



INFLUENCE OF EARLY MARRIAGE ON EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL ASPIRATION OF STUDENTS IN WOMEN DAY SECONDARY SCHOOL, MAIDUGURI, BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated influence of early marriage on educational and vocational aspiration of students in Women Day Secondary School, Maiduguri. The objectives of the study were: to identify characteristics of students who married early, to identify reasons for engaging in early marriage among married female students, to determine the influences of early marriage on educational aspiration of secondary school students and to determine the influence of early marriage on vocational aspiration of secondary school students. The following four research questions were answered: what are the characteristics of students who married early in Women Day secondary School, Maiduguri? What are the reasons for engaging in early marriage in Women day Secondary school? Does early marriage influence educational aspirations of students who married early? And Does early marriage influence vocational aspirations of students who married? The population comprised SS1-SS3 students out of which the researcher used Ex-post facto on three hundred students using Random sampling technique. The researcher use Self-Developed Evaluative Questionnaires (SEQ) and administered to students. Results from the study showed that characteristics of early marriage in Maiduguri metropolis are those who married between the ages of 15-17 years old, mostly from rural polygamous Islamic background and also from large siblings of 6 and above. Their parental background were mostly low unskilled civil servants and farmers who have average qualifications of SSCE or GCE and as well lived far away from the nearest school; lack of guidance and counselling, parental influence, poverty, illiteracy, culture/traditions and lack of knowledge of the values of education were among reasons for early marriage of students in Women Day Secondary School, Maiduguri. Early marriage influences educational aspirations of students in Women Day Secondary School, Maiduguri

Metropolis; early marriage influences vocational aspiration of students in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made: there should be an age limit fixed for girls marriage, while education above senior secondary school level be made compulsory before marriage; more women secondary schools should be established in Borno and other places to meet up girls who may wish to continue their school after marriage; there should be massive campaign and enlightenment to parents, husbands and significant others on necessities of educational and vocational aspirations of their children and wives and guidance and counselling centers should be opened in every schools, work places, markets and communities to meet up social, educational and economical problems of students and significant others.

Keywords: Educational, Vocational, Aspiration, Students, Women.

Introduction

Marriage being sacred union between a man and woman, thus for the Kanuri is done at an early age. For men, their first contact with marriage usually takes place at age of about 20 years and above, when according to tradition, his parents would marry a young maiden to him, between the ages of 12-14 years. Among the Kanuri is preferred for a young lady marrying for the first time a virgin. Mohammed (2009) have long seen serious gender bias in terms of education against girls in Nigeria, especially in the northern part of Nigeria. He further stressed that girls aged 6-15 years were forced into early marriage. Also a lot have been reported on low enrolment and attendance of females in vocational courses. People have their arts and culture through which their level of civilization is appreciated. In Borno state, for instance, Kanuri/Shuwa wedding is one event that is colourful and exciting.

Among the Kanuris and Shuwa Arabs, Islamic Education pre-dominated Western Education. That could be why Western Education has not become a priority to a lot of indigenous inhabitants. Despite the role played by Western Education in Maiduguri Metropolis some parents especially Shuwa Arabs and Kanuri are not in agreement to it that Western Education leads to lost of culture and traditions. They also believe that marriage which was strictly under influence of the parents has become a privilege not an obligation and most of their western educated children will not allow their parents to choose their spouses for them, rather they prefer to choose for themselves at a time they deem fit. To that effect, it may delay

their early marriage to late marriage as against their religions (Liman, et al, 2011).

Babur/Bura tribe in Borno, a young female is being dated at birth by the parents of the male child. Usually is done by tossing a clog of leaves from a certain tree into the compound of the nursing mother of the female child. If it is accepted, he gives a bracelet and latter a necklace to the girl as soon as she is weaned. The females (mostly) married at age of 13-15 years of age while the male 19-20 years of age (Davies, 1956). Although there were few blacksmiths, hunters and farmers, the women were mostly engaged in calabash designing, pottery, etc.

The Marghi people are one of the dominant tribes in Borno State located in the southern of Borno. They occupy the northern part of Adamawa, Dambo and Yobe (Mbilim); these tribes were predominantly farmers (Mbilim) and blacksmiths (inkyagu) those who are mostly associated with the metal technology were the INGYAKGU castes in Marghi land while their women were specialist of pottery. In the early 1950's the art of iron technology and pottery became so renown that their products were sold outside the Marghi enclave (Wamduda, 2014). Similarity, the Marghi family is more or less a paternal origin where a man marries his wife to his parent's house and she automatically becomes a member of that family. Their traditional marriage is usually an arrangement between two families as opposed to an arrangement between two individuals. In the past, parents choose wives for their children at infancy, but of recent, individuals were allowed to make their choice and introduce their choices to their families for established arrangement to matrimony. These arrangements are the payment of bride price, the matured age of marriage for a Marghi man is 20 years and above and that of female 15 years and above (Wamduda, 2014).

Furthermore, the emergence of Christianity within Marghi land and people was in 1927 by the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (CBN). These missionaries brought a lot of changes in their educational and health care alongside with changing their religious ideologies from African traditional religion to Christianity. This consequently influenced their political, social, educational, economical, vocational and religious lives till date (Wamduda, 2014).

This tradition of early marriage continues to affects and alters the educational and vocational aspiration of girl-child in Borno state, hence the practice of early marriage continued to consume children of school age. Though in the past, it was a lifestyle that was so practice without any hitches, but in an enlighten society where education and vocational aspiration of a woman become an acceptable norms, it posed a problem to the women folk in the contemporary society where the role of women has equally become a necessity in home and nation building.

Their abilities can only be harnessed when they bridge the gap between illiteracy and literacy to be properly fixed and function. It is no longer the slogan women education ends in the kitchen.

