Article title: The Prevalence and Predictors of Early Girl Child Marriage in the Nabdam district of the Upper East Region Ghana: predictors of early girl child marriage

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<RH> Mohammed and Nyaaduye.: Prevalence and predictors of child marriage

The Prevalence and Predictors of Early Girl Child Marriage in the Nabdam of the Upper East Region Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Background: Child marriage remains a challenge in Ghana. Over the years, government and development partners have made various commitments and efforts to curb the phenomenon of child marriage. However, there is little empirical evidence on the predictors, norms and

practices surrounding the practice to support their efforts, a gap this study sought to fill.

Methods: The study adopted an explanatory research design and quantitative research approach in which simple random and convenient sampling technique were used to select ninety-three respondents from Kongo-Pitanga of Nabdam district. The study used structured questionnaires as a tool for data collection. **Findings:** From the qualitative data, the study identified poverty, teenage pregnancy, and cultural norms such as, exchange of girls for marriage and pressure from significant others as the drivers of child marriage. **Conclusion:** The findings show that various socio-economic and cultural factors such as education, teenage pregnancy, and poverty influence child marriage. Hence, efforts to curb child marriage should be geared towards retention of girls in school, curbing teenage pregnancy, empowering girls economically, enforcing laws on child marriage in Ghana, as well as designing tailored advocacy programs to educate key stakeholders and adolescent girls on the consequences of child marriage. Additionally, there is the need to address socio-cultural norms/practices to help end child marriage.

Key words: Child marriage, Culture, Marriage, Poverty, Ghana.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter has the background of the study which explains or gives the general ideas of what the study seeks to find, the problem statement, which indicates the need for the study or why the study should be carried out and the general and specific objectives including research questions which serve as road map to completing the study. It also includes the significance of the study which shows how important or essential the study can be to the development of the nation. This chapter also contains the scope of study which indicates the threshold or the limitation of the study. It also includes the population of the study and the communities of study.

Background of the study

A girl who marries before the legal age of 18 years is considered as early girl child marriage. Marriage before the age of 18 is a fundamental violation of human rights. Many factors interact to place a child at risk of marriage, including poverty, the perception that marriage will provide ‘protection’, family honor, social norms, customary or religious laws that condone the practice, an inadequate legislative framework, and the state of a country’s civil registration system.

While the practice is more common among girls than boys, it is a violation of rights regardless of sex. Child marriage often compromises a girl’s development by resulting in early pregnancy and social isolation, interrupting her schooling, limiting her opportunities for career and

vocational advancement, and placing her at increased risk of domestic violence. Although the impact on child grooms has not been extensively studied, marriage may similarly place boys in an adult role for which they are unprepared and may place economic pressures on them and curtail their opportunities for further education or career advancement (UNICEF global databases, (DHS, MICS) 2007-2019).¹ Sexual reproductive health, including the demographic, economic, and socio-cultural implications.

The World Health Organization defines adolescents as those in the second-decade life aged 10-19 years. This age band is further broken down into early adolescence (10-14 years), middle adolescence (15-17 years) and late adolescence (18-19 years). Individuals aged 10-24 years are referred to as young people. Child Marriage affects adolescents in this age category.

In some countries, girls as young as 7 or 8 are forced by their families to much older men.

The reasons girls are married are diverse, and parents sometimes believe that through marriage, they are protecting their daughters and increasing their economic opportunities, However, child marriage exposes girls to increased health problems and violence, denies them access to social networks and support systems, and perpetuates a cycle of poverty and gender inequality” (de Groot, R. et al, 2018)².

According to the UN, 37,000 girls under the age of 18 married each day. 1 in 3 girls in developing world are married before 18; 1 in 9 are married before the age of 15. Globally, almost 140 million women now age 20-49 were married before the age of 18 (New York: UNICEF; 2014)³.

650 million girls and women alive today were married before their 18th birthday. 12 million girls are affected every year, with an additional 10 million predicted to be at risk before the end of the decade because of COVID-19. These significant numbers of girls and women affected by child marriage globally will be very familiar to many working within, and supporting, the movement to end this harmful practice. They may be new for those working in the broader development sector, but however familiar you are, you will know there is a long road ahead of us before we achieve gender equality (GNB, 2021)⁴.

