

## EARLY MARRIAGE AND ITS IMPACT ON GIRL'S EDUCATION IN ABAKALIKI EDUCATION ZONE OF EBONYI STATE.

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### Abstract

This work sought to determine Early Marriage and its Impact on Girl's Education in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State. Four research questions were formulated to guide the study; a descriptive survey design was adopted. The population of the study was four hundred and forth eight (448) teachers. The researcher used simple random sampling technique to draw the sample for the study. Twenty eight (28) respondents were randomly selected from each of the five (5) selected schools. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The researcher used Test-re-test method to determine the reliability of the instrument, and a reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained, using the spearman's rank order (rho). All the copies of the questionnaire were dully completed and returned with no instrument mortality. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive mean statistics ( $\bar{x}$ ) to give verifiable answers to the problems and objectives of the research. The findings revealed that early marriage results negatively to the poor academic performances of a girl-child, that early marriage results to school dropout, hinders educational ambition and finally limits the full development of academic potentials of the girl-child in that area. It is recommended that government should enact a law prohibiting parents irrespective of tribe and religion on forcing their female children to get married at tender age when ought to be in school, also map out strategies to encourage female education, there should be public enlightenment campaigns to educate parents on the importance of educating female children as well motivate women on the importance of education through scholarships, bursary award and other kinds of financial assistance. Finally, enact a law through social welfare organization to be out in looking into the cases of violation among girls.

**Keywords:** Marriage, Early Marriage, Education of the Girl-Child.

### Introduction

Child marriage is a global issue that is extremely prevalent in developing nations. According to a report by WHO in 2018, 16 million years girls between the ages of 15-19a annually this figure indicates how prevalent the issue of child marriage is across the globe. In addition, 2.5 million

girls under the age of 16 give birth annually in developing areas

The girl-child, and indeed women all over the world especially in Nigeria have had their destiny sealed from birth by tradition and culture on account of their biological

sex. They have been called the weaker sex in order to justify societal discrimination and oppression against them. Their natural rights of place in the scheme of things as human beings are not respected. They are short-changed, victimized, and stereotyped. The girl-child has become a victim of female trafficking across international borders, being denied education, and consigned to early marriage. They can be seen but not to be heard in both private and the public spaces of decision making. The girl-child by the natural status ascribed to her by male defined norms societal conduct and behaviour remains a property to be owned and commoditized. It is only education that can salvage women from this condition.

Education has indeed taken number one priority in our country Nigeria, which the country has to offer the citizens the opportunity at all level to behold such a bedrock in other to be part and parcel of our day to day development. This bedrock is what a girl-child is been deprived of due to early marriage. A girl-child should be repos it of her place as a human being and indispensably ally and co-traveller in Nigeria. Strive towards the actualization and attainment of development agenda.

It is indubitable that no meaningful agenda-setting and development objectives can be attained in a situation where a girl-child is sidelined and consigned to the kitchen closet without conscious consideration for empowerment through the acquisition of quality education that liberates her.

Education seems to be a pre-requisite for a sustainable development which could lead a country to achieve maximum profitability within and outside the country (Tola and Asishati (2012). Adedeji (2019) reasoned that lack of education leads to so many unfortunate events in one's life. Education as a process welcomes changes in different aspects of life and promotes sustainability of society (Huges, Kroechler, and Zanden, 2019).

Education is an aspect of human endeavor that leads to socialization Onyekwelu, (2017), he also opined that education can also be seen as a pointer that directs, detects, leads someone in right directions, and equally opens an avenue for problem solving. Moreover, it makes one to acquire and develop high sense of esteem, being able to know his/her personality capacity.