Vocational aspiration is conceived to mean to produce semi-skilled, skilled and technical manpower necessary to restore, revitalize, energize, operate and sustain national development and unemployment; vocational aspiration accommodating at all periods of life without discrimination or bias or ground of sex (Biola & Halilu, 2002). The low level of education among women resulted from the discriminatory policy in education and training given by early Europeans (Biola & Halilu, 2002). The attitude of parents is another major factor. Traditional conservatism was a restraining factor during those colonial days. Parents were more willing to send their sons to school because boys were and still are considered permanent residents and owners of home. Traditionally, people of Borno believed that young girls should not go to school. Boys were preferred to go to school in a family, more than girls. Male children were perceived as carrying family identity and responsibility throughout life while the female ones are seen as people who would soon identify with their husbands. This made many parents to believe that it was better to invest in the education of boys than that of girls (Saliba, Ani and Haruna, 2008).

The role of the early governments and their policies also lend credence to this lack of female student's enrolment in educational and modern vocational aspirations. These abilities, skills and competencies may be alternatively called science process skills. The vocational studies is designed to prepare male/female students for gainful employment in different occupations. Despite the upsurge of female enrolment at all levels of education, girls have continued to lag behind boys, in vocational aspiration. The factors that have hindered female students enrolment in vocational aspiration in Borno State is early marriage (Saliba, Ani and Haruna, 2008).

Considering the ages involved in early marriage, primary and secondary level of education covers the age bracket of the practitioners. To that effect, Modo (2009) and Forward (2011) observed that immaturity on the part of the couple in marriage posed a great threat to stability of family and other consequences such as obstruction to educational and vocational aspiration, economics and social status. Christian Women Mirror (2007) further put it that marriage is not for boys and girls but matured adult and that one must be physically and mentally matured to cope with rigors, stress and strain of life to be eligible for marriage. Women Mirror opined that for one to be an effective helpmate, one must possess some basic skills or formal education to a high standard above secondary school.

Early marriage is now widely regarded as violation of children's right to health, education, development and equality (Forward, 2011). UNFPA (2003) reported that a greater challenge and risk faced by teenagers of this generation is the plague of early marriage which impact directly on their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. Today, millions of adolescents and young people are faced with prospects of early marriage and incomplete education. UNFPA (2003), Forward (2011) and UNICEF (2005) strongly affirmed that early marriage inevitably disrupt education, reducing opportunities for future independence through work. UNFPA (2003) and UNICEF (2005) presented a gloomy future that about 82 million girls in developing countries and 100 million globally who are aged 10 – 17 will be married before their 18th birthday, most especially in countries like Nepal 60 percent, Niger 75 percent and India 80 percent. UNFPA (2003) attributed the ugly trend to the way family lives are organized and the opportunities teenagers have as they assume adult roles.

Access to vocational training opportunities enable students to choose the profession of their choice according to their abilities, skills and interest (Osamaigo & Oniyama, 2009). Every child's chances for a successful future depend on good educational foundation; the choice of career may become inappropriate or hardly unachievable without education (Osamaigo & Oniyama, 2009; Okwakpam & Eni, 2012).

In recognition to the prevalence of early marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa, most especially Maiduguri; Borno State located in the North east of Nigeria, the researcher found out influences of early marriage on both educational and vocational aspiration of the practitioners, concentrated on women who married early and are students in Women Day Secondary School Maiduguri. Similarly, women education has been discovered serving a vital role to the women, family and nation building. So, early marriage should be seen as a likely impediment to self actualization and national development. Reasons for this early marriage were determined to suggest a way of minimizing its frequent and subsequent occurrence.

Statement of the Problem

The researcher observed that the rate at which teenagers that is of school age engaged in martial union in Borno State is alarming and worrisome. Early marriage inevitably denies children of school age their right to the education they need for their personal development. Lack of schooling as a result of early marriage invariably means that those caliber of women who must work to earn a living are left with no qualifications or skills. Furthermore, due to the prevalence

of early marriage on the womenfolk, their educational and vocational aspirations have continued to remain at the lowest ebb with attendant poverty and high dependency, leaving them fulltime housewives over their spouses (Forward, 2011). Most women who married early were discovered to have low levels of education and vocational skills. The equality of women versus men educational status continued to remain far apart (53 percent versus 75 percent) respectively (NPC & ICF, 2014).

However, government and non-governmental agencies has made stringent effort to bridge the gap of educational and vocational status between men and women through establishment of women schools, scholarship, women empowerment and women emancipation on power sharing in Nigeria and Borno State in particular. The gap still remains widened and has poised a concern. In Northern Nigeria, for instance, researches have shown that girls of age below 18 years were given out in marriage, of which these age range were supposed to be in school. Mohammed (n.d) have long seen gender bias against girls in education in Northern Nigeria. Government policies also lend credence to this lack of female enrolment in education and modern vocational aspirations by waging war against none education and early marriage of a girl child. In view of these, the researcher investigated the influences of early marriage on educational and vocational aspirations of students in women Day Secondary School, Maiduguri, Borno state, Nigeria.

Operational Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined as used in the study

Aspiration: - Strong wish or hopes to have knowledge or skills 'for the purpose of occupation'.

Early Marriage: -Is the marital engagement of students before 18 years.

Educational aspiration: - Refers to the desire for attending western education above senior secondary school level; educational goals an individual set for himself/herself such as NCE, Degree, Masters, Ph.D, Technical School, Nursing School etcetera.

Influence: - The difficulties encountered with educational and vocational aspirations of students as a result of early marriage.

Vocational Aspiration: - Is the desire for professional skills acquisition of knowledge needed in order to do a particular job or work after senior secondary school. Professional skills such as Doctor, Lawyer, Teacher, Accountant, Nurse, etcetera.

Theoretical framework

This study employed Dworkin's (1970) radical feminist theory and Ginzberg, Axetral and Harman's (1951) Vocational Theory. Dworkin's (1970) radical feminist theory started with the assumption that gender are adversarial poised, that men have power over women and that the society and its various social relationship can best be understood in terms of their relationship to that situation (Eisentein, 1983). The theory was originally inspired by the political theories of Karl Marx. Feminist theory as cited in Godha (2011) is most concerned with giving a voice to women and highlighting the various ways women have contributed to the society. There are four major types of theory that attempts to explain the differences in women such as gender differences, gender inequalities, gender oppression and structural oppression. However, the most appropriate for this study is gender differences and gender inequality.