While the prevalence of child marriage might have seen some form of decreased worldwide from one in four girls married a decade ago to approximately one in five today, the practice remains widespread. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 100 million girls were

expected to marry before their eighteenth birthday in the next decade. Now, up to 10 million more girls will be at risk of becoming child brides because of the pandemic (UNICEF, 2021)⁵. Across the globe, levels of child marriage are highest in West and Central Africa, where nearly 4 in 10 young women were married before age 18. Lower levels of child marriage are found in Eastern and Southern Africa (31 per cent), South Asia (28 per cent), Latin America and Caribbean (22 per cent), and the Middle East and North Africa (15 per cent), all the Africa countries put together gives us a baffling percentage (UNICEF, 2021)⁶.

According to *Educating Girls and Ending Child Marriage: A Priority for Africa* report, more than three million (or one third of) girls in Sub-Saharan Africa marry before their 18th birthday each year. Today, the region has the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world. Child brides are much more likely to drop out of school and complete fewer years of education than their peers who marry later. They are also more likely to have children at a young age, which affects their health as well as the education and health of their children (BoG, 2018)⁷.

Ghana is ranked 61 in the world on Child Marriage as 5 percent of girls are married by age 15 and 21 per cent by age 18. One in four women in Ghana married before the age of 18, representing 27 per cent of the population (Raj, A., Saggurti, N., Balaiah, D., & Silverman, J. G. (2009)⁸. According to Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2011 the menace is high in Upper East, Western, and Upper West Regions, however, for girls living in the three Northern Regions of Ghana (Northern Region, Upper East, and Upper West regions), this number increases to 1 out of 3 girls (34%). Marriage before age 15 does occur, although it is rarer for girls in Ghana (national prevalence 5%), upper East region has reported high early girl child marriages for so many years, highest been 39.2% and 36.1%. The high numbers of teenage pregnancies have been linked to early girl child marriage. The Nabdam District has recorded high teenage pregnancies for the region over the years with latest been 22.9% (Anarwat, S.G., Salifu, M. & Akuriba, M.A.)⁹.

METHODOLOGY

The chapter entails, the type of study, the research setting, the target population, the sample size, and sampling method as well as data collection method. It also describes steps taking to ensure ethical considerations, limitation, and delimitation of the study.

Study Design

Designing a good research strategy played a significant role in the process. A design that integrated the two major elements of research. The research was not limited to one characteristic of a method that may result to unsatisfied conclusion. A quantitative descriptive study design was conducted with detailed open and close ended questionnaires. This wide range of selection offered the researchers a good perspective of the population as well as providing good data that was presented descriptively.

Study Area

The research was carried out in Nabdam District which has 5 sub-districts, the population for 2021 is 42,632. The district is in the Upper East Region, Bolgatanga. The Nabdam District Assembly is bordered to the north, south and east by the Bongo, Talensi and Bawku west Districts respectively, and to the west by the Bolgatanga municipality. The Nabdam District Assembly occupies a land area of 353 km². Its climate is tropical with two distinct seasons, namely wet season (May - October) and a dry season (November – April).

Study Site

The study was conducted in Kongo-Pitanga sub-district in Nabdam district of the upper East Region of Ghana.

Study Population

The study was conducted among girls who got married before eighteen years, and girls who are above eighteen years but entered marriage before eighteen years in the Nabdam District of the Upper East Region.

Sampling Technique

The sampling method used was the simple random sampling technique which is a probability sampling method. All members of the study population of interest were selected from a sample frame through a completely random procedure. The sub-district was selected out of 5 sub-districts through the following procedure: names of the 5 sub-districts were written on pieces of paper and one of the researchers was asked to pick randomly. The researcher went ahead and picked the name of the sub-district (Kongo-Pitanga).

Sample Size Determination

A sample is a set of individuals selected from a population which is usually of similar characteristics to the entire population and is intended to represent the population in a research study Zikmund, W. G. (2003)¹⁰. In this study however, a sample of 100 females within the ages of 14 to 24 years who is married or have ever been married has been selected from the population and to use for the study.

Instrument of Data Collection

The main tool that was used to gather data was questionnaire. This tool of data collection was employed because it was less expensive, time saving, and its objective nature of information gathered as it was devoid of interviewer bias. The questionnaires were made up of 26 questions, which comprise both close-ended questions and open-ended questions.

The questionnaire consisted of four (4) sections A, B, C and D.