Education is the main source of our democratic way of life, economic, political, social and otherwise. It is the utmost way of achievement in our society enveloping human existence, and at the same time, the most economic investment society can be quilt. (Kennedy, 2012) Marriage is found in all cultures as a process by which individual select their partners. It is an old institution which regulates the term upon which male and female reproduce according to well defined and acceptable social norms. Marriage also could be described as an institution that legally joins a man and a woman to be one in love, body and soul in other to fulfill an obligatory right. Kendall,

(2017) opined that marriage is an institution that binds people of different belief, and culture in a form of mutual dependence of each other for the purpose of building a home. UNICEF (2014), stated that marriage could be seen throughout the world as the period of joy and celebration. Marriage from the biblical concept "the union of two people" This is the bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh (Gen 2: 23-24). This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife and they become one flesh.

Education is one of the fundamental human rights which every citizen has a right to have. Although Nigeria has had a national policy on education since 1981, it has not been fully implemented effectively due to poor managerial function, gender disparity (Ocho, 2015). Girls-child is mostly affected by these negative factors due to early marriage. (UNICEF, 2014) Early marriage inevitably denies a girl-child the right of education, need for personal growth, development, preparation for adulthood and effective contribution to the future wellbeing of her family and society. (Dewey, 2012) Indeed, married girls who would like to continue schooling may be other practically and legally excluded from doing so.

The situation in Nigeria is clear, a girl will be withdrawn from school if a good marriage prospects arises. (DHS) data also show a clear link in some other countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Kazakhstan and Indonesia. Although attitudes towards the

education of girls have begun to change even in traditional societies, many parents still believe that investment in a girl's education is wasted when she is simply going to be married and work in another household.

The costs of the investment in education reinforce the impetus towards the girl-child withdrawal from school.

In rural areas, secondary education often means that a girl must leave to live in a school dormitory, parent fear that this may expose her to risks including pre-marital sex and pregnancy. In Northern Nigeria, for example, girls are often kept out of school for this very reason even where girls can live at home while attending schools, fears about their possible sexual activity about sexual harassment or about insecurity on the journey to and from school, discourage their attendance.

The removal from school of a young girl to marry early limits her opportunities to develop her intellect. She also loses out on socializing, making friends outside her family circle, and many other useful skills. This reduces her chances of developing her own independent identity. The girl grows up with no sense of the right to assert to her own point of view and little experience in articulating one. Lack of self-esteem or of a sense of ownership of her own body expose a girl-child to unwanted pregnancy and make her vulnerable to HIV infection. Lack of schooling also means that the girl child who

must work to earn a living has no qualifications or skills, which leads her to a commercialized version of work as cleaners, cooks, child minding and may also lead her to commercial sex trade.

Annan, (2016), opined that early marriage is the type of marriage that fails to put the both parties consent into consideration which could lead to disastrous experiences. Early marriage also defined by the (F.R.N., 1999), Federal Republic of Nigerian constitution of 1999 as any marriage before the age of 18 years. (Wluml, 2013), women living under Muslim law in Afghanistan define early marriage as a type that humiliate women's dignity violently as well as deprive them so many opportunities life can offer. This situation which early marriage has subjected a girl-child is alarming and could seek attention among government, educationist, professional, students and the society at large. This is partly because early marriage appears to be more pronounced, irrespective of the huge task already done by developing countries to prevent such an outdated practice. It interferes with the right and freedom of the girl child. Marriage at a very young age has very serious consequences for both the child parents and the children. In the past, some studies have worked assiduously to measure the implications of early marriage on education of the girl child which could be attributed to poor education background of the girl child family, economic status of the country and gender inequality (Moemeka, 2018).

(Lyold and Mensch, 2018), are of the opinion that women with poor education background could be traced from the world go, and the girl-child in question may have no interest on education as well as poor abilities to cope, there by grabbing the little opportunities of leaving in the name of marriage to run away of such responsibilities.

In (Ethopia, 2005), some parents are sincerely of the opinion that school dropout syndrome could be linked with early marriage in other to prevent some ugly behaviours of their children i.e. unwanted pregnancies, rape, suicide attempt. (Ngugen and Wodon, 2012b)

Education has no substitute in life, and not only offers one the ability to read and write but also exposes one to realities of life which could not be bought in the market anywhere. (Richard; 2011) Education itself is a venture for moral ethics, values of life and opportunity which are necessary for mutual coexistence with others because it is a viable tool for success in setting life goals.