Feminist theory as cited in Godha, (2011) is most concerned with giving a voice to women and highlighting the various ways women have contributed to society. There are four major types of feminist theory that attempts to explain the differences in women:

1. **Gender differences:** The gender difference theory examines how women location in their experience of social situations differs from men's. In culture feminist look at the different values associated with womanhood and feminity as a reason why men and women experience social world differently.
2. **Gender Inequality:** This theory states that women's location in and experience of social situations are not only different but also unequal to men. Liberal feminists argue that women have the same capacity as men for moral reasoning and agency but that patriarchy, particularly; the gender patterning of labour has historically denied women the opportunity to express and practice this reasoning. Women have been isolated to the private sphere of the household and thus, left without a voice in public sphere.

Feminist theory is one of the major contemporary sociological theories, which analyses the status of women and men in the society which the women live. Feminist sociological approach to career choice of a woman believe that chance and such sociological factors as race, parents' socio-economic background, ex, marital status etc are major influences on women's educational and career aspirations. They also believed that society that is the social and cultural milieu in which a person is born and bred determines the status or career that person

subsequently become. Feminist theorists have also started to question the difference between women including how race, class, ethnicity and age intersect with gender inequality.

Gender differences and inequalities relate to how women location in their experience of social situation differ from men, that different role is assigned to women including the division of labour in household. It is also the focus of this research to determine the extent of this marginalization and inequality of women to men in aspect of influence of early marriage of female students to their educational and vocational aspirations, which is one of the feminist theory liberational point. Similarly, feminist sociological approach to career choice of women also link to this research in identifying the major characteristics of female students who engage in marital union, such factors are race, parental socio-economic background, sex, marital status and so on. This study is in line with feminist concept of gender differences and inequality in aspect of educational and vocational aspirations of female students which has a link to their early marriage union.

Furthermore, Ginzberg, et al. (1951) vocational theory which stated that occupational choice is not merely by chance. But through some activities which took place throughout one's life. Ginzberg, et al. (1951) divided the total spans of vocational aspirations between ages 0-24 into three stages (fantasy stage 0-11 years, tentative stage 11-17 years and realistic stage 18-24 years).

1. **Fantasy stage 0-11 years:** Children at this stage made their vocational choice based on what holds their fancy, at this stage, vocational choice are being discussed – they made their choices without minding about ability and some other consideration such as parental and socio-cultural factors. Choice at this stage lacks permanency – change of choice are made based on emotions and fantasy.
2. **Tentative stage 11-17 years:** This stage coincides with the adolescent stage of development. At this point, choices are made based on choice of courses offered in secondary school. The main factors affecting choice at this stage are: interest, capacity and values. This is perhaps why the stage is called tentative because choice changes as each of these factors emerges and begins to interact with each other.
3. **Realistic stage 18-24 years:** At this stage, three basic sub-stages are segmented such as explorative stage, crystallization stage and specification stage. At exploration stage, occupational opportunities are investigated for almost the last time and the vocational choice areas are greatly narrowed, though there are still certain vocational flexibility. At

crystallization stage, most individuals are either working temporarily or permanently or are in higher learning where a definite course of study may have been chosen. Choices are made based on personal characteristics and opportunities open to them. Specification stage is the last stage of career development. At this stage, an individual is usually very specific in his career choice because of maturity and experience.

This theory propounded by Ginzberg et al. (1951) confirmed that early marriage may blur the successive exploration of these three stages of vocational aspirations, leaving such victims generally unskilled in all aspects of vocations. This is owing to the fact that they were cut up and denied of these transitional vocational explorations. This research lends support to the Dworkin's (1970) feminist theory and Ginzberg et al. (1951) vocational theory in its conducts, findings and conclusion with aim of contributing to knowledge in a dynamic society.

According to Population Reference Bureau (PRB) (2012), large differentials by education, household wealth and residence exist in the percentage of men and woman who marry at young ages. Women with eight or more years of schooling, who lives in urban areas and are in the top category, are much less likely to marry than their less well educated rural and poorer counterpart.

Early marriage is also associated with leaving school, sometimes permanently curtailing a young person's education and vulnerability to school dropout which eventually subsumes into illiteracy (PRB, 2012 & Forward, 2003). Large numbers of girls who drop out of school do so because of early marriage, leaving many women who married illiterate. Jenson and Thornton, (2003) observed that the non education of girl child is a problem compounded by early marriage.

Liman, Asraf and Shittu (2011) studied girl-child education in northern Nigeria: problems, challenges and solutions and reported that a number of factors have been identified militating against girl-child education. Some of these factors are: early marriage, societal belief, cultural influences, religious inclinations, illiteracy and poverty level among other factors. The outcome of the research further showed problems and challenges attributed to the implementation and actualization of government policies on girl-child education and it also dwell on non-governmental organizations' efforts in support of the girl-child education.

In Borno State, the median age at first marriage still stood at 17 years among women while in the North-East generally is a little lower with 16 years (NPC & ICF, 2014). Early marriage has been prevalent among the non-educated women 15 years, primary education 17 years and secondary education 22 years. This is

a predicative that educational status has a role in determining marriage engagement. Educational status also tallied with vocational aspiration of an individual(s). This is common among the teenagers who are very prime for their educational pursuit. Observation has shown that those children who drop out of school for marriage union are mostly below the age of 18. Forward (2011) and Daunt (1977) also observed that any marriage union involving under 18 of age; is early marriage. This is further confirmed by article XXI of the 1990 African Charter on the right and welfare of the child in United Nation International Children Education Fund (UNICEF) (2001) that child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be eighteen years. UNICEF (2005), Refworld (2006), UNICEF (2001) and Godha, (2011) observed that the causes of early marriage are enormous, among which are early child bearing. When women who are not fully developed physiologically give birth early, the health of both mother and child may suffer especially the mother may encounter the plague of vesicular virginal fistulae (VVF) which involve the breaking down of tissue in the virginal wall leading to bladder and rectum laceration. Early marriage is also associated with leaving school and impeding vocational aspiration of the prospective child.