Data Collection Procedure

Respondents were contacted at their various communities. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents prior to administering the questionnaire as well as assurance of confidentiality. Respondents were told that, participation was voluntary and so they could opt out of the study at any time or moment of the study. They were also told that there was no need for personal identification. Data collection was done by group members themselves in a period of two (2) weeks.

Ethical Consideration

The purpose of ethical considerations in research is to address the rights of research participants, their protection from harm, privacy, and confidentiality as well as their dignity. To observe the above. Permission was sought from the stakeholders of the community where the study took place. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and confidentiality ensured. Respondents were told that participation was voluntary and that at any point of the study, they could opt out or continue in the study if deemed necessary. The respondents were also told that there was no need for personal identification.

Limitation

Financial constrains also impeded the study. Inadequate money was one of the factors that limited the sample size to hundred (100) participants. Some traditional practices did not allow to some extent ask about certain things.

Delimitation

This study was restricted to look at the prevalence and predictors of early girl child marriage.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software version 26. The results were presented in the form of frequency distribution table and charts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents results of the analysis and further discuss the results in detail. Data obtained from the questionnaire used in the study has been analyzed and presented in tables and graph form. These were performed to give clear and more detailed understanding of the study results.

Results

This presents the results of the analysis under study using tables and graphs and further discusses the results.

Demographic characteristics

This section gives the background description of the respondent. it is made of the age group, sex or gender of the respondent, educational level, marital status, occupation, employment status, age at first marriage, age at second marriage and marriage duration to the frequency and percentage of the frequency.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents.

Variables	<i>Frequency (n=93)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Age Group</i>		
<i>12-14yrs</i>	1	1.1
<i>15-18yrs</i>	23	24.7
<i>19-20yrs</i>	38	40.9
<i>21-24ys</i>	31	33.3
<i>Sex</i>		
<i>female</i>	93	100
<i>Educational Level</i>		
<i>Prim/JHS</i>	49	52.7
<i>SHS</i>	23	24.7
<i>Tertiary</i>	2	2.2
<i>No School</i>	19	20.4
<i>Marital Status</i>		

<i>Married</i>	75	80.6
<i>Divorced</i>	15	16.1
<i>widowed</i>	3	3.2
<i>Age at first Marriage</i>		
<i>12-14yrs</i>	5	5.4
<i>15-16yrs</i>	68	73.1
<i>17-18yrs</i>	20	21.5

Source: Field Data, 2021.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The original sample for the study were 100 participants, but during the course of the study seven (7) participants did not turn up with personal and family issues as excuse for not participating in the study.

The results from Table 4.1 indicates the following

A total number of ninety-three (93) females within the ages of 14 to 24 years. Out of the 93 participants, 1(1.1%) were between the ages of 12-14 years. Of the 93 participants 23(24.7%) were within the ages of 15-18years. 38(40.9%) of the participants were within the ages of 19-20years. Of the study participants 31(33.3%) were within the ages of 21-24years.

The gender or sex of the study participants were strictly females and therefore the number of females counts to be 93(100%) of the participants.

The participants of the study were asked about their educational level and the response was mind blowing and surprising. More than half of the participants were said to either have completed Primary (Basic) School or Junior High School which equates 49(52.7%). Out of the total participants 23(24.7%) had completed Senior High School. The number of participants who were able to make it to the tertiary level of education were 2(2.2%) of the participants. The number of respondents who had no schooling experience were 19(20.4%).

The researcher asked about the marital status of the respondents which was categorized in to three married, divorced, and widowed. Out of the 93 respondents 75 were married representing 80.7%, those divorced as at the time of the interview were 15(16.1%) and those widowed were 3(3.2%).

We set out to find out the age of the respondents at the first time they got married. Of the 93 respondents 5(5.4%) got married within ages of 12-14, 68(73.1%) were those that got married within the ages of 15-16years and the reminder of the 93 respondents that is 20(21.5%) got married within the ages of 17-18years.

Figure 4.1: Knowledge of Girl Child on Early Marriage Existence

Source: Field Data, 2021.

Knowledge of Girl Child on Early Marriage Existence

This subsection presents and discusses the result of respondent knowledge of the girl child on the existence of early child marriage.

The results from Figure 4.1 indicates the following

To begin with, the respondents were asked three questions to ascertain their knowledge of early marriage. Of the total respondents 69(74.2%) answered “Yes” to the question *Does early girl child marriage exist?* The rest of the respondents that is 24(25.8%) answered “No” to the question *Does early girl child marriage exist?*

In addition, 78(83.9%) of the respondents answered “Yes” to the question *Do you consider yourself as marrying early?* And 15(16.1%) answered “No” to the question *Do you consider yourself as marrying early?*

Finally, the respondents were asked the question, *do you know anyone who got married early?* And 56(60.2%) answered “Yes” and 37(39.8%) answering to “No”.