According to Donberg (2000) education is a process of having access to optimal state of mind regardless of the situation one is at that particular moment. It has a wide scope of interest that places one in his/her area of potentialities for instance, area of skill acquisitions, entrepreneurship where one works on his/ her own in other to earn a living which could be satisfactory.

procreation of children and satisfaction of our sexual urges.

## Statement of the Problem

Women and girls are human being with potentials like their male counterparts. Yet, they are sometimes denied of so many opportunities especially education that can enable them to develop their potentials endowed in them for the benefit of the society at large and Abakaliki Education Zone in particular. Through Education people develop and strengthen their capabilities.

According to UNICEF (2000), early marriage has immensely contributed negatively to the future of women especially girl-child. It could be seen as an intimidation! On the young women's life in general which could lead to psychological imbalance. This study therefore focuses on the influence of early marriage on the education of the girl-child in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

## Research Questions

1. How does early marriage hinder the educational ambition of the girl-child?
2. In what ways does early marriage limits the full development of academic potentials of the girl-child?

## Review of Related Literature

### Concept of Marriage

Marriage is one of the oldest socially recognized institution and essential for the

Throughout the world, marriage is been regarded as a moment of celebration and milestone in adult life. Sadly, the practice of early marriage gives no such cause for celebration. All too often, the imposition of a marriage partner upon a girl-child means that a girl-child-hood is cut short and her fundamental rights are compromised (UNICEF, 2001 and Lefevre, Quiroya and Murphy, 2004). Young girls are robbed of their youth and require taking on roles for which they are not psychologically or physically prepared. Many have no choice about the timing of marriage while others are too young to make an informed decision. Premature marriage deprives them of the opportunity for personal development as well as their rights to full reproductive health and wellbeing, education and participation in civic life.

The international women's Decades, 1975 till date, had endeavored to crystalize the status of women, particularly in education which was seen as being inadequate. The 2015 Nairobi conference aimed particularly at examining the basic needs of African and Asian women, who constitute the bulk of the world's female population. The focus was on aspects of inequality and education

The convention on the rights of the child was adopted by the general assembly of the United Nations on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 1989, in Ethiopia, Articles 28 and 29 of this

convention are particularly relevant to this write up.

1. Make primary education compulsory and available free to all.
2. Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education available and accessible to every child.
3. Make educational and vocational guidance accessible and offering financial assistance in case of need.
4. To measure to encourage regular attendance at schools and reduction the dropout rates article 29 makes references to aims of education.
5. The development of the child's personality talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potentials.
6. The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes. The African charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child adopted by the organization of African unity reinforced the above-mentioned resolutions. There assertions uphold the need to implement the instrument in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, and girls.

The world conference on Education for all Jomtien (2017), reached a global consensus

on needs, objectives and strategies regarding basic education on the girl-child.

1. That education is a fundamental right for all people, women and men of all ages throughout the world.
2. That education can help ensure a safer, healthier, more prosperous and environmentally sound world.
3. That education can equally ensure an economic and cultural progress, tolerance and international cooperation.

The ministry of women and social Affairs is responsible for educating and integrating women and young girls in the occupational world and supervises all centers for girls and women's education.

The above measures provide some evidence of the efforts made by the government to provide equal opportunity for all children more efforts were made to extend basic educational opportunities in non-formal education as well as improving its quality. This is so because the government has come to realize that no one mode of education is capable of meeting all the essential learning needs of the individual.

(Brown, 2012)-) in different societies, there are different types and methods of marriage. Some of the societies allow a man to engage in monogamous type of marriage whereas in other societies men are polygamous. Similarly, some societies will not allow some societies will not allow a woman to

have more than one husband whereas other societies will not round a woman having more than one husband. In some case, the parent arranges the marriage and other places, girls and boys arrange their marriage.