Low Economics Status

Employment according to NDHS (2013), women in Borno and M.M.C. in particular are the least likely to be currently employed (34 percent and 29 percent respectively). Employment is highest in South-West zone especially in Ogun where 80 percent of women are currently employed. Poverty is one of the factors that trigger early marriage. Where poverty is acute, a young girl may be regarded as an economical burden and her marriage to a much older person is a practice common in some middle Eastern and South Asia societies. This is a kind of family survival strategy and may even be seen to be in her interest (Forward 2011; UNICEF 2001).

In Nigeria, economic hardship seems to be so hard in polygamous dominated areas which are equally characterized by great number of siblings. Most of these siblings depended on the lean resource of the father as most of those women may only be fulltime housewives who do not have much sources of income to augment their husband in terms of child training especially in Maiduguri metropolis (Da'orong & Obi, 2010). This revelation corroborates Rimfat (2006) and Iheanacho (2002) who discovered that most school dropout who indulges in

early marriage as a result of high number of siblings has this to say: "we are many in the house, so our father found it difficult to give us financial attention."

Furthermore, UNICEF (2005) observed that economic pressures are often cited as an explanation for early marriage. UNICEF (2005) Statistic shows that the index disparity of early marriage case of age 18 between 20 percent poorest and 20 percent wealthiest across globe.

In all countries analyzed, early marriage was most common among the 20 percent poorest of the population. The greater disparity according to household wealth is observable in Peru, where 19 percent of women age 20 -24 were married before age 18. That is, 45 percent among the richest 20 percent conversely in countries such as Chad and Central African Republic, with total values of 71 percent and the poorest 20 percent (66% & 54% respectively) (UNICEF 2005). As noted above, in Central African Republic, the differences in early marriage level accounting to household wealth is notable, while in Ghana and Nigeria, poor women were much more likely to be married as children than their wealthiest counterpart with ratio 0.37:0.18%. The prevalence for the poorest 20% is considerably higher than the richest 20% (UNICEF, 2005).

In Nigeria too, financial constrain was a major barrier against secondary education. The cost of higher education was still out of reach for many parents especially in areas where annual per capital income was very low. Consequently, low income families, where it come to opportunity cost and choice between education of their children and others especially marriage and apprenticeship, they tend to choose marriage and apprenticeship for their children which is less costly (Iliya, Rimfat, Dakun and others, 2005, Chaba 2003, and Ejikeme, Elaigwu. & Agbowuro, 1997). This was owing to low economical states and high dependency of siblings over their parents. UNICEF (2001 & 2005) advances so many reason as to why parents gave out their daughters into marriage at an early age- Among which was for their protection against infidelity, pre- marital sex, defending of family honour and most importantly, parent genuinely felt that their daughters will be better off and safer with a regular male guardian.

Geographical Location of Residence

In addition, Forward (2011) conducted a survey on early marriage of women based on literacy states, level of education and place of residence, it was discovered that there was little difference in proportion of women with primary education between rural and urban areas (25 percent versus 27 percent). On the other hand the proportion of women who have gone to school beyond primary education was about three times higher in urban areas than in rural areas (30.9

percent and 10.7 percent) respectively. Generally, only 15 percent continued beyond primary education while least among them is those who went to secondary school and above rural versus urban were 3.4 percent and 17.5 percent respectively.

In Nigeria, according to National Population Commission and ICF International (NPC & ICF, 2014) literacy is much higher in urban than in rural areas. Literacy level decline with age from 66% among women age 15-19 to 36% among women age 45 – 49. More than 7 in 10 urban women (77%) are literate as compared with less than 4 in 10 rural women (36%). The gap in literacy level between women and men is notable in the North Central, north East and North-West zones among these three zones, North-East is the least. Most of these educational disadvantage areas are fertile ground for early marriage of young girls which pose a great threat to their educational and vocational aspiration alike.

In Borno state, about 77.2% of women cannot read while children age 15 to 19, about 69.6 percent cannot read at all, those that can read part of a sentence stood at 9.1% which the bulk of the population are based at the rural areas and semi urban (NPC & ICF, 2014). In addition statistics shows that urban women are slightly more likely to be currently employed than rural women (63 percent versus 61 percent). Women in Yobe and Borno are least likely to be currently employed (34 percent and 29 percent) respectively (NPC & ICF, 2014)

Religious Affiliation

Fafunwa (1974) observed that religion has been one of the driving forces for societal behaviour and character formation across nations and cultures. A digression to the dos and don'ts of one's religion is regarded as a necessary evil. It is in fulfillment of this that most religious practitioners focus their lives and activities guiding and protecting its fulfillment to an extent that they are deprived of some vital dynamism of changes and education. According to Refworld (2006); Bamgbose (2002), marriage in northern Nigeria are mostly under Islamic law, while those in the south are mostly under customary law. In most customary law system in Nigeria, there is no minimum age for marriage (Women's Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC) & Women Aid Collective (WACOL, 2003). However, force marriage and early marriage are most common in the predominantly Muslim state in the north, including Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Nasarawa, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara (Paden 2002 & WACOL 2005).

Mbahi and Astenokhai (2000) opined that religion (Islam) constitutes a stumbling block to western education especially in Borno North and Central

areas; where Islamic education dominates the landscape of the area. They observed that Christian faith has less influence against Western Education; rather encourages western education for their children. Sdanbe (2007) and Musa (1989) also agreed that parental religions affiliation is another source of teenager's early or delayed marriage. He observed that Muslim in particular prefer a reasonable grown up lady of 12-18years to be in purdah and equally engage in marriage. To them, they regard such practices as sacred.