It can therefore be concluded that, the mere fact that teenagers see their age mates involve in marriage encourages them to also involve the early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district of the Upper East region of Ghana.

Table 4.2: Socio-Economic Status Scale.

	<i>Frequency (n=93)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Father/guardian education background?</i>		
<i>Prim/JHS</i>	30	32.3
<i>SHS</i>	27	29.0
<i>Tertiary</i>	6	6.5
<i>No School</i>	30	32.3
<i>Father/guardian employment status?</i>		
<i>Employed</i>	13	14.0
<i>unemployed</i>	80	86.0
<i>Mother's educational background?</i>		
<i>Prim/JHS</i>	4	4.3
<i>SHS</i>	0	0.0
<i>Tertiary</i>	0	0.0
<i>No School</i>	89	95.7
<i>Mother's employment status?</i>		
<i>Employed</i>	19	20.4
<i>Unemployed</i>	73	78.5

<i>Family type?</i>	<i>Frequency (n=93)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Nuclear</i>	28	30.1
<i>Extended</i>	57	61.3
<i>Single Parent</i>	2	2.2
<i>Separated</i>	6	6.5
<i>Family size?</i>		
<i>1-4</i>	44	47.3
<i>5-8</i>	32	34.4
<i>8 Plus</i>	17	18.3

Source: Field Data, 2021.

Economic Status of the Girls Families

The family of the respondents were assessed based on the four key areas that is mother and father/guardian educational level, employment status, family size and family type.

The results from Table 4.2 indicates the following

To begin with, 30(32.3%) of the fathers’/guardians had attended or completed primary or junior high school, 27(29.0%) of the fathers’/guardians had completed or attended senior high school, 6(6.5%) of the fathers’/guardians had completed tertiary level of education, and 30(32.3%) of the fathers’/guardians had no schooling experience. Of the 93 respondents, 13(14.0%) fathers’/guardians had employment and 80(86.0%) fathers’/guardians had no employment.

Furthermore, the individual mother’s educational background sums up to 4(4.0%) for primary of junior high school, 0(0.0%) mothers attended senior high school, 0(0.0%) mothers had attained tertiary level education, the 89(85.7%) had no schooling experience. The employment status of the respondents’ mothers was 19(20.4%) for those employed and 73(78.5%) unemployed.

In addition, the respondents were asked of the type of family type, 28(30.1%) was from nuclear family, 57(61.3%) were born into extended families, 2(2.2%) said their parents were single parents, and 6(6.5%) had their parents separated.

Finally, the research team asked the respondents about the family size, 44(47.3%) of the respondents had their family size within one to four people forming the family, 32(34.4%) families composed of five to eight people, and 17(18.3%) had their family more eight and above.

It can therefore be concluded that, the girl child illiteracy rate and those that completed Primary/JHS are those that involve the early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district of the Upper East region of Ghana.

Table 4.3: Effects of Early Marriage on the girl child.

	<i>Frequency (n=93)</i>	<i>Percentage (100%)</i>
<i>Are you able to further your education after marriage?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	5	5.4
<i>No</i>	88	94.6
<i>Have you had the opportunity to start a business with the help from your partner?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	32	34.4
<i>No</i>	61	65.6
<i>Have you started learning a trade or hand work courtesy, your partner?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	59	63.4
<i>No</i>	34	36.6
<i>Have you had any health issues after your marriage?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	30	32.3
<i>No</i>	63	67.7

Source: Field Data, 2021.

Effects of Early Marriage on the girl child

The research team set out to determine the issues that promote early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district.

The results from Table 4.3 indicates the following.

Firstly, the respondents were asked “*Are you able to further your education after marriage?*” and 5(5.4%) answered “*Yes*” while 88(94.6%) said “*No*” they could not continue their educational career.

Secondly, the respondents were asked whether they were given the opportunity to start their own business with help from the partner, 32(43.4%) answered “*Yes*” to the question and 63(67.7%) said they were not privileged to start a business.