Marriage is a term of social relationship of husband and wife is of plural mates. Also it is for the ceremony of uniting marital partners. Marriage is the approved social pattern whereby two to more people establish a family (Dixon, 2018). It involves not only the right to bear and rear children, but also other firms of obligation. Methods of Marriage

There are two acceptable methods of marriage according to Rury (2017). Exogamy method of marriage seems to be when a person marries outside one's group, religion, race, class and caste of which it is mostly practice in the modern times. Endogamy is when a person marries inside one's group, religion, race, class and caste which is mostly practice in rural areas.

### Types of Marriage

There are many types of marriage but to mention but few Monogamy, polygamy, polygamy, polyandry, Non-fraternal, group -marriage, experimental marriage, intercaste marriage, Anuloma, pratiloma, Hyper -gamy and hypogamy so rerate marriage, levirate and marriage by elopement. But within our country Nigeria, monogamy and polygamy type of marriage are most practices which involve a person marry one

wife and two wives respectively. Marriage is an institution ordained by God for companionship and procreation. The union is expected to be by the consent of two adults who are mature enough to take their responsibility, (Rotimi, 2017). According Ezeagu (2013), opined that marriage is based on growth and development as well as changes that takes place at different stages of development to full maturity, socially, educationally and otherwise.

### Concept of Early Marriage

Nigeria a country blessed with rich human and natural resources is the most populated country in the sub-Saharan region with an estimated population of about 162.5 million. Of this, about 49% of the population are females, accounting for roughly 80.2 million of the entire population. This population therefore signifies the economic and societal importance of the female to the country. The African society however places expectation on females to marry and become submissive to their husbands and in some cases drop the personal interest and ambitions.

Early marriage impairs the realization and enjoyment of virtually every one of their right. (Tilak 2015), the imposition of marriage partner on a girl-child deprives her of freedom, opportunity for person development and other rights including health, education and well-being. Early marriage is seen differently by different people. It is relative to people and place. Marriage which is considered early here

might be an ideal age in other part of the world. To Onuoha (2019) early marriage is a situation where female children are given away in an unripe age by their parents to enable their bride price to be used for the education or training of the male children.

According to Mavis (2019), early marriage is the type of marriage between two people who are below marriageable age, usually agreed for them by their parents. It is a marriage between young girls and older men. Early marriage is the marriage between spouses when both or the lady spouse is no mature enough to appreciate the essence of marriage. Adebayo (2015), before the age of 18 years early marriage represents a major threat to a child's well-being while the practice affects a girl child badly. The mostly fundamental right of a girl child to survive, to develop are undermined. She is left out with little or no opportunity to influence her own life (Sadik, 2015).

Early marriage truncates the girl - child and can lead to preproduction of poverty from one generation to next (United Nations, 1989, Singh, 2018). Early marriage has become a social problem in many sub-Saharan African countries because it tends to lead to school dropouts, illegal abortions, child abandonment, increasing number of adolescent prostitution, early breakages of marriages, and growing rate of HIV/AIDS particularly among the girl child. (Ajayi2018). In many countries especially among the poor migrants or displaced communities, marriages at young is not

uncommon, usually it is the girls who marry early compared to boys (Lewis 2016). This is gender inequality presents in all aspects of the society, lack of life skill and negotiating power (Lewis 2016). The boys unlike girls have a say on when and who they marry as well, as what they do once they are married, hence early marriage is usually forced as the girls consent and right are grossly abused Lyold 2018).

Nevertheless, females across the country have continued to record strides in various sectors of the country. These are reflected by this administration's political appointment of females as Minister of Finance (Kemi Adeosun), D.G of NPA (Hadiza Usman) and the D.G of NAFDAC (Moji Adeyeye) to mention a few within the political scenery. In the area of the private sector, Emzor Pharmaceuticals (Dr Stella Okoli), Ebonylife TV (Mo Abudu), Newton & David Events Limited (Uche Majekodunmi), Linda Ikeji, Folorunsho Alakija to mention a few.

