

**INFLUENCE OF EARLY MARRIAGE ON FEMALE PUPILS' EDUCATION AS PERCEIVED BY
MARRIED MUSLIM TEACHERS IN UPPER BASIC SCHOOLS IN ILORIN, KWARA STATE
BY**

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ABSTRACT

Education has been described as the most important aspect of human development and a key to a successful living. Female pupils' education is to equip girls who later grow up to women with the knowledge, abilities and mental powers with which they will be useful to themselves, the family and the society. Against this background, the study examined the influence of early marriage on female pupils' education as perceived by married Muslim teachers in Upper Basic Schools in Ilorin, Kwara State. The variables considered are gender and educational attainment. This study adopted descriptive research method; purposive sampling technique was used to sample three hundred (300) Upper Basic married Muslim teachers in Ilorin, Kwara State. The researcher-designed questionnaire was used for data collection. t-test and One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to test the two hypotheses. The result revealed that there was a significant influence of early marriage on female pupils' education as perceived by married Muslim teachers in Upper Basic Schools in Ilorin, Kwara State based on gender and educational attainment. Based on these findings, it was concluded that early marriage has significant influence on female pupils' education as perceived by married Muslim teachers in Upper Basic Schools, it was recommended that parent should be orientate on the importance of female pupils' education to the family and the society in general and government should improve access to education and eliminating gender gaps in education.

Keywords: Early Marriage, Female Pupils, Education, Married Muslim Teachers, Upper Basic Schools.

Introduction

Education has been regarded as fundamental human rights of every child irrespective of sex and economic status. This is in compliance with the United Nations General Assembly (2018) where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulated that everyone has the right to education which shall be free at least in elementary and primary stages. Similarly, the National Policy on Education in Nigeria (2013) emphasizes among other things that there will be equal opportunities for all citizens. The Universal Basic Education (U B E) was introduced and formally launched in 1999 by the Federal Government of Nigeria as an educational reform programme to replace Universal Primary Education (UPE) (Danmole, 2018) and to meet the National Economic

Empowerment Development Strategies (NEED). Education for All (EFA) goal and the Millennium Development Goals (M D G s). The UBE was therefore, introduced to provide a universal, free, compulsory and continuous 9- years Basic Education (Onoacha, 2016).

The main objectives of the scheme, according to National Policy on Education (2004) are to providing free, compulsory and basic education for every Nigeria child of school going age, development in entire citizen, a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion, reducing drastically, dropout rate from formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency, catering for drop out through the various forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education, ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numerical, manipulative and life skills (as well as ethical, moral and civic values) needed for laying the foundation for lifelong learning (p. 2).

With reference to female education and contribution to the society, Marshal (2019) stated that women make up more than half of the Nigerian population, and they have been known to have contributed in many ways to the development of the society. Stronquist (2017) stressed that female pupils' education involves equipping girls who later grow up to women with the knowledge, abilities and mental powers with which they will be useful to themselves, the family and the society. To Ballara (2018), the importance of the child female pupils' education cannot be over-emphasized in any society, since they (female pupils), constitute more than half of the population in most societies; their education is vital to any sustainable development. With the acquisition of skills, the female pupils in adulthood contribute a lot to societal development. A woman's education affords her the opportunity to take advantage of family planning facilities which results in fewer births of children and less social and economic burdens on families and society in general (Ballara, 2018).

Abdallah (2019) posited that the female pupils' education has bearing on the economic well-being of a country. Abdul (2019 explained further that educated female develops essential life skills, including self-confidence, the ability to participate effectively in societal welfares and protect herself from HIV/AIDs infection, sexual exploitation and pressures for early marriage and complicate child birth. Moreover, Adedokun and Olufunke(2020) opined that the female pupils can only claim these rights and exercise them if she understands what they mean and their implications upon her livelihood and dignity. The female pupils should therefore be made to know that education is empowerment and when she is empowered, she can fight for her rights and exercise such. Adedokun and Olufunke (2020), unraveled further that that educating a girl-child will therefore help her socialize, reproduce knowledge and even lead her towards the production of new knowledge.

It appears that Nigeria is still a long way from achieving the "Education for All" goal of equality in education for girls and boys. One of the barriers to achieving this goal is early marriage, or the marriage of school-age children. Early marriage can be a violation of children's basic rights - to a childhood, to an education, to good health and to make decisions about their own lives (Molokwu, 2018). Molokwu (2018) defined further that early marriage or child marriage refers to

any marriage of a child younger than 18 years old in accordance to Article of the Convention on the Rights of the child. Similarly, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2018) described it as both formal marriage and informal unions in which a girl lives with a partner as if married before the age of 18. UNICEF (2018) added further that it is any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, physiologically and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and child bearing.

