

Effects of early marriage essay sample

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



The review of the literature for this study focuses on the effects of early marriage to the young people. The main problem about early marriage focuses on financial ones. Young couple is just depressed by their low income. Lack of proper education, inexperience & youth do not help the young to receive a large payment for the jobs they do. Some young people decide to get married even without any sources to existing. Usually young couple with low income faces a lot of problems. And with the help of their parents, they are able to survive without a good career or job. The reason for lack of money in a young family is not only a low income but also radiant expectations of the young. Teenagers think they will be able to buy all that things immediately while their parents have needed years for achieving such wealth. LOCAL STUDY

Marriage, as a fundamental social and cultural institution and as the most common milieu for bearing and rearing children, profoundly shapes sexual behaviors and practices. It is undeniable that early marriage is a controversial yet hot topic that gets the attention of the professionals across many fields such as economy, psychology and sociology. The age at first marriage variegates across the globe. Being married before the age of 18 has been a social norm in third world countries [refer to Appendix A]. The percentage of women being married before age 18 is estimated from 20 to 50 percent in average in developing countries (Joyce, et al., 2001). But then, developed countries are unlikely to experience the resembling pattern of matrimony.

The marital union is normally delayed too long although this practice is believed to bring the most apparent reason for the breakdown in sexual

ethics (Orsi, 2001). Out of its wealth and egoistic, western society chooses to marry later in life until they have built a decent maturity in age, education and financial state. I seriously don't understand the urgency of getting married. I am just 22 and I think I am not physically, emotionally, mentally and socially ready to get married. My parents are pestering me with everyday saying that once they have the right match, they are marrying me off. And in all this I wonder if they'd ever like to know what my feelings and emotions regarding the marriage and the person I am going to marry are. I know the person who I am going to marry. I hate to be born in the community where it is necessary for the girls to get married at a terribly early age. One should believe in marriage as the immortality of soul. And not just a sudden and emphatic hitching. -Jain Palanca

I cannot stand when people get married to someone after a few months or even a year! Again, YOU DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT YOUR SIGNIFICANT OTHER IN THIS AMOUNT OF TIME TO KNOW THAT YOU WANT TO BE WITH HIM/HER FOREVER! I admit, I would have got married when I was 18 if Josh would have been stupid enough to ask me. I'm glad I didn't. We would have never lasted and I can almost bet these relationships won't either. A marriage is a COMMITMENT to your husband/wife that you will be with them your entire life! If you still can't decide what you want for dinner tomorrow, YOU DON'T NEED TO GET MARRIED! And don't just get married because you're having a baby either. -Lovely Cupang

FOREIGN LITERATURE

1. BRIEF OVERVIEW ON EARLY MARRIAGE IN AFRICA

1. 1 What is the early marriage?

The term “ early marriage” is used to refer to both formal marriages and informal unions in which a girl lives with a partner as if married before age of 18 (UNICEF 2005; Forum on Marriage and the rights of women and girls 2001). For UNIFPA (2006) Early marriage, also known as Child marriage, is defined as “ any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, physiologically, and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing.” Child marriage, on the other hand, involves either one or both spouses being children and may take place with or without formal registration, and under civil, religious or customary laws. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the most comprehensive international bill of rights for women, states that any betrothal or marriage of a child should not have any legal status. The Committee that monitors this convention states further in General Recommendation 21 (Article 16(2)) that the minimum age for marriage for both male and female should be 18 years, the age when “ they have attained full maturity and capacity to act”. Most early marriages are arranged and based on the consent of parents and often fail to ensure the best interests of the girl child. Early marriages often include some elements of force, (Otoo-Oyortey and Pobi 2003)

The lack of an overarching definition of early marriage in international conventions has generated some debate. Some scholars and activists, argue that instead of looking for a universal age at which girls and boys should not marry, the focus should be put instead on eliminating the unwanted effects of early marriage (Women’s human rights resources, [<https://assignbuster.com/effects-of-early-marriage-essay-sample/>](http://www. law-lib.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

utoronto. ca/Diana/index. htm). For example, some commentators suggests that a universal age of marriage is not appropriate, in part because societies have different understanding of what it means to be a child as well as different socio-economic and cultural realities. Bunting (1999) proposes that governments should be allowed to set the age of marriage below 18 years of age, but that the onus is on them to demonstrate that this lower age does not result in any discrimination or adverse consequences for women. 1.

2 Context of early marriage in Africa

While more women are now marrying at later ages, in many regions, early marriage remains the norm. Overall, 20-50 percent of women in developing countries are married by the age of 18, with the highest percentages in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (Singh and Samara 1996 cited by LeFevre et al. 2004).