Females are regarded as the currency in which political and economic alliances are built. They carry out 50-60 percent of the activities involved in food processing, agricultural husbandry activities in the country<sup>1</sup>. Women are at the center of many communities and irrespective of whether they are employed or not, they are very influential to their children<sup>2</sup>. As such, their population plays a key role in the social and national advancement.

This section of the population has however faced societal prejudices from discrimination because of their gender as well as stigmatization as a result of failure to meet societal standards and customs. One of these prejudices is the expectation within the society that females must become married in order to gain audience in their society. It is estimated that more than 20-50 % of females in developing nations particularly in the sub-Saharan region of Africa go into marriage before the age of 18. As such this has highlights the phenomenon today known as “Girl child marriage”.

It must highlight that although most marriages today are structured on monogamy where one man marries one woman. In certain societies where traditional, Jewish, Islamic religion and customs are practiced, men are allowed to take as many as four wives. It is an institution where the two individuals have “chosen” to bind themselves by marriage are expected to leave together until death. Hence, the idea of child marriages sees the girl child married off to their husbands by their parents without her choice. Invariably, it can in some cases be referred to as “forced marriage”. This therefore makes these girls become sexually active as early as 10 years and in the case of Nigeria is commonly found in North-West and North-East of Nigeria .

Child marriage otherwise referred to as early marriage is an ancient tradition and can therefore be defined as any marriage that

occurs when the girl is not physically, mentally or physiologically ready to bear the pressures of marriage and child bearing. Scholars have emphasized that the human rights of the girl-child is been violated through early marriage as globally, international bodies recognize 18 years as the legal age of marriage. In furtherance to this, highlights that child marriages are most times carried out without the valid consent of one or two of the parties.

Proponents argue that this practice can be attributed to religious beliefs, financial capabilities and societal conflicts to mention but a few <sup>14, 15, 16</sup>. Another school of thought argue that under the certain traditional and Islamic laws, a woman becomes of age once she undergoes the process of marriage thereby making it challenging for some nations where this traditions are practiced to accept these classifications. It however, be agreed that the impact of marriage on child brides are harmful and violate other universally accepted regulations and poses developmental challenges for countries. According to Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) “any betrothal or marriage of a child should not have any legal status”. Scholars have opined that most early child marriages are most times consently arranged by parents opines that the effect of this imposition has long lasting effects on the child. As young girls are forced to grow up and thereby robbing of the youth.

In the case of Nigeria, early marriage is predominant in the Northern part of Nigeria where North-west and North-East geopolitical zones account for over 45 % of child marriages as well as the highest levels of illiteracy amongst females in the nation. The cases continue to occur in spite of the Nigerian constitution frowning at early marriages, the recent cases of Alhaji Ahmed Bakura, former governor of Zamfara and Ese Oruru in Bayelsa state are clear examples that these practices continue to be practiced.

### **Causes of Early Girl-Child Marriage**

#### **(a) Financial uncertainty**

Financial uncertainty is a critical contributing factor to early girl-child marriage. In the sense that, where the parents of the child are faced with acute uncertainty of finances, their young girls may be seen as expensive and a burden. This can lead to the parents marrying her off to an older man at a very young age. In traditional African societies, the bride's family may receive cattle from the family of the groom. Furthermore poor families tend to marry off their girls at the same time with a view to reducing the expenses of marriage ceremonies.

#### **(b) Cultural Expectation**

As a result of cultural expectation, where young girls are lured into early marriages in order to fit into the expectations of their community. opines that societal expectation

pressure parents to allow their girls under the age of 18 years because of prestige. As failure to confirm with these expectations can lead to ridicule and disapproval.

#### **(c) Religious Belief**

Religious beliefs have played a key role in girl-child marriage, as some religious beliefs do not condemn marriage to under aged girls and this has thereby encouraged the perpetuation of such acts. In addition, as a result of religious expectations, parents force their daughters to marry whomever they get pregnant for.

#### **(d) Family alliances**

Marriage is a union between two families and some parents lure their girl-child's into marriage in order to consolidate family alliances. According to a report by UNIFPA, some marriages in Africa and Asia are seen as a means of strengthening the relationships between families or settling disputes. According to a report by <sup>25</sup> in some cases the children are betrothed even before birth.

