

**ATTITUDE OF ADOLESCENTS TOWARDS EARLY MARRIAGE IN
OHAUKWU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EBONYI STATE,
NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

This study determined the Attitude of Adolescents towards Early Marriage in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The design of the study is a descriptive survey. Three Research Questions were formulated to guide the study. The instrument for data collection was validated by two Experts in Guidance and Counselling Department. The population of the Study comprised of eleven thousand, seven hundred (11,700) Students in Ohaukwu Local Government Area. Simple random sampling was used to identify eight (8) schools from the thirty seven (37) public secondary Schools, both boys and girls. The sample included three hundred and twenty (320) respondents. To get this figure, disproportionate stratified random sampling was further used to identify forty (40) students each from the identified eight schools. Data were collected through a twenty (20) item questionnaire. The questionnaire was structured on a four point scale that ranged from

strongly agree to strongly disagree. The data were analyzed using mean, all items with the mean of 2.5 and above was regarded as positive, while mean less than 2.5 was regarded as negative attitude towards Early Marriage. The result of the study showed that majority of female students have positive Attitude towards Early Marriage, while majority of male students have negative attitude towards Early Marriage in the area of the Study. In view of these findings, the implications and recommendations were also highlighted.

Keywords: Attitude, Adolescents, Marriage, Early Marriage, Ebonyi State.

Introduction

Marriage is a union of two or more people that creates a family tie and carries legal, social, and or religious rights and responsibilities. Thus, Odunze (2017) sees marriage as God's calculated and premeditated divine institution designed to form a permanent union between a man and a woman that they might be helpful to each other. Marriage is an old sacred God-ordained institution that ought not to be entered without serious securitization. In support of the above assertion, Anaebonam (2015) pointed out that marriage carries a lot of commitments such that only those with sense of purpose, with old heads on their shoulders can go through it without faltering so much along the thorny pathways. However, Westermarck (2017), opined that marriage is a relation of two or more men and women who are recognized by the custom or law and involving certain rights and duties both in the case of the parties entering the union and in case of children born of it. However, early marriage is a formal or informal union entered into by an individual before reaching a certain age, specified by several global organizations such as UNICEF as minors under the age of 18. Early marriage also seen as child marriage is extremely prevalent in some religions. It is a fundamental violation of human rights. Many girls and smaller number of boys are married without their free and full consent. In many cases, only one marriage partner is a child, usually the female. According to UNICEF, (2014) early marriage is any marriage that involves an individual that is aged less than 18 years. This is in consonance with the UN charter of child rights which defines a child as someone who is under the age of 18 unless national laws recognizes an earlier age of majority (UN, 2012). Invariably, parents in some cultures usually give out their teenagers especially young girls early in marriage while others would prefer to have their female children trained in school, become fully matured and graduate from school before getting married. This has dealt immensely with the very bright and sparkling future of our young boys and girls.

Right from the beginning of ages, early Marriage has been the topic of debate and has been a matter of concern for researchers, policy makers, teachers, stakeholders, parents and guidance counsellors. Early marriage has been in practice in most developing countries; giving rise to adolescent child bearing. Among the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria is one of the countries that have a high prevalence of early marriage (UNFPA, 2014; Turner; 2010).

In 2014, children's national Day, the UNICEF in collaboration with the ministry of Education in Nigeria, had a presentation of statistical result of schooling children to non-schooling children in the contemporary society. The research presented shows that over 7.2 million Nigerian children are out of school as they engaged themselves in hawking as maid to people or likewise. Meanwhile, from the above result, 87% of those children found outside school were girls. In a press briefing organized by the Chairman of National Orientation Agency, The Nigeria Demographic Health survey of 2014 betoken that 40% of female are married by the

age of 18, with the highest concentration in the Northwest region where 78% of girls are married by the age of 18. It indicates that 23% of women have commenced child bearing by 19 years (NPC and ICF macro, 2015). In a bid to get married, many students at tender age have abandoned their academic in pursuit of marriage. This seems to have negatively affected their future academic pursuit and social wellbeing. Often, children who are involved in such marriage do so by parental decision and not of their own volition (Otoo-oyortey & pobi, 2013).

Elaborating further, the *National Policy on Population* (2015) discouraged early marriage and stated that parents should train their children up to marriageable age, and also stop arranging early marriage for girls below the age of eighteen. It was disclosed that nationwide twenty (20%) percent of girls married by the age of 15-19 and 40% married by the age of 18-22.

