



General trends of girl-child marriage in Bauchi metropolis of Bauchi state, North-Eastern, Nigeria

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Abstract

Girl-child marriage remains highly prevalent today and it attained substantial negative development impacts in the areas of education, labor force participation, health, violence, and empowerment. A research was carried out to identify the general trends of girl-child marriage in Bauchi metropolis of Bauchi state, North-Eastern, Nigeria. Primary data were collected through the use of structural questionnaires and verbal interview. The total of 330 questionnaires were allocated to different areas within Bauchi metropolis. The results obtained revealed that illiteracy and lack of awareness are the major causes of early girl-child marriage in the study areas. While other respondent's belief that poverty is the predominant cause of girl-child marriage. Meanwhile, other respondents recommend that religious perspective plays a key role for girl-child marriage in the study areas. Therefore, it can be recommended that the society should be intensively enlightened, sensitization and awareness on the health and general implications of girl-child marriage in the study areas.

Keywords: Girl-child marriage, general trends, awareness

Introduction

Girl-child marriage remains highly prevalent today and it has substantial negative development impacts in the areas of education, labor force participation, health, violence, and empowerment (see the review article by Parsons *et al.*, 2015^[37], in this issue; see also Brown 2012 and Klugman *et al.* 2014)^[33]. As assessed by Dixon-Mueller (2008)^[12] on the basis of various physiological and social criteria and data from a large number of Demographic and Health Surveys, boys and girls aged 14 and younger are too young for sexual, marital, and reproductive transitions, while 15–17-year-olds may or may not be too young, depending on circumstances. This suggests that the traditional cut-off point of 18 years of age can be seen as appropriate for defining child marriage. The importance of child marriage for a wide range of development outcomes explains why in many countries child marriage is now prohibited by law. However, such laws often have little effect. In India for example, marriage before the age of 18 has been illegal for about three decades, but about half of all girls still marry before 18. In Nigeria legal limitations on the age of marriage have not fundamentally altered the practice (Toyo 2006)^[49]. The lack of impact of legislation is related in part to cultural and religious traditions (see, e.g. Faizunnisa and Ul Haque 2003 for Pakistan, as well as the articles by Prettitore 2015, and Scolaro *et al.* 2015, in this special issue). Beyond consent law reforms, other interventions are often needed to curb the incidence of child marriage. While the elimination of child marriage has now been recognized as a major policy issue, and is likely to be included in the sustainable development goals to be agreed upon by the international community, its measurement has remained relatively unsophisticated. To our knowledge, most existing studies simply report the incidence of child marriage, which is the share of girls who marry early (typically before the age of 18, but sometimes also considering a threshold of 15 years) within a population, as well as the median age of marriage in a country (see UNFPA 2012, as well as UNICEF 2014, for recent estimates of the extent of child marriage). Measures that would better take into account how

young girls are when they marry are often not provided. No tests are done to assess the robustness of comparisons of age at marriage between countries, groups within countries, or time periods, for example with respect to the age threshold used to identify child marriage or the specific measure relied upon to measure the extent of child marriage. Nguyen and Wodon (2012) suggest that better measurement of child marriage can be obtained by adopting the techniques used for the measurement of poverty, and they illustrate these techniques with an application to one African country (Nigeria). The objective of this research work is to use that approach to provide estimates of general trends over time in the extent of child marriage—not only its incidence, but also what we refer to as the child marriage gap and the squared child marriage gap.

1. Statement of the Research Problem

In the efforts to explain and understand why, how and what are the implication of girl-child marriage in Bauchi metropolis of Bauchi State. Girl-child marriage is a global issue that has both positive and more of negative implication for young girls which include lack of access to education, freedom of will and vulnerability to health problems such as visico vaginal fistula, infant and maternal mortality and sexually transmitted diseases. Despite the fact that girl-child marriage poses numerous threats, a married girl is perceived as safer from harm because it is believed that she has a husband to watch over her.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To assess how Customs and traditions influence girl-child marriage
- To examine the Influence of religion on girl-child marriage
- To ascertain the Influence of education on girl-child marriage in the study area
- To examine how poverty of Parents influence girl-child marriage

Concept of Socio-Economic Status

According to National Center for Educational Statistics (2008) socio economic status (SES) is a combination of economic and sociological factors which are used to measure a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation. When analyzing a family's socio-economic status, the household income, education and occupation are examined, as well as combined income, of an individual, when their own attributes are assessed.