#### **(e) Kidnapping**

The rising case of insecurity in Africa, particularly Nigeria has seen the rise of kidnapping and other criminal vices. This has seen young girls kidnapped on their way to school or at school premises and thereafter forced into marriage by their captives. The case of abduction and eventual forceful marriage and impregnation of some

of the Chibok girls in the northern part of Nigeria is a typical example of this.

#### **(f) Traditional practice**

A number of traditional practices contribute to early girl-child marriage for instance, practices such as female genital circumcision (FGC) where part of all of the female genital is removed for cultural reasons<sup>27</sup>. It is believed that the process improves the health of the girl child, hygiene, prospects of marriage and fertility. It is estimated that about 140 million women have gone through the process of FGC.

#### **(g) Ignorance**

One of the significant causes of early girl-child marriage is ignorance on the part of the parents. Ignorance in the sense that some parents have the opinion that their daughters are safer when they are married off early so as to prevent sexual attacks and violence.

#### **(h) Community pressure**

The pressure girls face as a result of their status in the society contributes in early marriage. A study carried out by UN in 2004, established that women are regarded as inferior in African and Asian societies.<sup>28</sup> posits that girls are seen as burdens because of the fact that they will eventually get married into another family as such they prefer to educate their boys and marry off their girl child at an early age.

#### **(i) Control of unintended pregnancy**

Most societies in Africa and Asia frown upon pregnancy prior to marriage. As such, most families seek to marry off their girl child before they get pregnant outside marriage. A report by UNICEF established that unmarried girls are seen as liability to the honor of the family and in order to guarantee chastity and virginity of the bride they are married off early to avoid dishonoring the family.

#### **(j) Limited educational attainment of parents**

Africa is continent that is still developing and as such most countries have a significant population that lack educational qualification and form of training. This therefore exposes them to a lot societal superstitions and misinterpretations of marriage. As a result, this makes them gullible to any superstition or misconceptions that have been passed down from generation to generation regarding early-child marriage. According to<sup>30</sup> the education of parents greatly affects the timing and type of union.

#### **(k) Limited or no access to health information services**

This is a serious contributory factor to the continuous practice of early girl-child marriage. This is because parents who engage in this practice are not fully abreast with the consequences of early girl-child marriage on their daughter. These include confinement to household roles, sexual

abuse, discontinuation of education, exposure to maternal death, Vesico-Virginal Fistulae (VVF) and sexually transmitted diseases. According a report by WHO in 2018, adolescent mothers aged between 10 to 19 have a higher likelihood of experiencing eclampsia, systematic infections as well as puerperal endometritis when compared to older mothers.

### **Impact of Early Marriage on Girl Child Education**

The school is the most important institution outside the family involved in socializing young people into all dimensions of adult roles and responsibilities. Many years of schooling has been associated with many positive outcomes, including later ages of marriage, lower fertility and healthier and better educated children. (Otoo-Oyotey, 2003). Marriage often means the end of educational development for women. In the case of early marriage, girls may be deprived for vital education needed for their preparation into adulthood, their effective contribution to the future well-being of their family and society, and their capacity to earn and make a living. The education a girl receives is the strongest predictor of the age she will marry. The most important documented implication of its loss is that girl grows up with hindered sense or no sense at all, of the right to assert her own point of view and little experience, as women are barred from participation in political, economic and cultural decisions - making processes. Early marriage has

disrupted the chances of a girl child to inherit the goal of equality in education for girls and boys for the universal right to education by the Development goals (MDGs) adopted by the 191 members states of the united Nation in 2000.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### Social Disorganization Theory

The proponents of social disorganization theory according to Mills (1943), valued a smooth-working, culturally homogeneous social system in which people adapt their behavior to accepted norms. Through this vision of the ideal society, they now determine who and what their social problems were.