Furthermore, religious frowned at premarital sex which leads to numerous problems such as unwanted pregnancy and babies, single parenthood, diseases, secondary infertility, abortion and even death (Olusakin & Nwolisa, 2010). However, Sdanbe (2007) in his study discovered that about 52.5% of religious parents are not encouraging model to their children. That is why moral decadence seems to be on upward turn. Audu (2005) discovered that young girls ranging from 12 and above – in Muslim communities are encouraged to focus on gathering materials and utensils for marriage rather than education. Audu finally concluded that the resultant effects of abandoning school for other cultural or religious issues are liability and over dependence on the few that acquire formidable western education. Forward (2011) saw religion as one of the factors that continues to fuel practice of early marriage across the world, despite its adverse effect on health, vocational and educational career of the victims. UNICEF (2005) further reveal that it is evident, customary and religious law is one of the factors that influence early marriage in geographical areas that condone the practice. Areas such as south Asia (48%) Africa (42%) Latin America and Caribbean (29%) have children who got married before the age of 18 years. Those who married at exactly age 18 years has the highest parentage in Niger with (78%) Nigeria (47%) and the least nation is South Africa (9%) (UNICEF, 2005).

Christian religion does not so much believe in forced or early marriage but a democratic type-by allowing boys and girls to choose their life partners. It seems to have no much control over the age one should choose a spouse for marriage. Bernard (2009) justified the above assertion and said "make your own choice in marriage; this will enable you to accept responsibility in time of crisis or trial". Every marriage must undergo trial and test period and your choice will give you courage and strength to stand and overcome (pg.12). The young boys and girls seem to mistake the free leadership styles in Christian homes to demand some times what can equally destroy them, such as choosing their life partners at a tender age. This may contribute greatly to their educational and vocational set back. Similar event happened in the Holy Bible, story of a prodigal son who

demanded for his birth right too early only to spent it on youthful passion, his end was pathetic (Luke15:11-21).

Influence of Early Marriage on Educational Aspiration

Marriage is seen as a union born out of love, provides a source of social recognition and a gate way to level procreation, responsibilities and belief (Mustapha, Mbursa and Goni, 2010; Abubakar, 2009 and Pever, 2009). However, such union can be an inhibition to education when entered into at an early age. Jenson and Thornton (2003) opined that girls in Africa are less likely to attend school than boys, particularly in poorer households. The non education of girl child is a problem compounded by early marriage. They further observed that large number of girls who dropped out of schools does so as a result of early marriage, leaving many women who married early illiterate. Early marriage plans can also discourage parents of a girl child from educating their daughter because they believe that a formal education will only benefit her future family in-laws (Jenson and Thornton 2003; Iheanacho 2002, & UNICEF, 2001).

Furthermore, early marriage inevitably denies children of school age the right to education, the need for their personal development. Indeed, married girls who would like to continue with schooling may practically and legally be excluded from doing so by any strong forces above their control (UNICEF, 2001). Education is a social vehicle with which women move from the periphery to the centre of political leadership where their voice will be heard at the highest decision- making level of the society. Therefore educational neglect of a woman is disastrous and retrogressive (Okwakpam and Eni, 2012). In view of this UNICEF (2005) opined that education is often seen as key to preventing early marriage. Iheanacho (2002) further discovered that some parents in Borno state advance reasons for not sponsoring their children to secondary school level on such reason is that it prevents them from marrying early with 12.50%. Other reasons include fear of sexual harassment, unwanted pregnancy, and lack of finance, traditional and religious prejudice and so on. Iheanacho (2002) further discovered the following from field statistic pertaining girl child participation in secondary education in Borno State.

Forward (2011) and UNICEF(2001) reported that African charter on the right and welfare of the child 1990 and convention on the right of the child 1989 state that any marriage union of a child below the age of 18 is illegal because such child is regarded as a minor. Article XX1 of African Charter 1990 states that child marriage and betrothal of girls and boys should be prohibited and effective action and legislation should be taken to specify minimum age of marriage to be 18

years. Christian Women Mirror (2007) supported that marriage is not for boys and girls but for matured adult, and that one must be physically, socially, spiritually, emotionally and mentally matured to cope with rigours, stress and strain of life to be eligible for marriage. UNFPA (2003) and UNICEF (2005) reported a gloomy future that about 82 million girls in developing countries and 100 million globally who are age 10 -17 will be married before their 18th birthday most especially in countries like Nepal (60%), Niger (75%) and India (50%). Unfortunately, parents capitalized on the gullibility of such age to go ahead and imposed on these children spouses of not their age or choice.

Liman et al, (2011) reported that many of the female children more especially from northern Nigeria hardly acquire the higher level of education; some quit either primary or secondary school level with some few exceptions getting to other colleges of higher learning. They further posit that there can be no meaningful and sustainable national transformation and development without educating the girl-child.

The Northern part of Nigeria comprises of the three geopolitical zones in 2004, the North East, North Central and North-West, the most prevalent of girl-child backwardness in education and early marriage is North-East and North-West with 20 percent of women literate for both and 42 percent women literate for North-Central (meaning 80 percent women illiterate for both the North-East and North-West). Currently, literacy status of women versus men in North East Nigeria is (28 versus 51 percent) respectively (NPC & ICF 2014). However, there are slight improvements in the literacy rate of women over the period of ten years, but in arithmetical progression.

Influence of Early Marriage on Vocational Aspirations

Early marriage has been positively advanced by the guardian/parents of the victim to be in their interest and partly the values of custom, self interest, religious, economic purpose and so on (UNICEF 2001, 2005; UNFPA 2005 and Forward 2011, 2003). However, in spite of reasons for engaging or permitting teenagers into early marital union, it has its consequence on the teenagers in terms of vocational aspiration and other forms of achievements that requires education and maturity. Zidon (1987) observed that teen's occupational choices are influence by their parents' choice and priority, among which marriage is one. She further said such parental influence in teenage career choice have disadvantages towards their occupational aspiration in life. Jenson and Thornton (2003) also substantiated that cyclical nature of early marriage result in a likely

low level of education and life skills which increases vulnerability to acute poverty.