Furthermore, the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the most comprehensive international bill of rights for women, states that any betrothed or marriage of a child should not have any legal status. The committee that monitors this convention states further in general recommendation 21 (article 16:2) that the minimum age for marriage for both male and female should be 18 years, the age when they have attained full maturity and capacity to act. According to Dike (2016), many students of secondary schools perform poorly academically, for instance, about half of those that registered West Africa Examination council (WAEC) in 2015, performed below average. Hence, this could be traced as lack of interest in pursuit of education and serious focus on marriage and its related fantasies. It is just few people that have given it a thought as whether this issue of early marriage has any influence on the young boys and girls that indulge in it.

In Nigeria, particularly in Ebonyi State, South Eastern Nigeria, it has been observed that the girls marry at a very tender age against a national average of 18 years. Early marriage occurs due to a lot of reasons. It could be due to poverty, family background, customs and traditions, control over sexuality, developing an alliance between two families, minimizing the risk of dishonor, moulding the behaviour of the girl child, economic instability, pressure of society and relatives lack of exposure or experience, ignorance and illiteracy. However, Eruikar (2015), pointed out, that poverty is recognized as a major deciding factor for early marriage of girls especially in poorer households. Where girls are seen as an additional burden and complexity on family resources, they tend to be married off earlier as a means of survival for the family. Grinder (2017) observed that the majority of people involved in early marriage are rural dwellers. In his words, he stated that “early marriage is more predominant among rural dwellers”. The researcher noted that those who involve in early marriage in Ohaukwu Local Government of Ebonyi state are mainly the interior rural dwellers. This could be as a result of lack of exposure and experience (ignorance). More so, the cultural background of the parents can also contribute to early marriage. Okoro (2014) asserted that, “culturally speaking, no African man finds joy in educating his daughters especially where he sees them as passersby”. This implies that, though there are several disadvantages of early marriage, the practice continues due to the difficulty in convincing people within a community, of its negative effects.

Thus, it becomes pertinent to determine the adolescents’ attitude towards Early Marriage in Ohaukwu Local Government Area, Ebonyi State, Nigeria considering that recently, early marriage is at its peak in Ohaukwu Local Government Area, Ebonyi State. This could be traced

to lack of interest in pursuit of education and serious focus on marriage and its related fantasies. Ohaukwu Local Government Area, comprises of ten (10) towns. The people of the State are known to be hospitable and hard-working. The area is highly populated by Civil Servants, Traders and peasant farmers. The choice of Ohaukwu L.G.A. as the area of study was due to high level of commitment of the people to Education.

It is on the basis of the above assertion therefore, that the researchers geared towards this study. The main purpose of the study is to identify the attitude of adolescents towards early marriage in Ohaukwu L.G.A particularly, the study determined the following: Attitude of adolescents towards early marriage, secondly, attitude of female adolescents towards early marriage lastly, attitude of male adolescents towards early marriage. The following formed the research questions; what are the attitudes of adolescents towards early marriage? What are the attitudes of female adolescents towards early marriage? What are the attitudes of male adolescents towards early marriage?

Method

This chapter portrays the laid down procedures adopted in carrying out the study. The design for this study is a descriptive survey. A survey research therefore could be referred to as a method for collecting information or data as reported by individuals. It is the type of research in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group (Akuezuilo and Agu, 2007). The population comprised of eleven thousand seven hundred (11,700) students. The population was made up of thirty seven 37 public Secondary Schools (boys and girls) in Ohaukwu local Government Area (Statistics Division, State Education Zonal Office Abakaliki, 2019). The sample of the study comprised of three hundred and twenty (320) respondents. Simple random sampling was used to identify eight coeducational schools from the total of thirty seven schools. Thus, disproportionate stratified random sampling techniques were employed to identify forty (40) students each from the eight schools. The instrument used for data collection was a research questionnaire structured on Adolescents Attitude towards Early Marriage. The questionnaire has three sections A, B and C. To ascertain both face and content validity of the instrument, two experts from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, validated the instrument. They were given the title, purpose of the study and research questions for Face and content validity. Their criticisms and corrections helped in the modification of the items. The research questions were analyzed and interpreted using statistical weighted mean (\bar{X}). Any item having a mean score of 2.5 and above was regarded as an expression of positive attitude by the respondents. While below 2.5 was regarded as a negative attitude of adolescents towards early marriage.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the Attitudes of Adolescents towards Early Marriage?