The female pupils have been defined as a biological female offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age (UNICEF, 2015). This is the age before one becomes a young adult. This period covers the crèche, nursery or early childhood (0 – 5 years), primary (6 – 12 years) and secondary school (12 – 18 years). This implies that many girls of adolescence stage are also vulnerable to this barbaric practice that could jeopardize brighter future of the country. Nigerian girls are in critical and delicate stage of adolescence. The period of adolescence is a critical one, which profoundly influences girls' future potential. It is a time of key transitions: from girlhood to womanhood; from primary to secondary education; from education to work and family life. Too often, however, these transitions go wrong: with high drop-out rates from secondary school; early and forced marriage; exposure to violence, abuse and to HIV infection; and high maternal mortality (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2015).

Limited educational opportunities also keep girls from securing safe, reliable, and rewarding forms of employment, thereby perpetuating chronic poverty across generations (Akunga, 2017). Globally, there are 582 million girls aged 10 to 19 years (Chabaan & Cunningham, 2017). Over 85% of adolescent girls are estimated to live in poverty (less than \$2 per day), in countries such as Bangladesh, Liberia, Tanzania and Rwanda (Calder & Huda, 2013). Approximately 25% of girls in developing countries are not in school. In over a dozen countries across the world, more than 50% and in some as much as 87% of girls – do not complete primary school (Chabaan & Cunningham, 2017). These statistics – accompanied by others – highlight the deprivation, discrimination, and lack of opportunity that adolescent girls globally must contend with.

Abdallah (2019) in a study observed that in Nigeria, the practice of child marriage is deeply entrenched in tradition, culture and religion and the country has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, with estimated 42 percent of girls married before 18 years; and while this is found among many ethnic groups across the country, its predominance is clearly in the northern part of the country. While nationwide, 20 percent of girls are married by age 15, and 40 percent are married by age 18, child marriage is extremely prevalent in some regions such as among the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani of the Northwest and North-East (of which Zaria is a part) where 48 percent of girls are married by age 15, and 78 percent are married by age 18.

Furthermore, the study reported that average age at first marriage is 17 years nationwide, average age of marriage for girls is just over 11 years in Kebbi State and about 15 years in most other parts of northern Nigeria. Among the Yorubas, made up of a mixture of Christians and Muslims in the South-West, child-marriages are no longer arranged and for the Igbo in the South-East that are predominantly Christians, the practice has declined considerably and restricted to few

communities and situations where pregnant teenagers are forcefully married off, to prevent family shame or restore honour (Abdul, 2019).

According to United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF, 2015), Africa has the highest incidence rates of child marriage, with over 70% of girls marrying under the age of 18, in three nations. Among Nigerian women between the ages of 20 and 24, 76% reported marrying before the age of 18, and 28% reported marrying before the age of 15. As of 2006, 15-20% of school dropouts in Nigeria were as a result of child marriage. In 2013, Nigeria attempted to change section 29, sub section 4 of its laws and thereby prohibit child marriage. However, it was opposed by the Islamic states of Nigeria. Child marriage seems to be on the increase in Nigeria, though laws have been made to stop this dilemma. However, it has overtime been rebuffed by the Northerners who are core Muslims, and who uphold the 'doctrine' of child marriage (Omorodion, 2015).

Some Islamic marriage practices have permitted marriage of girls below the age of 10, because Sharia law is based in part on the life and practices of Prophet Muhammad, the Prophet, as described in part in sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim. The prophet married Aisha, his third wife, when she was about age six and consummated the marriage when she was about age nine (Jewish Encyclopedia, 2010). Some mainstream Islamic scholars have suggested that it is not the chronological age that matters, marriageable age under Islamic law is the age when guardian of the girl feels she has reached sexual maturity. Such determination of sexual maturity is a matter of subjective judgment and there is a strong belief among most Muslims and scholars, based on Sharia that marrying a girl less than 13 years old is an acceptable practice for Muslims (Ali, 2020).

Early childbearing poses serious consequences to the health and development of young girls. Previous studies have revealed poor pregnancy outcomes among young women ages between 13 and 19 years (Olausson, Cnattinguis & Haglund, 2017) and also that the risk of maternal death and disability is higher for young women than for women in their 20s. Early childbearing limits girls' opportunities for formal education, training and socioeconomic advancement, it induces high dropout rates at school and engagement in low paid employment and increases economic over dependent on partner's support (Shuger, 2020). It against this background that this study aimed at investigating the influence of early marriage on female pupils' education as perceived by married teachers in Upper Basic Schools in Ilorin, Kwara State.