In every society 'traditional or modern, there are always social sanctioned behavior pattern which people are bound to. Hence, we have socialization which makes sure that there is continuity and order in the society. However, more often than not, there are certain breakdowns of these socially sanctioned behavior patterns. The organization of society was made possible therefore by sets of norms, or rules for appropriate behavior. Deviant behaviors where due to the existence of social disorganization within parts of the social system Social disorganization give rise to social disequilibrium because poverty and poor managerial system deprive people not to abide by the norms. It gives rise to deviant behaviors. It has also been

responsible for the alienations and exploitations of girls in early marriage. Many are denied of their education, social rites because of early marriage.

### Review of Empirical study

Osakinle and Falana (2014), conducted a study on the impact of early marriage on education of the girl-child in senior secondary school Education in Abakaliki Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. The study examined how early marriage hinders the educational ambition of the girl-child. How early marriage limit the full development of the potential of the girl child. How it encourage poor academic performance of the child. The study gave some reasons why people or girls join early marriage. Poverty, environment, social-cultural background study went further to recommend that there should be direct counseling programs about early marriage for the girl-child. Moral instructions should also be re-emphasized to assist or aid young girls who may fall into the temptations of getting into early marriage. Counseling services should be extended to non-school setting to help parents eradicate the notion or superstition of early marriage among their children especially females. Counselors are to enlighten the public on their services to families to live an exemplary moral life.

### Research Method

Research design used was a descriptive survey. According to Abonyi, Okereke, Omebe and Anugwo (2016), it involves quick ways of obtaining facts and figures from systematically selected segments of a population with the purpose of ascertaining the general characteristics of the population. It involves very large and extensive population, thus, information collected from samples and the populations are analyzed yield a result which could be used for decision making.

The research was carried out in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State which has three education zones; namely, Abakaliki, Afikpo and Onueke. The people of the zone are well known for farming, trading and some others engage in white collar jobs.

The population of this study comprised of all the secondary school teachers in all the seventy eight (78) secondary schools situated within Abakaliki Education Zone. The teachers totaled four hundred and forty eight. The sex composition is made up of 149 male and 299 female teachers (Secondary Education Board; SEB, 2014). Well-Structured questionnaires were designed by the researcher for data collection.

The descriptive mean statistics were made to analyzed data collected in the study.

## RESULTS

Chapter four centers on results of the research made with the analysis of the data collected. This was done based on the four research question that guided the study using descriptive statistics of mean QQ.

**Table 1:** Response on how early marriage hinders the educational ambition of the girl-child.

S/NO	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	N	FX	$\bar{X}$	DECISION RULE
<b>1.</b>	The girl-child is not mature enough emotionally to combine married life and educational activities	108	30	2	-	140	526	3.76	Agreed
<b>2.</b>	Some men might not allow their wives to complete secondary education before in pregnant them.	89	49	2	-	140	507	3.62	Agreed
<b>3.</b>	The girl-child's heart culturally is pre-occupied with child bearing rather than concentrating on educational pursuit.	19	24	66	31	140	311	2.22	Disagreed
4.	Some husband prefer their wives trading to assist in family responsibilities	105	34	1	-	140	524	3.74	Agreed
5.	Early marriage makes it difficult for the girl-child who got pregnant to go back to school for educational pursuit out of shame because her mates have passed that level	107	33	-	-	140	527	3.76	Agreed
<b>Grand Mean</b>								<b>3.42</b>	

Based on the analysis of the table in which a grand mean of 3.42 was recorded which is above the criterion mean score of 2.5, the researcher concluded that early marriage hinders the educational ambition of the girl-child in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

**Research Question Two:** In what ways does early marriage limits the full development of academic potentials of the girl-child?

Table 2: Responses on how early marriage limits the full development of girl-child potentials.

