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## **EARLY MARRIAGE AS PANACEA TO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF ADOLESCENTS IN OYO METROPOLIS, OYO STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

Education is the process by which society through schools, colleges, universities and other institutions transmits its cultural heritage, values, skills from one generation to another. Birth, marriage and death are the standard trio of key events in most people's lives. But only one 'marriage' is a matter of choice. The right to exercise that choice was recognized as a principle of law even in Roman times and has long been established in international human rights instruments. There is no gainsaying therefore that marriage can change the narrative of an individual, especially females, positively or negatively. This study therefore examines the effect of early marriage on the educational attainment of adolescents in Oyo town. Three research questions were raised to guide the process of the study. The population of the study comprises one hundred (100) adolescents each from the four (4) Local Government of Oyo metropolis. The study sample was drawn from the four (4) Local Government of Oyo metropolis. The findings from the study show that there are significant difference in the educational attainment of adolescents and early marriage among genders ( $F_{(3,249)} = 46.724, P < 0.05$  and area of settlements that is within urban and rural areas ( $F_{(3,249)} = 35.213, P < 0.05$ ). It was obvious from the study that early marriage has a significant relationship on the educational attainments within the study areas. The study shows that child marriage is an accepted cultural practice in many countries especially in developing countries with more prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa. It is still widely sanctioned, even though it is a violation of the human rights of young girls due to various motives. Early marriage can violate the rights of girls and boys, both in this generation and the next but this is an issue that impacts upon girls in far larger numbers and with more intensity. Among others, it was recommended that Government should establish skill acquisition

centres in case where the girls cannot benefit from formal education; they must be trained in different skills, according to their choice and the state of the market.

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## Introduction

Education is the process by which society through schools, colleges, universities and other institutions transmits its cultural heritage, values, skills from one generation to another (Ukeje, 2010). According to Ozochi, (2018), Education is seen as a solution to vast range of task of the society and bed rock for national development. The Federal Government of Nigeria in the National Policy Education (2014) saw education as a dynamic instrument per excellence for effecting national development and a potent means for ensuring the welfare of the people and the equalization of life chance. The benefits derivable from educational investment equip the individual for proper understanding of important phenomena and further exploitation of human and material resources. It is on this background that Okeke, (2014) opined that whosoever neglect learning in his youth loses the past and is dead for the future. Ocho, (2018) is also of the opinion that the central purpose of education is virtue or character training, acquisition of knowledge, understanding and physical skills. Every nation should therefore take its educational system and process very serious because an error made in the training of the child becomes a perpetual and mortal error and disabilities in education in subsequent decades. Education is equally the process whereby one is prepared for the task of living happily with one's neighbours and advancing the cause of one's society as well as finding solution to its nagging problems (Okeke, 2014).

In traditional African society, the role of female was pegged and circumscribed. It was considered a taboo sending a female to school. This is because of the attitude towards education for women. It was considered a waste of money, time and effort considering that most women in no time get married into another family, to raise the adolescent that serve as farm hands for their father. In addition to raising the adolescent for the man, the women still helped to keep the house and provide meal for all. Hence the saying some years back that women's education ends in the kitchen. This primitive attitude exposes women to early marriage.

Birth, marriage and death are the standard trio of key events in most people's lives. But only one 'marriage' is a matter of choice. The right to exercise that choice was recognized as a principle of law even in Roman times and has long been established in international human rights instruments. Yet many girls, and

a smaller number of boys, enter into marriage without any chance of exercising their right to choose. Some are forced into marriage at a very early age. Others are simply too young to make an informed decision about their marriage partner or about the implications of marriage itself. They may have given what passes for 'consent' in the eyes of custom or the law, but in reality, consent to their binding union has been made by others on their behalf.

The assumption is that once a girl is married, she has become a woman – even if she is only twelve. Equally, where a boy is made to marry, he is now a man and must put away childish things. While the age of marriage is generally on the rise, early marriage – marriage of adolescents below the age of 18 is still widely practiced. While early marriage takes many different forms and has various causes, one issue is paramount. Whether it happens to a girl or a boy, early marriage is a violation of human rights. The right to free and full consent to a marriage is recognized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and in many subsequent human rights instruments – consent that cannot be 'free and full' when at least one partner is very immature. For both girls and boys, early marriage has profound physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional impacts, cutting off educational opportunity and chances of personal growth.