The impact of early marriage on girls and to a lesser extent on boys is wide ranging (UNICEF 2001). Several factors are known to affect or influence vocational aspiration. These include educational level of the person and his parents, socio-economic level of the family, environment and early marriage. Ginzberg, Axetrad and Harman (1951) propounded that occupational choice is not merely by chance but through some activities which take place throughout one's life. They divide the total span of the vocational aspiration between ages 0 – 24 into three periods (Fantasy stage 0-11, tentative stage 11-17, and Realistic stage 18-24 years). Therefore, early marriage may blur the successive exploration of these three stages of vocational aspiration, leaving such victim generally unskilled in all aspect of vocation.

Furthermore, Zidon (1987) also discovered that occupational or vocational aspiration is best cultivated in secondary school than at later time or out of school. UNICEF (2001) further substantiated that the removal of a young girl to marry, or to work in preparation for her marriage life limits her opportunity to develop her intellect and many other useful skills. Therefore it is more disadvantageous to teenagers who are removed from school to fulfill marital obligation. The lack of school also means that these girls or women who must work to earn a living have no qualification or skills. The most important implication of this loss is that, girls grow up with no sense of the right to assert their own point of view and little experience in articulating one (UNICEF 2001). Zidon (1987) discovered that those who are highly professionals in their vocation are the highly educated; while those at the lowest brim of vocation such as unskilled are labourers and so on. When children were asked which class of work they wish to belong, about 54 percent opted for highly professional job as against 12 percent of un-informed group for unskilled vocation and that it correlates to their parental educational level too. Haggai and Piwuna (2000) also agreed that most Nigerian parents are either illiterates or of low educational level, so hardly encourage their children or taking interest in what they do in school. The consequence of this is to withdraw their children from school for marital engagement which incidentally robs them of their rich vocational aspiration. Zidon (1987) term that as external force or impediment of vocational aspiration of teenagers.

Consequently, Longe and Fashina (2010) demands a greater need for gender re-orientation to boost female self efficacy belief for adequate integration, productivity and national development, Okwakpam and Eni (2012) discovered

that lack of women education and early marriage in some state have depleted their potentialities and ability to aspire for their desired vocation. In view of this, women are underutilized. Refworld (2006) recommend the relocation of victim of force marriage to a better environment where they can be allowed to pursue their desired vocational aspiration. Mangyvat (2001) observe that about 75 percent of small scale economic venture in Nigeria and the whole of Africa are handled by illiterates and rural women. This is caused by selfish interest of men as observed by Iliya et al., (2006) that men encourage early marriage of women knowing that once married and blessed with children, their attention will be focused on domestic task and leaving most of the lucrative occupation for them to dominate.

Age difference between partners has implications for power dynamics within the household. The analysis found a general pattern according to which women age 20-24 whose male partners are more than five years older are more likely to have been married before age 18. To fully consider the role of education in preventing early marriage, one must also examine the education level of men and the gap of education levels of spouses. The difference in level of education of spouses is thought to result in negative early marriage. It is more likely that the male partner has received more education than the woman. Early marriage is frequently found in rural areas of sub-Saharan countries as reported by UNICEF (2001). They (early-marriage) are more likely to come from the poorest 40 percent of society than the wealthier, 40 percent of society in all cases. In 10 countries, there were girls from wealthiest 20 percent are likely to be in union than those from the poorest 20 percent.

Women occupation according to NPC & ICF (2014) show that 7 percent of women are employed in professional technical or management positions. The largest groups of women (61 percent) are engaged in sales and services. The remaining women are working in agriculture (16 percent) in skilled manual jobs (14 percent), and in unskilled manual job (1 percent). The proportion of women in professional, technical or managerial positions increases with age while the proportion of women in sales and services varies little by age. Women in the old age group (21 percent), women who are divorced, separated or widowed (26 percent); women with five or more child bearing (20 percent), rural women (22 percent) and women with primary education (29 percent) are more likely to work in the agricultural sector (NPC & ICF, 2014). Statistics revealed that most of these women are self-employed (79 percent) such as selling vegetables ingredients, cassava processing, yam, provisions and lots more. In Borno state,

about 45 percent of women are into sales and services followed by 23 percent in skilled manual labour, least is clerical (2 percent)

Godha (2011) investigated early marriage influence on vocational aspiration. Eight responses show that early marriage has direct negative impact on child career. Similarly, NPC & ICF International (2014) investigated career aspiration of women in 20th century and reported that women, who marry early, consider their jobs to take second place next to marriage and child bearing. They also discovered that socio-cultural practices and geographical locations can hinder students on vocational aspiration. Early marriage has a lot of influence on the vocational choice of children. Godha (2011) also reported occupational aspiration choice of the child to be positive. Some of the factors affecting girl-child vocational aspiration include economic factors that influence career aspirations of secondary school girls. The study further found that family appears to play a critical role in child's career development.

UNICEF (2001) reported that students' career aspirations tended to match their parents' occupation. Early marriage affects millions of children throughout the world with little education and poor vocation altering, reinforcing the gendered nature of poverty. The cultural norms and practices are highly influenced by the culture of Northern Nigeria. The report further showed that parents disagree with their career aspiration. There was significant other influence which subsequently influences occupational aspirations among youths in Nigeria.

Research Design

This study adopted ex-post facto research design and collected information on the influence of early marriage on educational and vocational aspirations of women who married early. According to Lere, Daduhun and Bulus (2002) and Ogbonna, Dakun and Dewan (2006), ex-post facto research is to discover the possible causes of a phenomenon that is present in a certain group of people or population. It refers to an investigation on the effect of dependent variables on the independent variable is determined in a natural setting to seek how it affect the dependent variables. More so, this type of design is interested in some characteristics of the population from which intensive studies were drawn such as age, number of siblings, educational qualification and the like. These enable the researcher collects information that help him analysed and draw conclusion on the generalization of the targeted population on influence of early marriage on their educational and vocational aspirations.