Thirdly, the question, “*Have you started learning a trade or hand work courtesy, your partner?*” was asked, of the 93 respondents, 59(63.4%) said their husbands has help them to start a trade or hand work, and 34(36.6%) answered that their husbands had not help them into a trade or handwork.

Lastly, the question, “*Have you had any health issues after your marriage?*” was asked and 30(32.3%) answered “*Yes*”, and 63(67.7%) answered “*No*” to the question.

It can therefore be concluded that, the effects of marriage have not actually been expressed in detail to the girl child to make good decision, the fact that some girl children are permitted to continue their education does not make it good, but we still think the girl child been allowed to further their education promote the early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district of the Upper East region of Ghana.

Table 4.4: Exposure Social-Media.

	<i>Frequency (n=93)</i>	<i>Percentage (100%)</i>
<i>Do you own a smart phone?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	61	65.6
<i>No</i>	32	34.4
<i>How did you acquire the smart phone?</i>		
<i>Parent</i>	15	16.1
<i>Family member</i>	14	15.1
<i>Boyfriend</i>	29	31.2
<i>‘Kayayei’</i>	31	33.3

<i>Other Source</i>	4	4.3
<i>Do you have access to internet connectivity?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	77	82.8
<i>No</i>	16	17.2
<i>Does your family own a television with satellite dish?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	54	58.1
<i>No</i>	39	41.9

Source: Field Data, 2021.

Exposure to Social-Media

The researcher set out to find out whether social media has a role to play in promoting the early getting married of teenagers in the Nabdam district.

The results from Table 4.4 indicates the following

Firstly, the respondents were asked about ownership of a smart phone, those that said they had a smart phone were 61(65.6%) and the 32(34.4%) did not own a smart phone.

In addition, the respondents were asked on how the smart phone was acquired, those that answered that parents bought for them were 15(16.1%), 14(15.1%) answered that family member bought form them, 29(31.2%) of the respondents said their boyfriends acquired the smart phone for them, 31(33.3%) said they acquired the smart phone after engaging in ‘Kayayei’ at Kumasi or Accra, and the 4(4.3%) said they had the phones from other sources from friends and acquaintances.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked of about their access to internet connectivity and 77(82.8%) answered the affirmative and the 16(17.2%) answered “No” to the question of internet connectivity.

Finally, the respondents were asked if their family had or own a television with satellite.

It can therefore be concluded that, the unmonitored use of smart phones, watching of telenovela has encouraged and promoted the early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district of the Upper East region of Ghana.

Table 4.5: Benefits of early girl child marriage.

	<i>Frequency (n=93)</i>	<i>Percentage (100%)</i>
<i>Comparing with the time you were not married and now, has there being any financial increment for your family?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	56	60.2
<i>No</i>	37	39.8
<i>Comparing with the time you were not married and now has your marriage help your family gain social status?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	50	53.8
<i>No</i>	43	46.2
<i>Has your marriage enriched you financial?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	52	55.9
<i>No</i>	41	44.1
<i>Has your marriage help you gain social status?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	67	72.0
<i>No</i>	26	28.0

Source: Field Data, 2021.

Benefits of Early Girl Child Marriage

The respondents were assessed on the benefits that she the girl child gets and that of the family. The results from Table 4.5 indicates the following.

To begin with, the respondents were asked a “Yes or “No” questions to ascertain whether the suppose term benefit is leading the girl child to marry early. The question “*comparing with the time you were not married and now, has there being any financial increment for your family?*” was asked, 56(60.2%) answered *Yes* to the above question and 37(39.8%) answered *No* to the above question.

In addition, 50(53.8%) said comparing with the time they were not married and now, my family has gain social status and recognition while 43(46.2%) said there has not being any major improvement.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked if after marriage there she has attain financial freedom. 52(55.9%) answered they have gained financial freedom while the 41(44.1%) answered the that, they have not gotten any financial aid.

Finally, the researchers sort to find out if respondents were help them to gain social status. Of the 93 respondents, 67(72.0) said yes, they are now respected due to their social status, while 26(28.0%) said they had not gained social status after getting marriage.

It can therefore be concluded that, the benefits that come with marriage in the form of money, status and social standing has promoted the early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district of the Upper East region of Ghana.

Table 4.6: Law Regarding Girl Early Girl Child Marriage.