Table 1: Respondent's mean ratings on their Attitudes towards Early Marriage

SN	ITEMS	MEAN	REMARK
1.	I want to marry early because my peers have all gotten married.	2.21	Disagreed
2.	There is nothing wrong if one marries early in life	3.13	Agreed
3.	I want to get married early because it is my parents' wish	2.91	Agreed
4.	I admire my fellow students who are married.	3.44	Agreed
5.	Early marriage generates a lot of problem from the couples	2.95	Agreed
6.	I love early marriage because it will ensure the proper training of the children	1.90	Disagreed
7.	One is more respected when married early in life than one who marries late	2.96	Agreed
8.	I am scared of getting married early because it may disturb my academic pursuit	2.65	Agreed
9.	I love early marriage because it enables me to enjoy in law relationship		
10.	for a longer time.	2.23	Agreed
11.	It is believed that early marriage predisposes one to the opportunity of living an urban life.	2.41	Disagreed
12.	I believe that adolescents who marry early do not know the hazards of marriage.	3.26	Agreed
13.	Early marriage may expose the girl to virginal discharge.	2.88	Agreed
14.	I do not feel comfortable seeing fellow adolescents being pregnant or carrying babies.	2.75	Agreed
15.	Those who married earlier in life usually dropout of school.	3.20	Agreed
16.	I want to get married early so as to get out of my parent's house and control.	3.11	Agreed
17.	I wish to marry while still in secondary school	1.56	Disagreed
18.	Early marriage does not allow for proper education on genotype issues	3.55	Agreed
19.	Early marriage hinders men from attending their educational goals and aspirations in life	2.58	Agreed
20.	I feel early marriage brings about economic emancipation	2.04	Disagreed
21.	I hate early marriage because; it is being sponsored and supported by parents.	2.81	Agreed
GRAND MEAN		2.75	AGREED

Data in Table 1 shows that, out of the twenty (20) list items on Attitude of Adolescents towards Early Marriage, respondents rated Agreed on fourteen (14) items, while they disagreed on the remaining six (6) items. The grand mean score of 2.75 falls within the Agreed category. Therefore, it indicates that adolescents in the Area of the Study (Ohaukwu L. G. A of Ebonyi State) have positive Attitude towards Early Marriage.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

What are the Attitude of Female Adolescents towards Early Marriage?

Table 2: Respondent's mean ratings on the Attitude towards Early Marriage

(N=203)

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	REMARK
1	I want to marry early because my peers have all gotten married.	2.16	Disagreed
2	There is nothing wrong if one marries early in life	2.68	Agreed
3	I want to get married early because it is my parents' wish.	2.25	Disagreed
4	I admire my fellow students who are married.	1.87	Disagreed
5	Early marriage generates a lot of problem from the couples	3.28	Agreed
6	I love early marriage because it will ensure the proper training of the children	1.88	Disagreed
7	One is more respected when married early in life than one who marries late.	2.37	Disagreed
8	I am scared of getting married early because it may disturb my academic pursuit	3.41	Agreed
9	I love early marriage because it will enable me to enjoy in-law relationship for a longer time.	1.80	Disagreed
10	It is believed that early marriage predisposes one to the opportunity of living an urban life.	2.10	Disagreed
11	I believe that secondary School students who marry early do not know the hazards of marriage.	3.08	Agreed
12	Early marriage may expose the girl to virginal discharge.	3.29	Agreed
13	I do not feel comfortable seeing fellow students being pregnant or carrying babies.	2.94	Agreed
14	Those who married earlier in life usually dropout of school.	3.35	Agreed
15	I want to get married early so as to get out of my parent's house and control.	2.15	Disagreed
16	I wish to marry while still in secondary school	1.57	Disagreed
17	Early marriage does not allow for proper education on genotype issues	3.14	Agreed
18	Early marriage hinders men from attending their educational goals and aspirations in life	3.13	Agreed
19	I feel early marriage brings about economic emancipation	1.88	Disagreed
20	I hate early marriage because it is being sponsored and supported by parents.	1.96	Disagreed
GRAND MEAN		2.51	AGREED

Data in Table two(2) reveals that ,out of the twenty (20) items listed on Attitude of Female Secondary School Students towards Early Marriage, nine (9) agreed; while the remaining eleven (11) disagreed.

The grand mean score of **2.51** which falls within the agreed category, indicating that Female adolescents in the Area of the Study (Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State) have positive Attitude towards Early Marriage. RESEARCH QUESTION 3

What are the Attitudes of Male Adolescents towards Early Marriage?

Table 3: Respondent's mean ratings on their Attitude towards Early Marriage (N=107)