Population and Sample

The targeted populations of this study were all students who married before their 18th birth day in Women Day Secondary School Maiduguri from SS1-SS3 with

total population of one thousand four hundred (1,400) students. Random sampling was used to get the sampled population of three hundred (300) respondents; this is based on Robert and Morgan (1971) population and sample size format. This school was chosen because it is an only institution streamline for married women who are drawn within Maiduguri and its environs. Similarly, this can give us a fair representation of women who married early in Borno State and the specific population used.

This descriptive statistical tool is used because the researcher is not inferring differences or relationship of respondents but describing their characteristics and experiences for conclusion and possible solutions. Statistical tools used were frequency distribution and percentages.

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result was analyzed and presented in tabular form using descriptive statistics of frequency distribution and percentages.

Question 1: What are the characteristics of students who marry early in Women Day Secondary School, Maiduguri?

Respondents were asked to tick the appropriate options that their information appeared.

Table 4.1: Characteristics of Early Marriage of Students in Women Day Secondary School, Maiduguri

S/N	ITEMS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
1.	Age category of marriage:		
	9-11 years old	42	14
	12-14 years old	42	14
	15-17 years old	216	72
	Total	300	100%
2.	Religion:		
	Christianity	135	45
	Islam	156	52
	Traditionalist	9	3
	Total	300	100%
3.	Location of Area lived before marriage:		
	Rural	126	42
	Semi-urban	78	26

	Urban	96	32
	Total	300	100%
4.	Parent/guardian educational qualification:		
	None	71	24
	FSLC	24	8
	JSCE	18	6
	SSCE/GCE	75	25
	O/ND/ND/NCE or equivalent	60	20
	HND/B.Sc and above	51	17
	Total	300	100%
5	Parent/guardian occupation:		
	Farming	105	35
	Cleric	12	4
	Civil servant	144	48
	Trading	36	12
	Craftsmanship	3	1
	Total	300	100%
6	Parent/Guardian family type:		
	Monogamy	102	34
	Polygamy	159	53
	Single parenting	39	13
	Total	300	100%
7.	Household size before marriage:		
	0-5	18	6
	6-10	111	37
	11-15	75	25
	16 and above	96	32
	Total	300	100%
8.	Distance of house before marriage to the nearest school:		
	1-2km		
	2.1-3km	87	29
	3.1-4km	75	25
	4.1-and above km	39	13
		99	33
	TOTAL	300	100%

Field questionnaire, 2018

Table 4.1 shows the characteristics of early marriage of students in Women Day Secondary School Maiduguri. Based on age category of marriage, the data analyzed revealed that a greater number (216) of students got married between the ages of 15-17 years old with 72 percent while those who married between the ages of 9-11 and 12-14 years old stood at 14 percent each.

Respondents were rated based on their religious inclination. Data revealed that 52 percent were from Islamic background while 45 percent were from Christian religious background. On locations of area lived before marriage, 42 percent were from rural areas while 32 percent were based in urban areas before marriage.

Parental/guardian background was one of the characteristics analysed such as educational qualifications. Data showed that 25 percent of parents/guardians had SSCE/GCE; those that did not possess any formal educational qualifications were 24 percent, while those parents that had OND/ND/NCE or equivalent scored 20 percent.

On parental/guardian occupations, most of them are civil servants with 48 percent, followed by farming 35 percent. For parents/guardians family types, 53 percent of the respondents came from polygamous families while 34 percent are from monogamous family background. Furthermore, based on household size, students were mostly from families where their parents had about 6-10 children (37 percent) while those who came from 16 and above siblings had 32 percent. Distance of house before marriage to the nearest school revealed that 33 percent were over 4km away from the nearest school. Similarly, 29 percent were living 1-2km away from the nearest school. This data supported item three which shows that most of the respondents came from rural areas which are characterized by dispersed settlement. Therefore, getting to the nearest catchment school is a little distance which can discourage attendance and completion of school.

Table 4.2: Results on Reasons for Early Marriage

S/NO	ITEMS	RESPONSES			
		Agreed	%	Disagreed	%
1	I married early because I dropped out of school	138	46	162	54
2.	I married early because my parents are separated	153	51	147	49
3.	Lack of guidance/counseling	216	72	84	28

4.	Lack of sponsors to my studies/education	195	65	105	35
5.	Culture/traditions demands that I was due for marriage	195	65	105	35
6.	My religion forbids staying long without marriage	168	56	132	44
7.	There was no money to cater for my education	210	70	90	30
8.	My parents influenced me into early marriage	180	60	120	40
9.	My parents are not educated	162	54	138	46
10.	I did not know the value of education	162	54	138	46
11.	I got married because most of my friends/peers are married	147	49	153	51
12.	I got married because I had no interest in schooling	147	49	153	51
13.	I got pregnant that is why I married early	132	44	168	56
14.	I MARRIED EARLY FOR FEAR OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	156	52	144	48

Field questionnaire, 2018

In Table 4.2, it shows that 54 percent disagreed that they did not marry because of school dropout. 51 percent agreed that they got married early as a result of parental separation. Similarly, 72 percent agreed that lack of guidance and counselling was their major reasons for early marriage. Lack of sponsors and cultural/traditional influences pooled 65 percent each, while religious influence and poverty stood at 56 percent and 70 percent respectively. Those who agreed that parents influences their early marriage were 180 (60%) parental low level of education and students ignorance to the values of education was found to be 54 percent each as reason for their early marriage.

Findings revealed that among reasons for early marriage, 51 percent disagreed that it was neither peer influence nor lack of interest in schooling. More so, 56 percent disagreed that pregnancy was not their reason for early marriage while 52 agreed that they got married early for fear of sexual harassment.