S/NO	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	N	FX	$\bar{X}$	DECISION RULE
6.	Early marriage limits the personality development of the girl-child	98	42	-	-	140	518	3.70	Agreed
7.	The affected girl-child would be depressed emotionally due to trauma of child bearing to continue her education	43	93	4	-	140	459	3.28	Agreed
8.	Early marriage enhances a girl-child of getting vesico fistula (V.V.F) which permanently put the affected girl-child out of school	110	30	-	-	140	530	3.79	Agreed
9.	Early marriage may make the girl-child to remain as a house wife without the opportunity	47	91	2	-	140	465	3.32	Agreed

	of furthering her education								
10	The girl-child, because of her lack education deprives her opportunity of excising her right as a citizen to the community	48	89	3	-	140	465	3.32	Agreed
	<b>Grand Mean</b>							<b>3.42</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Based on a grand mean score of 3.48, the researcher established that early marriage limits the full development of the academic potentials of the girl-child in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

## Discussion of Findings

The results on table 1 showed that early marriage hinders the educational ambition of the girl-child in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State. The result revealed that the girl-child is not mature enough to attend to the responsibilities of marriage and education at the same time. Result also showed that for economic reason, some husbands may not allow their wives to complete secondary education before putting them in family way. In addition, result showed that some husbands prefer their wives trading to schooling. This findings is in line with the Mavis (2019) who found that early marriage which often concerns underaged girls whose parents forced into marriage without considering their (the girl-children) opinion are mainly forced to trade or resort to farming by their husbands due to economic reasons.

On item 5 in table 1, the result showed that the girl-child who got married early find it difficult to go back to school for educational pursuit out of shame since her mates have passed that level. This finding agrees with

the findings of Nworie (1994) that underaged girls who got married and impregnated earlier are bound to develop certain feelings to exercise themselves socially which attracts social stigma from their mates.

How does early Marriage Enhance School Dropout of the Girl-child in Abakaliki

In what ways does early marriage limit the full development of academic potentials of the girl-child?

As evident on table 2, it was found that early marriage limits the full development of academic potential of the girl-child in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State. Result on item 6 revealed that early marriage limits the personality development of the girl-child. Result on item 7 showed that early marriage affects the girl-child emotionally due to trauma of child bearing and thus limits her academic pursuit. Early marriage was also found to enhance the girl-child's development of V.V.F which permanently puts the affected child out of school.

Also it was found on items 9 and 10 might subject the girl-child to a house wife and thus, makes the girl-child not to contribute meaningfully to the development of her community because of the academic limitation she falls into. The above findings are in line with the opinion of Ike (2013) who posits that marriage is very challenging demanding and sometimes most frustrating, thus, limiting the chance of the girl-child acquisition of good education that will equip her and make her a functional and contributing member of her community.

## Conclusion

From the findings for this research, the researcher is convinced that it has empirically to establish that early marriage in Abakaliki Education Zone is faced with serious challenges with the result that many girl-child in that area still denied formal education because various factors. In other words, only few privilege girl children enjoyed formal education, while a substantial number of them are denied the opportunity of acquire functional education that can enable them to develop and improve their skills and full potential.

The study has revealed that major factors that are responsible for this ugly situation, ranging, early marriage, poverty, poor parental attitude, economic status of the parent, obnoxious cultural beliefs and gender inequality is common among people in that area. Above all, parent think that girl's education is a waste of resources.

In conclusion, this study strongly argues that this influences girl-child education in Abakaliki Education zone must be remove by all the stake holders, including government, parents, traditional ruler and the elites in the communities, if not girl child will continue to suffer the influence of early marriage.

## Recommendations

From the findings of this research, the researcher made these recommendations as follows.

1. Schools on their own must employ qualified counselors to help inculcate the implications of early marriages on education of the young ones.
2. Counseling services should be extended to non-school setting to help parents eradicate the notion or superstition of early marriage among their children especially the females.
3. The government through the services of health education practitioners should constantly enlighten the public especially at the rural areas about the dangers of encouraging early marriage among the female children. •
4. Customarily, every community head should sensitize her people on the ills of early marriage of the girl-child citing what the community stands to lose in particular.

Religious organizations should constantly sermonize against the early marriage of the girl-child in the society to cushion the effects this development has on the girl-child and the society at large.

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