For girls, in addition, it will almost certainly lead to premature pregnancy and childbearing, and is likely to lead to a lifetime of domestic and sexual subservience over which they have no control (Eboh, 2016). Early marriage before the age of 18 is a violation of a number of international human rights charters and conventions such as 2019 Convention on The Rights of the Child (CRC), 2019 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEFADW), the 2019 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the 2010 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Women. However, for many young girls in developing countries, marriage is perceived as a means of securing their future and protecting them. Girls are forced into marriage by their families while they are still adolescent in the hope that marriage will benefit them both financially and socially. On the contrary, early marriage violates the rights of adolescent with often more negative consequences on the girls than the boys. This compromises their overall development, leaving them socially isolated with little or no education, skills and opportunities for employment and self – realization. These conditions ultimately make married girls more vulnerable to poverty. Young married girls are indeed a unique group, coming under great

pressure on a number of fronts. They are required to do a disproportionate amount of domestic chores, which includes new roles and responsibilities as wives and mothers. The young bride's status in the family is frequently dependent on her demonstrating her fertility-often within the first year of her marriage at a time when she is not yet physiologically, psychologically and emotionally prepared. Additionally, girls are made to be responsible for the care and welfare of future generations while still adolescent themselves. Young mothers with no decision making powers, restricted mobility and no economic resources are likely to transmit this vulnerability to their off-springs. Therefore, early marriage directly compounds the 'feminization of poverty' and intergenerational poverty (Saxena & Shobha, 2019). Several studies confirm wide age gaps between younger married girls and their spouses. This age gap clearly creates unequal power relationship between the younger brides and her older and more experienced husband, resulting in husband having total control over sexual relations and decision-making. Since younger brides are socially conditioned not to question the authority of their husbands, they are often unable to use contraception or to plan their families. The combined effect of these factors may also make younger brides more likely to tolerate partner violence.

Child marriage is a global issue that is extremely prevalent in developing nations. According to a report by World Health Organization in 2018, 16 million years girls between the ages of 15-19 annually this figure indicates how prevalent the issue of child marriage is across the globe. In addition, 2.5 million girls under the age of 16 give birth annually in developing areas. The girl-child, and indeed women all over the world especially in Nigeria have had their destiny sealed from birth by tradition and culture on account of their biological sex. They have been called the weaker sex in order to justify societal discrimination and oppression against them. Their natural rights of place in the scheme of things as human beings are not respected. They are shortchanged, victimized, and stereotyped. The girl-child has become a victim of female trafficking across international borders, being denied education, and consigned to early marriage. They can be seen but not to be heard in both private and the public spaces of decision making. The girl-child by the natural status ascribed to her by male defined norms societal conduct and behaviour remains a property to be owned and commoditized. It is only education that can salvage women from this condition.

Education has indeed taken number one priority in our country Nigeria, which the country has to offer the citizens the opportunity at all level to behold such a

bedrock in other to be part and parcel of our day to day development. This bedrock is what a girl-child is been deprived of due to early marriage. A girl-child should be repos it of her place as a human being and indispensably ally and co-traveller in Nigeria. Strive towards the actualization and attainment of development agenda.

It is indubitable that no meaningful agenda setting and development objectives can be attained in a situation where a girl-child is sidelined and consigned to the kitchen closet without conscious consideration for empowerment through the acquisition of quality education that liberates her. Education seems to be a pre-requisite for a sustainable development which could lead a country to achieve maximum profitability within and outside the country (Tola and Asishati, 2012). Adedeji, (2019) also reasoned that lack of education leads to so many unfortunate events in one's life. Education as a process welcomes changes in different aspects of life and promotes sustainability of society (Huges, Kroechler, and Zanden, 2019). Furthermore, education is an aspect of human endeavor that leads to socialization. Onyekwelu, (2017), also opined that education can be seen as a pointer that directs, detects, leads someone in right directions, and equally opens an avenue for problem solving. Moreover, it makes one to acquire and develop high sense of esteem, being able to know his/her personality capacity.

Education is the main source of our democratic way of life, economic, political, social and otherwise. It is the utmost way of achievement in our society enveloping human existence, and at the same time, the most economic investment society can be quilt. (Kennedy, 2012). Marriage is found in all cultures, it is process by which individuals select their partners. It is an old institution which regulates the term upon which male and female reproduce according to well defined and acceptable social norms. Marriage also could be described as an institution that legally joins a man and a woman to be one in love, body and soul in other to fulfill an obligatory right. Kendall, (2017) opined that marriage is an institution that binds people of different belief, and culture in a form of mutual dependence of each other for the purpose of building a home. UNICEF (2014), stated that marriage could be seen throughout the world as the period of joy and celebration.