Early motherhood has been the subject of a growing number of studies, research projects and intervention programs in Africa. African women in general marry at a much earlier age than their nonAfrican counterparts, leading to early pregnancies. Surveys carried out in some Sahelian countries offer alarming examples. In Niger, for example, according to the 1992 Health and Demographic Survey (HDS), 47% of women aged between 20 and 24 were married before the age of 15 and 87% before the age of 18. A total of 53% had also had a child before the age of 18, (Locoh Therese 2000). The following table shows the data about women ages 20 to 24 married by 18 years old

Table1: women ages 20 to 24 married by 18 years old

Country Child Marriage Prevalence

Niger 77%

Chad 71%

Mali 65%

Bangladesh 65%

Guinea 65%

Nepal 56%

Mozambique 57%

Uganda 54%

Burkina Faso 52%

India 50%

Ethiopia 49%

Yemen 48%

Eritrea 47%

Togo 31%

South Africa 8%

Source: Demographic Health Survey (DHS) data from 1995 to 2003 The table above, shows that in Africa, there are countries with very high rates of early marriage, such as Niger (77 percent), Chad (71percent), and Mozambique (57 percent), but others such as Togo in West Africa have a more moderate rate of early marriage (31 percent), while South Africa has a fairly small percentage of young women who marry early (8 percent), Maltur et ali.

2003). 4 2. REASONS FOR EARLY MARRIAGE IN AFRICA

The factors which are presented below are not a particularity of African countries because they seem to be almost the same all over the world with very few disparities due to cultures.

2. 1 Economic survival strategies

Poverty is one of the major factors underpinning early marriage. Where poverty is acute, a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden where one less daughter is one less mouth to feed (UNICEF 2001, Forum on marriage and the rights of women and Girls 2001; Mathur 2003 and Nour 2006). Parents encourage the marriage of their daughters while they are still children in hope that the marriage will benefit them both financially and socially, while also relieving financial burdens on the family. The marriage to a much older – sometimes even elderly – man is practice common in some societies.

In traditional societies in Sub-Saharan Africa, the bride's family may receive cattle from the groom, or the groom's family, as the bride price for their daughter, (UNICEF 2001). The following case of a Zimbabwean girl is one of many cases of girls who are married off at a very young age due to economic constraints. In August 2001, a ten-year-old girl in Zimbabwe was reported in a local newspaper as having been sold to be a wife to a 40-year-old man in order for the family to obtain cash for food. She was sold for \$2000 Zim that is US\$7. This sum would perhaps have bought two sacks of maize. The previous wife of the man the child was to marry had died of AIDS (Forum on marriage and the rights of women and Girls 2001: 8)

In traditional societies – where infant mortality was very high and survival depended on a family's ability to produce its own food or goods for sale –

child marriage helped to maximize the number of pregnancies and ensure enough surviving children to meet household labour needs (Mathur 2003). Additionally, poor families tend to marry off girls at the same time to help reduce the burden of high marriage ceremony expenses.

2. 2 Socio-cultural and religious values

In communities where child marriage is prevalent, there is strong social pressure on families to conform. Failure to conform can often result in ridicule, disapproval or family shame. Invariably, local perceptions on the ideal age for marriage, the desire for submissive wives, extended family patterns and other customary requirements, are all enshrined in local customs or religious norms. In many contexts child marriage is legitimized by patriarchy, and related family structures, which ensure that marriage transfers a father's role over his girl child to her future spouse. The marriage or betrothal of children in parts of Africa and Asian is valued as a means of consolidating powerful relations between families, for sealing deals over land or other property, or even for settling disputes (UNIFPA, 2006) The strong religious message also enforce the view that marrying early is best as supported by the following views of one priest representing Ethiopian's orthodox church. He argues that " these days, with western ideas spread everywhere; girls stay unmarried as late as 30. It is very scientific and modern, but in our church it is prohibited. Such girls are neither clean, nor blessed", (Barnes et al. 1998).

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2. 3 Value of virginity and protection of young girls

Early marriage is one way to ensure that a wife is protected, or placed firmly under male control; that she is submissive to her husband and works hard

for her in-laws' household; that the children she bears are legitimate, (UNICEF 2001; Mathur, 2003 and Nour 2006). On the other hand, for many societies that prize virginity before marriage, early marriage can manifest itself in a number of practices designed to 'protect' a girl from unsanctioned sexual activity. In North-East Africa and parts of the Middle East in particular, control may also include the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM to restrict sexual pleasure and temptation.

Some parents withdraw their girls from school as soon as they begin to menstruate; fearing that exposure to male pupils or teachers puts them at risk. These practices are all intended to shield the girl from male sexual attention, but in the eyes of concerned parents, marriage is seen to offer the ultimate protection measure. In Wars and civil conflicts parents or caregivers resort to child marriage as a protective mechanism or survival strategy. Displaced populations living in refugee camps may feel unable to protect their daughters from rape, and so marriage to a warlord or other authority figure may provide improved protection. For the young girls orphans or separated with their parents or relatives the only way to survive and to get protection is to get married, (De Smedt 1998).