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	REMARK
1.	I want to marry early because my peers have all gotten married.	2.21	Disagreed
2	There is nothing wrong if one marries early in life	1.72	Disagreed
3.	I want to get married early because it is my parents' wish.	1.75	Disagreed
4.	I admire my fellow students who are married.	2.21	Disagreed
5.	Early marriage generates a lot of problem from the couples	3.24	Agreed
6.	I love early marriage because it will ensure the Proper training of the children	1.95	Disagreed
7.	One is more respected when married early in life than one who marries late.	2.21	Disagreed
8.	I am scared of getting married early because it may disturb my academic pursuit	3.60	Agreed
9.	I love early marriage because it will enable me to enjoy in-law relationship for a longer time.	1.94	Disagreed
10.	It is believed that early marriage predisposes one to the opportunity of living an urban life.	2.00	Disagreed
11.	I believe that secondary School students who marry early do not know the hazards of marriage.	1.94	Disagreed
12.	Early marriage may expose the girl to virginal discharge.	2.41	Disagreed
13.	I do not feel comfortable seeing fellow students being pregnant or carrying babies.	3.61	Agreed
14.	Those who married earlier in life usually dropout of school.	3.18	Agreed
15.	I want to get married early so as to get out of my parent's house and control.	2.16	Disagreed
16.	I wish to marry while still in secondary school	1.57	Disagreed
17.	Early marriage does not allow for proper education on genotype issues	3.23	Agreed
18.	Early marriage hinders men from attending their educational goals and aspirations in life	3.32	Agreed
19.	I feel early marriage brings about economic emancipation	1.76	Disagreed
20	I hate early marriage because; it is being sponsored and supported by parents.	3.21	Agreed
GRAND MEAN		2.46	Disagreed

Data in Table 3 shows that respondents rated items 5, 8, 13, 14, 17, 18 and 20 Agree, while the remaining thirteen (13) items were rated disagreed. The grand mean score of **2.46** falls within the disagreed category (below **2.50**) Thus, indicating that Male Secondary School Students in the Area of the Study (Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State) have negative Attitude towards Early Marriage.

Discussion

The findings of this Study were discussed based on the issues relevant to the Research Questions that guided the study. On the response to the Research Questions one, It is revealed that respondents have positive Attitude towards Early Marriage. They were of the view that Early Marriage be encouraged and practiced in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. This was shown on the grand mean of 2.75 which falls within the agreed category. This is in line with Wilkins (2014) study, which posits that a substantial number of young population are beginning family life at an early stage.

Also, Okeke (2016), in his Study on the effect of Early Marriage noted that school dropouts and poor performances are among the effects of Early Marriage. He observed that most of the married boys and girls do not do well in school because of their divided interest. This is in support of Dike (2016) who opined that many Students of Secondary Schools perform poorly academically. For instance, about half of those that registered for West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) in 2015, performed below average. This could be traced to lack of interest in pursuit of education and serious focus on marriage and its related fantasies. Thus, the conflicting situations of Early Marriage among Secondary School Students are becoming alarming that the education of people who fall within this range/category are being jeopardized.

The response to Research Question two indicated that the respondents agreed that Early Marriage is good and should be encouraged. This Study is in line with what Bernard (2014), in his Study stated that " some young girls enter into Early Marriage without understanding the full implications (hazards) of the married life, and as things begin to unfold, the sweet turns sour and the desired joy turns into mirage. Also, children who are involved in an Early Marriage, do so by Parents decision and not of their own volition (Otoo-Oyoretey and pobi, 2014). The response to Research Question three indicated that the respondents have negative Attitude towards Early Marriage. They were of the opinion that Early Marriage is bad and should be discouraged and eliminated in total. This is in line with the findings of Anaebonam (2015) who stated that marriage carries a lot of commitments such that only those with a sense of purpose, with old heads on their shoulders can go through it without faltering so much along the thorny pathways. Moreover, the 2015 National Policy on population discouraged Early Marriage and Stated that Parents should train their children up to marriageable age, and should stop arranging Early Marriage for girls below the age of eighteen (18) years.

Conclusion

The study aimed at finding out the Attitude of adolescents towards Early Marriage in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. The findings of the study showed female adolescents have positive attitude towards Early Marriage while male adolescents have negative Attitude towards Early Marriage.

Implications

Adolescents have positive as well as negative Attitude towards Early Marriage. Gender was found to be a factor in the identification of the Attitude of adolescents towards Early Marriage. In which Male adolescents had negative Attitude towards Early Marriage while Female adolescents had positive Attitude towards Early Marriage. This is a dangerous situation, as the Female adolescents stand the risk of dropping out of school in order to marry on time. This implies that, there is need for Marriage Counsellors to educate our adolescents, parents and guardians on the implications of Early Marriage.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Marriage Counselling should be provided, creating awareness on the dangers of Early Marriage through television, posters, handbills, radio among others.
2. Parents should be educated through the abolition of some cultural laws that encourage or force a child into an Early Marriage.
3. Teachers should organize workshops, seminars or conference where the adolescents can be enlightened on the relevance of entering into marriage maturely, as it comes with a lot of responsibilities which a child might not handle.
4. Guidance Counsellors posted in schools should make their impact to be felt; especially in the provision of educational, vocational and personal social services to students,
5. Government should enact law against Early Marriage; by stopping Parents from giving out their children (male and female) in marriage while they are still below the age of twenty (20) years.

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