Education is one of the fundamental human rights which every citizen has a right to have. Although Nigeria has had a national policy on education since 2011, it has not been fully implemented effectively due to poor managerial function, gender disparity (Ocho, 2015). Girls-child is mostly affected by these negative

factors due to early marriage. (UNICEF, 2014) Early marriage inevitably denies a girl-child the right of education, need for personal growth, development, preparation for adulthood and effective contribution to the future wellbeing of her family and society. (Dewey, 2012) Indeed, married girls who would like to continue schooling may be other practically and legally excluded from doing so. The situation in Nigeria is clear, a girl will be withdrawn from school if a good marriage prospects arises. (DHS) data also show a clear link in some other countries like Nigeria, Nepal, Kazakhstan and Indonesia. Although attitudes towards the education of girls have begun to change even in traditional societies, many parents still believe that investment in a girl's education is wasted when she is simply going to be married and work in another household. The costs of the investment in education reinforce the impetus towards the girl-child withdrawal from school. In rural areas, secondary education often means that a girl must leave to live in a school dormitory, parent fear that this may expose her to risks including pre-marital sex and pregnancy. In Northern Nigeria, for example, girls are often kept out of school for this very reason even where girls can live at home while attending schools, fears about their possible sexual activity about sexual harassment or about insecurity on the journey to and from school, discourage their attendance.

The removal from school of a young girl to marry early limits her opportunities to develop her intellect. She also loses out on socializing, making friends outside her family circle, and many other useful skills. This reduces her chances of developing her own independent identity. The girl grows up with no sense of the right to assert to her own point of view and little experience in articulating one. Lack of self-esteem or of a sense of ownership of her own body expose a girl-child to unwanted pregnancy and make her vulnerable to HIV infection. Lack of schooling also means that the girl child who must work to earn a living has no qualifications or skills, which leads her to a commercialized version of work as cleaners, cooks, child minding and may also lead her to commercial sex trade.

Adedeji (2019) opined that early marriage is the type of marriage that fails to put the both parties consent into consideration which could lead to disastrous experiences. Early marriage also defined by the (FRN 2019), Federal Republic of Nigerian constitution of 2019 as any marriage before the age of 18 years. (Wlumli, 2013), women living under Muslim law in Afghanistan define early marriage as a type that humiliate women's dignity violently as well as deprive them so many opportunities life can offer. This situation which early marriage has subjected a

girl-child is alarming and could seek attention among government, educationist, professional, students and the society at large. This is partly because early marriage appears to be more pronounced, irrespective of the huge task already done by developing countries to prevent such an outdated practice. It interferes with the right and freedom of the girl child. Marriage at a very young age has very serious consequences for both the child parents and the adolescent. In the past, some studies have worked assiduously to measure the implications of early marriage on education of the girl child which could be attributed to poor education background of the girl child family, economic status of the country and gender inequality.

Lyold and Mensch, (2018), are of the opinion that women with poor education background could be traced from the world go, and the girl-child in question may have no interest on education as well as poor abilities to cope, there by grabbing the little opportunities of leaving in the name of marriage to run away of such responsibilities. In (Ethopia, 2015), some parents are sincerely of the opinion that school dropout syndrome could be linked with early marriage in other to prevent some ugly behaviours of their adolescent i.e. unwanted pregnancies, rape, suicide attempt. (Ngugen and Wodon, 2012b)

Education has no substitute in life, and not only offers one the ability to read and write but also exposes one to realities of life which could not be bought in the market anywhere. (Richard; 2011) Education itself is a venture for moral ethics, values of life and opportunity which are necessary for mutual coexistence with others because it is a viable tool for success in setting life goals. According to Donberg (2010) education is a process of having access to optimal state of mind regardless of the situation one is at that particular moment. It has a wide scope of interest that places one in his/her area of potentialities for instance, area of skill acquisitions, entrepreneurship where one works on his/ her own in other to earn a living which could be satisfactory.

### **Statement of Problem**

Early marriage puts the youth at a disadvantage by their loss of educational opportunities. The level of the development for any nation is measured by the level of the educational attainment of the people in the area. The more people in the area are educated, the more the area will be developed. Early marriage contributes to a series of negative consequences both for young girls and the society in which they live. It is a violation of human rights in general and of girl's

rights in particular. For both girls and boys, early marriage has profound physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional impacts; cutting off educational and employment opportunities and chances of personal growth.

### **Research Questions**

1. Will there be a significant impact of early marriage between the educational attainment of both male and female adolescents in the four local government area of Oyo Town?
2. Will there be a significant impact of early marriage between the educational attainments of adolescents in Afijio and Atiba local government areas in Oyo Town?
3. Will there be a significant impact of early marriage between the educational attainment of rural and urban adolescents in the four local government areas in Oyo Town?