Table 4.3: Influence of Early Marriage on Educational Aspiration

S/NO	ITEMS	RESPONSES			
		Agreed	%	Disagreed	%
15	Home responsibilities do not allow me to concentrate on my education	126	42	174	58
16.	My spouse sometimes obstruct my educational concentration with personal assignment	195	65	105	35
17.	Parents/guardian no longer support my education because I am married	187	62	113	38
18.	My children do not allow me to have good time for extra study at home	168	56	132	44
19.	My mates who married later or not married have acquired more educational attainment than me	195	65	105	35
20.	Marriage responsibilities turn my educational career to be less important	204	68	96	32
21.	I regret my early marriage because it obstructs my educational aspiration	228	76	72	24
22.	My early marriage has affected me from furthering my education	187	62	113	38
23.	BEFORE I MARRIED, I HAD WISHED TO BECOME A HOLDER OF HIGHER QUALIFICATION THAN JSCE/SSCE	246	82	54	18

Field questionnaire, 2018

Responses on nine (9) items indicating influence of early marriage on educational aspiration of students are presented in table 4.3. About 58 percent disagreed with the statement that says “home responsibilities do not allow me to concentrate on my education” while 65 percent agreed that spouse assignments sometimes obstructed their educational concentration. 62 percent agreed that their parents no longer supported their education because they are married;

similarly 56 percent also agreed that their children did not allow them to have good time for extra study at home.

In addition, 65 percent agreed that their mate who married later or are not married have acquired more educational attainment than them while 68 percent also agreed that marriage responsibilities turned their educational career to be less important/ a greater number 228 (76 percent) agreed that they regretted their early marriage because it obstructed their educational aspirations. 62 percent also accepted that early marriage has affected their furthering of education. About 82 percent had wished to become a holder of higher qualifications above JSCE/SSCE before they marry.

Table 4.4 (a): Influence of Early Marriage on Vocational Aspirations of Students

S/NO	ITEMS	RESPONSES			
		Agreed	%	Disagreed	%
24	Marrying early has affected my desired choice of profession	177	59	123	41
25.	Early marriage prevents me from being a successful business woman	129	43	172	57
26.	Marriage limits my vocational aspiration because I cannot further my education beyond secondary school	162	54	138	46
27.	My husband is influencing my intended vocational desire to his own wish	177	59	123	41
28.	I no longer have any vocational aspiration because of my numerous house chores	216	72	84	28
29.	Early marriage can lead to choice of a weak profession	136	45	164	55
30.	Now that I am married, I only attend school to know how to read and write not to work	153	51	147	49
31.	My husband allows me to attend school to know how to take care of our home and children but not to work	180	60	120	40

32.	My husband told me his family is my vocation	165	55	135	45
33.	My spouse told me he does not want me to work after my secondary school graduation	153	51	147	49
34.	MY MATES WHO DID NOT MARRY EARLY HAVE MORE VOCATIONAL PROSPECTS THAN ME	198	66	102	34

Field questionnaire, 2018

Table 4.4 (a) shows 59 percent agreed that marrying early has affected their desired choice of professions while 57 percent disagreed that early marriage did not prevent them from being successful business women. 54 percent agreed that marriage limit their vocational aspiration because they cannot further their education to compete with others for professional vocations obtainable in the society. Those who agreed that husbands are influencing their vocational aspiration to their own wish stood at 59 percent. Furthermore, result has also shown that 72 percent responded that numerous home chores had suddenly become their vocations. On the contrary 55 percent disagreed that early marriage cannot lead to choice of weak profession. 51 percent confirmed that they attended school as married women just to know how to read and write and not to work; equally 60 percent agreed that their husband allowed them to school not for vocational prospects but only to take care of their families. Regrettably, 55 percent agreed that husbands restricted their wives to home front as their legitimate vocations. Similarly, the result also showed that 51 percent agreed that their spouse were not in agreement with them working after their secondary school graduation; 66 percent of the respondents also agreed that their mates who did not marry early had more vocational prospects compared to those that married early.

The item below is part of question 4 which is aimed at probing their intended vocational aspiration before they were cut up in early marriage.

Summary of Findings

From the results of this study, the findings were summarized as follows:

1. The study revealed that characteristics of early marriage in Maiduguri Metropolis are those who married between the age categories of 15 to 17 years old; mostly from rural polygamous Islamic background and also from large siblings of 6 and above. Their parental backgrounds

were mostly low unskilled civil servants and farmers who had average qualification of SSCE or GCE and as well live far away to the nearest school.

2. The study shows that lack of guidance and counselling, parental influence, poverty, illiteracy, culture/traditions and lack of knowledge of the values of education were among reasons for early marriage of students in Women Day Secondary School, Maiduguri.
3. This study has shown that early marriage influenced educational aspirations of students in Women Day Secondary School in Maiduguri Metropolis.
4. This study projected that early marriage also influences vocational aspirations of students in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evidence from the study shows that age of marriage, religious background, location of area lived, parental background, family size and distance to the nearest schools are major characteristics of early marriage cases among students. Similarly, poverty, lack of guidance and counselling, illiteracy, parental influence and dysfunctional homes are factors that fuel early marriage of secondary school students. Certainly, it is observed that all the factors or reasons that led to early marriages emerged from the characteristics so identified. If all these characteristics are managed to acceptable patterns, reasons advanced for early marriage could be reduced to the barest minimum.

Early marriage is also discovered to have influence on both educational and vocational aspirations of students in Women Day Secondary School, Maiduguri. This is as a result of various forms of pressures exerted; examples are family responsibilities, spousal influence, number of siblings and the like. This is an indication of a bleak future according to UNICEF (2005), if it is allowed to continue eating deep into the society. Most victims are going to remain in abject poverty, low education, unskilled labourers and low economic/societal status. Therefore, urgent action should be taken by parents, spouse, counsellors and significant others to curtail the occurrence of the adverse effect for a better society. Thus, base on the findings that early marriage has an influence on educational and vocational aspirations of students negatively. Therefore, counselling is suggested as one of the options for minimizing its prevalence among girl-child.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. There should be an age limit fixed for girl marriage, while education above senior secondary school level should be made compulsory before marriage by legislation.
2. More women secondary school should be established in Borno and other places to meet up girls who may wish to continue their school after marriage.
3. There should be massive campaign and enlightenment to parents, husbands and significant others on the necessities of educational and vocational aspirations of their children and wives.
4. Guidance and counselling centers should be opened in every institutions, work places, markets and communities to meet up social, educational, vocational and economical problems of students and significant others, by Borno State Government.

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