	<i>Frequency (n=93)</i>	<i>Percentage (100%)</i>
<i>Do you know the right age for marriage by Ghana law?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	31	33.3
<i>No</i>	62	66.7
<i>Do you know is a crime to marry before the age stipulated by law?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	19	20.4
<i>No</i>	74	79.6
<i>Do you know that if you are forced into marriage you can report to the appropriate authorities for sanctions again who master minded that act of marriage?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	30	32.3
<i>No</i>	63	67.7

Source: Field Data, 2021.

Law Regarding Girl Early Girl Child Marriage

Looking at the laws in Ghana that does not allow for early girl child marriage. The researchers sort understands the respondents view on some aspect of the law.

The results from Table 4.6 indicates the following.

Firstly, the respondents were asked, “*do you know the right age for marriage in Ghana by law?*”. Of the 93 respondents 31(33.3%) answered that they had heard of a law that stipulate the right age for marriage in Ghana while the 62(66.7%) did not have any idea about the law of the right age for marriage.

Secondly, the respondents were further question to assess whether they had knowledge of the law saying, “*Is a crime to marry before the right age*”. Of the 93 respondents, 19(20.4%) answered that they had knowledge of the law, and 74(79.6) respondents did not know that it is a crime to get married before the age stipulated by law.

Finally, the question “*Do you know that if you are forced into marriage you can report to the appropriate authorities for sanctions against who master minded that act of marriage*” was asked, 30(32.3%) of the respondents answered “*Yes*” while the 63(67.7%) answered “*No*” to the above question.

It can therefore be concluded that, girl child ignorance of the laws governing marriage in Ghana has promoted the early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district of the Upper East region of Ghana.

Table 4.7: Measure of the circumstance of marriage.

	<i>Frequency (n=93)</i>	<i>Percentage (100%)</i>
<i>Were you forced into the marriage?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	12	12.9
<i>No</i>	81	87.1
<i>Were you pregnant before marriage?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	76	81.7
<i>No</i>	17	18.3
<i>Did you immediately become pregnant after marriage?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	52	55.9
<i>No</i>	41	44.1

Source: Field Data, 2021.

Measure of the Circumstance of Marriage

The research team sort to further assess the factors that might lead to the increase in the prevalence of the early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district of the Upper East of Ghana by asking the following questions.

To begin with the respondents were asked if they were forced into the marriage. The results from Table 4.7 indicate that, of the 93 respondents, 12(12.9%) respondents said they were force into the marriage, 81(87.1%) answered that they got into the marriage voluntarily.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked if they were pregnant before the marriage. Of the 93 respondents, 76(81.7%) answered that they were pregnant before getting into the marriage, and 17(18.3%) answered that they were not pregnant before getting into the marriage.

Lastly, the respondents were asked the question “*Did you immediately become pregnant after marriage*”. 52(55.9%) answered “*Yes*” to the question while the 41(44.1%) answered that they did not become pregnant immediately after marriage.

It can therefore be concluded that, teenage pregnancy is the driving force of the early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district of the Upper East region of Ghana.

DISCUSSION

An explanatory study was carried out in the Nabdam district of Upper East Ghana to explain the promoters and predictors of early girl child marriage. The study involved data collection among women with the ages of 12-24 years. This subsection then presents the discussion of the result by supporting with empirical studies within the country and outside world.

Prevalence of early child marriage in the Nabdam district

The first objective sought to find out the prevalence of early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district. The researcher found that, the prevalence of girl child marriage exists in the Nabdam district evidenced by the respondents pinpointing the number girls who were involved in early marriage.

Our finding is in line with the researcher conducted (MICS 2011)¹¹, for girls living in the three Northern Regions of Ghana (Northern Region, Upper East, and Upper West regions), this number increases to 1 out of 3 girls (34%). Marriage before age 15 does occur, although it is rarer for girls in Ghana (national prevalence 5%). The upper East region has reported high early girl child marriages for so many years, highest been 39.2% and 36.1%. The high numbers of teenage pregnancies have been linked to early girl child marriage. The Nabdam District has recorded high teenage pregnancies for the region over the years with latest been 22.9%.

Factors that promote early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district

The second objective sought to find out the factors that promote early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district. The researcher found that, various socio-economic and cultural factors such as education, teenage pregnancy, poverty, and the exchange of girls for marriage influence child marriage.

Our finding is in line with the research conducted by (UNICEF, 2014)¹², show that, all regions, girls who live in rural areas were more likely to become child brides than their urban mates. This difference is especially striking in some countries in West and Central Africa and in Latin American and the Caribbean, where the prevalence of child marriage in rural areas is about twice the level found in urban areas.