### **Objectives of the Study**

This research work is basically focused on developmental implications of early marriage in Nigeria, therefore, at the end; it is expected that we could be able to ascertain or proffer the causes and the developmental implications of early marriage in Nigeria and to proffer lasting solutions to minimize it. The present state of the nation (Nigeria) demands that youths should be educated first before marriage. It is on this note that the researchers would like to investigate on the causes of early marriage among adolescent in the four local government areas in Oyo Town of Oyo State the study also identified the impact it has on the educational attainment of our youths.

Therefore, the specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the reasons behind early marriage perpetuation in Nigeria using Afijio, Oyo East, Oyo West and Atiba local government as a paradigm.
2. To identify how it affect girls' wellbeing and constitute a violation of their human rights in Afijio, Oyo East, Oyo West and Atiba local government area.
3. To investigate the consequences and educational implications of early marriage in Afijio, Oyo East, Oyo West and Atiba local government area.
4. To recommend ways of ameliorating the educational implications of early marriage in Afijio, Oyo East, Oyo West and Atiba local government area.



### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study cannot be overemphasized because this invaluable research work will be of tremendous impact on existing knowledge about educational implications of early marriage in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Thus, the outcome of this work will portray a vivid idea of peoples' perceptions and impressions of early marriage in Nigeria. It will also be of great importance to ideal administrators and sociologists.

The outcome of this study will be helpful to government in enacting and implementing policies and programmes that will impede the menace of early marriage in the country. Furthermore, the ideas in this work will help immensely in implementation and meaningful decisions and policies on educational implications of early marriage as it affects girl child and the entire society. On the other hand, the findings and recommendations of this research work will help tremendously to restore adequate dignity, rights and values of girl child in Nigeria especially in Afijio local government council.

Lastly, this valuable work will be of great significance in the sense that people should know that early marriage is not a solution to the search for economic survival, protection of young girls, peer group and family pressure, controlling female behavior and sexuality, and socio-cultural and religious values but it is a violation of girl's human rights as it deprives her of freedom, opportunity for personal development, and other rights. This work will also be of academic, administrative and social assets to all Nigerians.

### **Scope of the Study**

The research work is expected to cover impact of early marriage on the educational attainment of adolescents in Nigeria. The study will be limited to four (4) local governments in Oyo town, namely Afijio, Atiba, Oyo East and Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The research design employed in this study was descriptive survey. Researchers believed that that the design focuses on people, their beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, and it helps a researcher to systematically document current opinions and information. Therefore, it is an effective way to gather data through the use

of questionnaire. This method enabled the researcher to describe an event, situation or phenomenon as it was at the time of study.

### Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises the adolescents who married from Oyo Town early.

### Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The research adopted simple random sampling technique where one hundred adolescents were randomly selected from the four local government area in Oyo town. 25 respondents were selected from each of the local government areas (i.e. Atiba, Afijio, Oyo West, Oyo East)

### Research Instrument

The instrument used for data collection in this research was questionnaire which contains two (2) sections. Section "A" was about the personal information of the respondents under the study area which are gender, Age range, sex, and occupation of the respondents while Section "B" consists of twenty (60) structured research questions drafted from each of the research questions. The respondents are to respond to a likert of four point scale questionnaire of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), and Disagree (D) as it occur for this section.

### Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were presented and analyzed using frequency table, percentage and t-test

## Results

### Analysis of Findings

**Research Question One:** Will there be a significant impact of early marriage between the education attainment of both male and female adolescent in the four local governments in Oyo Town?

ANOVA	N	Square	Adj. R	Std. Erro
Male	50	103.000	249	297.530
Female	50	212.589	3	.815

The table above shows that there is a significant difference in the impact of early marriage between education attainment of male and female adolescents ( $F_{(3,249)} = 46.724, P < 0.05$ ) which is statistically significant.

**Research Question Two:** Will there be significant different between the education attainment adolescents in the four local government in Oyo town?

Factor	N	x	SD	df	T	Sig.	Remark
Early marriage	50	32.00	8.00	2	1.502	1.001	Sig.
Educational attainment	50	68.67	13.715				Sig.
Total	100						

The table above shows that  $t_{(8)} = -1.502$ ,  $P > 0.05$ . This indicates that there is significant difference in early marriage and educational attainment of adolescents.

**Research Question Three:** There will be a significant impact of early marriage between the educational attainment of rural and urban adolscents in four local government area of Oyo town?