3. KEY ISSUES SURROUNDING EARLY MARRIAGE (CONSEQUENCES)

There tends to be a relationship between age of marriage, level of education, poverty, and health: poorer, less educated girls tend to marry earlier and tend also to have poorer health. The following consequences tend to flow from early marriage:

3. 1 Health and related outcomes

Early child bearing and unwanted pregnancies: Young girls who get married will most likely be forced into having sexual intercourse with their, usually much older, husbands. This has severe negative health consequences as the girl is often not psychologically, physically and sexually mature. Early marriage is associated with early child bearing. Young married girls are under tremendous pressure to prove their fertility in the first year of marriage. Girls, who marry young, inevitably have children early, and have many children, because their knowledge of contraception is poor and their power to negotiate its use is weak.

Domestic violence and sexual abuse: As young girls are often married to men who are much older than themselves, the age difference tends to reinforce the powerlessness of the girl, who is thus at greater risk of abuse and less likely to assert herself. Young married girls are more likely to be beaten or threatened and more likely to believe that a husband might sometimes be justified in beating his wife. Women who believe that are more likely to have been married before age 18 than those who believe that there is never justification. Child brides are often more susceptible to domestic violence. (USAID Gender Assessment, 2003-2005). In Egypt, data indicates that 29% of married adolescents were beaten by their spouses—or their spouses and others. Of these, 41% were beaten when they were pregnant. (Population Council, 2000 cited by ICRW, 2008).

High maternal mortality and morbidity: The World Health Organization estimates that the risk of death following pregnancy is twice as great for

women between 15 and 19 years than for those between the ages of 20 and 24. The maternal mortality rate can be up to five times higher for girls aged between 10 and 14 than for women of about twenty years of age. Pregnant adolescents face far more health problems than older women, particularly single girls who often receive less prenatal care. Adolescents are far more susceptible to suffering from anemia than adults, which greatly increase the risk and complications linked to pregnancy. They are equally more at risk of malnutrition, high blood pressure linked to pregnancy and eclampsia than women who are over 20, (Women's International Network 2000 and IHEU 2006)

Increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS: Fear of HIV infection, for example, has encouraged men in some African countries to seek young virgin – and therefore uninfected –partners. On top of pregnancy-related complications, young married girls are also at high risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Young married girls are even at higher risk because their older husbands may already be infected in previous sexual relationships. Furthermore, the age difference between the girl and the husband and her low economic status make it almost impossible for the girl to negotiate safe sex or demand fidelity. Early marriage usually means that young girls enter marriage without adequate information about critical sexual intercourse, contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy and childbirth. 3. 2 Lack of power

It is hypothesized that women who are married as children have less decision making power than women whose marriage is delayed until

adulthood. They don't have ability to make decision on their own health care, contraception, household budget, daily household purchases, visit to family and friends etc, (UNICEF, 1996). They have little power in relation to their husbands and in-laws. 3. 4 Divorce or abandonment and Early Widowhood

Some desperate girls and women who have been forced into marriage try to run away or take other avenues to leave their spouses; others are abandoned by their spouses. However, the girls and women are usually left with the responsibility of raising children without the husband or family's financial support, thus making them more likely to live in poverty. In many cultures, husbands are often many years older than their young brides, and consequently die while the girl is still young. Traditionally, girls were not allowed to remarry or were passed onto their dead husbands' brothers. Furthermore, the girl's families are unlikely to accept her back once she has become widowed, (UNICEF 2001). In cultures that permit polygamy, the youngest co-wife is required to care for elder co-wives. This relationship is sometimes a daughter/mother relationship, but in many cases the elder wives view the younger with bitterness and resentment.

3. 5 Consequences for children

The health problems linked to early marriage not only affect the pregnant mother and the fetus, but also continue after child birth. The consequences reach beyond the lives of young married girls themselves to the next generation. The immaturity and lack of education of a young mother undermines her capacity for nurture evidence shows that infant mortality

among the children of very young mothers is higher – sometimes two times higher – than among those of older peers, (UNICEF2001)

3. 6 Reinforcement of gender stereotypes and roles

The lack of other opportunities and the powerlessness that often accompanies early marriage combine to perpetuate the gender roles of girls and women and reinforces cultural traditions that support early marriage as a desirable practice.

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. Numerous severe consequences result from the practice of early marriage. Early marriage is intrinsically linked to low levels of education, high levels of violence and abuse, social isolation, severe health

risks and harmful power dynamics and results in increased gender inequality and vulnerability to poverty for girls, young women, families and the society as a whole. This practice also threatens the international development effort to fight against poverty and related challenges in developing countries.