Research Methodology

The study was a descriptive research of the survey design. The target population comprised all married teachers in Upper Basic Schools in Ilorin, Kwara State. Three hundred teachers (300) Upper Basic married teacher were sampled as respondents for this study using purposive sampling technique. The researcher-designed questionnaire was used for data collection. The research instrument was validated by experts in the field of Arts Education. The reliability coefficient was determined using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and the value was calculated to be $r = 0.67$. Data collected were analyzed using t-test and One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Three research hypotheses were tested as presented in Tables 1 and 2.

H0₁: *Gender does not significantly influence the early marriage on female pupils' education as perceived by married Muslim teachers in Upper Basic Schools in Ilorin, Kwara State.*

Regression Result: Gender influence of Early Marriage on Female Pupils' Education

ANOVA					
Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
1.	164.8	1	164.8	1.12	0.34
Regression	17.292	298	1.408		
Residual	182.209	299			
Total					
<p>a. Predictor (Constant): gender based</p> <p>b. Dependent variable: female pupils' education</p>					
Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient		Sig
	B	Std Error	Beta	T	
1. (Constant)	62.81	10.61		6.449	0.00
Employee Innovativeness	0.76	0.77	0.301	2.188	0.34
Dependent Variable: Female pupils' education					

Source: SPSS Output, 2021

Since the calculated t-value(6.449) is greater than 2.05 (going by absolute values) at 5% level of significance, which represent the t-tab. This implies that there is a significance influence of early marriage on female pupils' education as perceived by married Muslim teachers in Upper Basic Schools in Ilorin, Kwara State based on gender. Therefore the Null hypothesis is rejected which says that there is no significance influence of early marriage on female pupils' education as perceived by married Muslim teachers in Upper Basic Schools in Ilorin, Kwara State.

H0₂: *Educational attainment does not significantly influence the early marriage on female pupils' education as perceived married Muslim teachers in Upper Basic Schools in Ilorin, Kwara State.*

Regression Result: Educational attainment of Early Marriage on Female Pupils' Education

ANOVA					
Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
1.	162.0	1	162.0	1.043	0.001
Regression	20.209	298	1.362		
Residual	182.209	299			
Total					
a. Predictor (Constant): Educational attainment					
b. Dependent variable: Female pupils' education					
Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient		Sig
	B	Std Error	Beta	t	
1. (Constant)	305.22	9.81		5.84	0.000
Employee characteristics	1.050	0.70	0.439	1.02	0.001
Dependent Variable : Female pupils' education					

Source: SPSS Output, 2021

The result in the Table above revealed that there is a significance influence of early marriage on female pupils' education as perceived married Muslim teachers in Upper Basic Schools in Ilorin, Kwara State based on educational attainment because the calculated F-Statistic (1.043)significance value (0.001) is greater than 0.005 (5%) critical level. This implies the null hypothesis that there is no significance different in the influence of early marriage as perceived by married Muslimteachers in Upper Basic Schools in Ilorin, Kwara State on the basis of Educational attainment is rejected.

Discussions

The result of this study revealed that there was a significance influence of early marriage on female pupils' education as perceived by married Muslim teachers in Upper Basic Schools in Ilorin, Kwara State based on gender and educational attainment. Finding of Ahmed (2019) has revealed that if a female is educated she would be more knowledgeable about; the use of health services, family planning methods and the health of her children because females are powerful catalysts for change. These females are called innovators because of their novel 'win-win' methods of achieving major life goals. The research by UNICEF (2015) shows that the more education a girl receives, the less likely she is to be married early. Improving access to education and eliminating gender gaps in education are important strategies for ending the practice of early

marriage. According to UNICEF (2015), females' education does not only bring the immediate benefit of empowering girls, but is seen as the best investment in a country's development. Education helps girls to develop essential life skills including self-confidence, the ability to participate effectively in society and protect themselves from HIV/ AIDS and other sexual exploitations. UNICEF (2015) further asserted that girls' education also helps in cutting children and maternal mortality rates, contributing to national wealth and controlling disease and health status.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It high time for the parent and every society to realize the fact that female pupils' education is important as saving the life, having considered the negative impact this has caused them as a result of early marriage without sound education. Meanwhile, the right of all Nigerians to education has always been provided for in constitutions. Indeed, the UBE Act 2004 makes basic Education not only free, but compulsory at State and Local Government Level.

Parent should be orientation on the importance of female pupils' education to the family and the society in general. Government should ensure proper implementation of policies on the girl child rights and girls- child abuse, female pupils' education should be seen as a way of reducing children and maternal mortality rates, controlling disease and health status. Government should improve access to education and eliminating gender gaps in education to end the practice of early marriage. Education of the female child therefore should be seen as a priority in educational process of any nation. Educating females would enable her to gain knowledge and skills needed to advance her status and move out of poverty level and early marriage should be seen as a way of subjecting young girls to danger of contacting disease and other deadly infection if there is no rightly knowledge.

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