ANOVA		R	Adj. R	Std. Error
Valid	Urban	62	72.75	5.723
	Rural	38	27.25	7.021
	Total	100	100.0	100.0

The table above shows that there is a significant difference in early marriage among adolescents in urban and rural areas ( $F_{(3,249)} = 35.213$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) which is statistically significant.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings from the study show that there are significant difference in the educational attainment of adolescents and early marriage among genders and area of settlements, that is within urban and rural areas. It was obvious from the study that early marriage has a significant relationship on the educational attainments within the study areas. The study supports the findings of Okeke (2014) who explored the roles of early marriage among adolescents as it predicts their future attainments among are maturity towards fatherhood and motherhood. Furthermore, the study conducted by Eboh (2016) shows the fact that educational attainment could be complicated when an individual gets into marriage at the early stage of life. Inferably, early marriage among adolescents can hamper their success academically, physically and more.

Considering the gender related issues to the choice of marriage at early stage, it was obvious in the study that female adolescents were the most affected by early marriage which might be considered as the basis for their level of academic attainment within the scope of the study. The present study shows that gender is arguably and unarguably significantly predetermines views about early marriage. This study supports the findings of Gilbert, Burnett, Phau & Haar (2010) who found out that there are still work-related differences between males and females which was due to the time of marriage.

The present study also finds out that early marriage is more realized among those who lived in the rural areas in relation to the level among those within urban areas. This study supports the findings by Sexena and Shobha (2019) that examined the influence of urbanization on individuals over marriage. There is no gainsaying therefore; there is significant difference in the early marriage among those within urban and rural areas.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has shown that child marriage is an accepted cultural practice in many countries especially in developing countries with more prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa. It is still widely sanctioned, even though it is a violation of the human rights of young girls due to various motives. Early marriage can violate the rights of girls and boys, both in this generation and the next but this is an issue that impacts upon girls in far larger numbers and with more intensity. More emphasis has been given to girls as the experience for boys is, less likely to be exploitative or physically harmful as it is for girls. The imposition of a marriage partner on children or adolescents who are in no way ready for married life, and whose marriage will deprive them of freedom, opportunity for personal development, and other rights including health and well-being, education, and participation in civic life, nullifies the meaning of the convention on the rights of the child's core protections for those concerned.

To trickle this challenging phenomenon, a joint effort to formulate and implement policies and strategies is needed. Actions to fulfill or restore the rights of those already married should go hand in hand with preventive actions to insure that all of the interventions are available to married, as well as to unmarried girls.

Providing economic opportunities to young girls: poverty is one of the major factors underpinning early marriage. Efforts to improve the access of young

married and non-married girls to economic resources should focus on expanding employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. Micro-credit programs provide women and girls with the basic economic opportunities they often lack and a social support network that promotes changes in attitudes and behavior. It serves as a means of granting them higher status and more control over their lives – including their options in marriage.

### **Recommendations**

The discussion in this study so far has revealed some key facts about early marriage and its developmental implications in the society especially in Nigeria. Thus, below are the stated recommendations from the researcher:

- Promoting education of girls: educating girls seems to be the ideal solution since, if sufficiently prolonged; it helps to delay age of marriage, and confers other benefits as well. However, sending children to school costs money and where money is scarce, it is unlikely to be spent on girls. In addition, due attention ought to be paid to the provisions of section 18(1) of the 1999 constitution, Article 28 of the CRC, and article 11 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, all of which guarantee every child a right to free and compulsory basic education.
- Government should establish skill acquisition centres in case where the girls cannot benefit from formal education; they must be trained in different skills, according to their choice and the state of the market.
- Enactment of laws regulating marriage in the country will be of tremendous help in the fight against early marriage because almost the majority of perpetrators are practicing it (early marriage) under the influence of ignorance. Making laws and sensitizing the public on the effects of early marriage on girls' child and the entire society will bring it (early marriage) to an end. Thus, governments should enact laws on early marriage based on the following:
- Long -term policies that select to change paternalistic institutions and that may end women's economic dependency on men should be adopted.
- Time to time sensitization is needed. Non-Governmental Organizations should campaign aggressively and raise awareness using mass media about early marriage. Sensitization on developmental implications of early marriage from time to time will increase women's status and power within the family and community. In other words, social attitudes must be changed on early marriage.

- Furthermore, government should try as much as possible to provide the basic social infrastructures/amenities for the masses to help them in the area of means of livelihood in order to reduce poverty which is the major cause of early marriage and to introduce a rural development program which will help in transformation of the communities.
- Finally, all hands should be on deck to make sure that early marriage could be reduced if not eradicated in the society because it is not only girls' child that suffers the implications but the society at large.

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