The perception of teenagers on girl child marriage

Our finding is in line with the research conducted by (Mangeli M. *et al.* 2017)¹³ some adolescents got into marriage because of Feeling of loneliness and desires, love, respect, and independence had encouraged some adolescents to be married. Adolescents wanted independence and freedom in decision making and expected to be addressed as an influential person. They were tired of parental interferences and were married for love, soulmate, and value acquirement. Others express their need to marry and leave family for husband home because they had old parents who had not been able to be friendly with their children, had encouraged adolescent girls to get pregnant and close the age gap between themselves and their children.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents summary of the study, conclusions drawn from the study, and recommendations based on the results obtained for each of the objectives.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the predictors and promoters of early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district of the Upper East region of Ghana. The objectives of the study were to: the prevalence of early girl child marriage, factors that promote early girl child marriage and finally, the perception of teenagers on girl child marriage.

The study employed quantitative research approach and exploratory research design. The study used a sample of 93 females who were within the ages of 14-24 years. The study adopted simple random and convenient sampling technique in selecting the participants from various communities. Questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument. Bar graph and frequency

table were used to obtain the result for objective one, two and three respectively.

Summary of Key Findings

In relation to the first objective, which is to assess the prevalence of early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district. It was revealed that, most of the girl children that are involved in early marriage have been with or have seen someone or other age mates in marriage that encouraged them to also get married. Again, some of the respondents did not consider themselves to be involved in early marriage therefore making the prevalence difficult for them to understand. To conclude, some of the respondents were able to pinpoint the number of females who were involved in marriage who the respondent claim to be older than.

In relation to the second objective, to determine the factors that promote early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district. It was revealed that, there are several factors that promote early girl marriage. The girls' level of education has impact in their decision to get married or not, the parents' illiteracy and economic state has a major role in getting the girl child marriage, the involvement in 'Kayayei' has helped the prevalence to increase, the lack of monitoring of the girl child use of smart phones on social media and exposure to telenovelas has impact on their ability to think good for themselves, girl children who happen to become pregnant are forced to marry, some get into the marriage by themselves to avoid disgrace and disrespect from society.

In relation to the third objective, to identify the perception of teenagers regarding early girl child marriage in the Nabdam district. It was revealed that, the teenagers see marriage to be easy because their friends and colleagues are enjoying marital life, respondents viewed early girl child marriage to be good because some respondents were able to further your education after marriage and the teenagers saw early marriage as a means of making money fast because some of the teenagers after marriage had the opportunity to start a business with help from their partners".

Conclusion

Based on the results obtained the following conclusions can be drawn:

In relation to the first objective, it is concluded that the prevalence of early girl child marriage exists in the Nabdam district.

In relation to the first research question, it is concluded that the evidence of the existence of early girl child marriage has its teeth buried in the Nabdam district.

In relation to the second objective, it can be concluded that the factors the promoter early girl child marriage include poverty, illiteracy and social media has a major role to play.

In relation to the second research question, it is concluded that the educational level of both parents and child, the employment status of parents, ignorance of the girls' law regarding on marriage, little benefits enjoyed by both parents and girls.

In relation to the third objective, it can be concluded that the girl perceives early girl marriage as a means of gaining financial aid, social status, escape from stigma of teenage pregnancy therefore it is good to get married.

In relation to the third research question, it is concluded that the teenagers see early girl child marriage as a good practice and have developed interest in early marriage.

Recommendations

The findings reveal that various socio-economic and cultural factors such as education, teenage pregnancy, poverty, and the exchange of girls for marriage influence child marriage. Hence, efforts to curb child marriage should be geared towards retention of girls in school, empowering girls economically through vocational training, enforcing laws on child marriage in Ghana, as well as designing tailored advocacy programs to educate key stakeholders and adolescent girls on the consequences of child marriage. Further, there is the need to address socio-cultural norms/practices to help end child marriage. Additionally, efforts should be directed towards curbing teenage pregnancy, which will lead to reducing child marriage.

Recommendation for further studies

Since the findings from this study was based on the opinions of only the teenagers, it is empirical to involve other stakeholders of early child marriage into other studies to support this study.

From the identified limitations to the approach used in this study, it is recommended for further studies to adopt both quantitative and qualitative research approaches in similar studies to objectively measure some of the responses presented by the participants in this study.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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