In every human society, whether rural or urban, there are different means by which people can be grouped into social positions. In other words, most of the societies today are formed into different categories of people. The immediate social environment of family comprises of the social status determined by the economic and political hierarchy of the system. However, to determine individual SES, a combination of factors is involved. Such factors include prestige, power and financial stand of such a person. Thus, from time immemorial, individuals have been divided into masters and servants, aristocrats and commoners, bourgeoisies and proletariats. Some individuals in the society are likely to be rich while some are poor due to hierarchical nature of the society.

1. Income: Means wages, salaries, profits, rents and any flow of earnings received. It can also come in the form of workers compensation, social security, pensions, interest or dividends, royalties, trusts, alimony, or other governmental, public, or family financial assistance. Income can as well be considered in terms of relative and absolute forms. Relative income dictates a person or family's savings and consumption based on the family's income in relation to others. Absolute income, as theorized by economist Keynes (2008) is the relationship in which when income increases, so will consumption, but not at the same rate. Income may have an important effect upon life chances. For example, on the chances of owning one's own home, and on life expectancy. Boushey and Weller (2005) ^[6] opined that low income families focus on meeting immediate needs and do not accumulate wealth that could be passed onto future generations thus, increasing inequality families with higher and expendable income can accumulate wealth and focus on meeting immediate needs while being able to consume and enjoy luxuries and affluence. (Boushey and Weller, 2005) ^[6]. More so, income of an individual determines his or her health condition and life span. In view of this Marmot (2004), Werner, Malaspina, and Rabinowitz (2007) remarked that, low income and little education have shown to be predictors of a range of physical and mental health problems, ranging from respiratory viruses, arthritis, and schizophrenia. These may be due to environmental conditions in their workplace, or in the case of mental illnesses may be the entire cause of that persons social predicament to begin with.

1.2. Education: Education equally plays a role in income. Median earnings increase with each level of education. According to American Psychological Association Task Force on Socio Economic Status Report (2001), higher levels of education are associated with better economic and psychological outcome (i.e. more income, more control, and greater social support and networking). Education plays a vital role in skill sets for acquiring jobs, as well as specific

qualities that satisfy people with higher socioeconomic status from lower socio economic status. Lareau (2003) speaks on the idea of concerted cultivation, where middle class parents take an active role in their children's education and development by suing controlled organized activities and fostering a sense of entitlement through encouraged discussion. He said further that families with lower income do not participate in this movement, causing their children to have constraint. According to him, a division in education attainment is thus born out of these two differences in child rearing. Lower income families can have children who do not succeed to the levels of the middle income children, who can have a greater sense of entitlement, be more argumentative, or be better prepared for adult life.

1.3. Occupation: Occupational prestige as one component of socio economic status, comprises both income and educational attainment. More so, it shows achievement in skills required for the job. Occupational status measures social position by describing job characteristics, decision making ability and control, and psychological demand on the job. Occupational status of an individual can either be grouped in the high SES classification or low SES classification depending on the type and importance attached to it in the society. In line with this, Scott and Leonhard (2005) remarked that, some of the most prestigious occupations are physicians and surgeons, lawyers, chemical and biomedical engineers, and communications analysts. These jobs according to them considered to be grouped in the high SES classification provide more challenging work and ability and greater control over working conditions. Those jobs with lower ranking were food preparation workers, Fer attendants, bartenders and helpers, dish washers, Janitors, maids and housekeepers, vehicle cleaners and parking lot attendants. The jobs that were less valued were also paid significantly less and are more laborious, very hazardous, and provide less autonomy.

Occupation is the most difficult factor to measure because so many exist, and there are so many competing scales. Many scales rank occupations based on the level of skill involved, from unskilled to skilled manual labour to professional, or use a combined measure using the education level needed and income involved.

1.4. Wealth: Wealth is another important variable which can be used when determining SES. Macarthur Research Network on SES and Health (2008) defines wealth as a set of economic reserves or assets, presents a source of security providing a measure of a household ability to meet emergencies, absorb economic shocks, or provide the means to live comfortably. Wealth reflects intergenerational transitions as well as accumulation of income and savings. Income, age, marital status, family size, religion, occupation, and education are predictors for wealth attainment.

2. Concept of Girl-child Marriage

Childhood marriage is a serious global issue. It has negative implications for young girls and women that include lack of access to education, freedom of will, and the vulnerability to health problems, such as infant and maternal mortality and sexually transmitted diseases. In Nigeria, the incidence is

highest in the northern region, where the practice of Islam is also most prevalent.

Childhood marriage is a complicated issue that affects the human rights of women across the globe. This issue is considered a violation on a major scale by activists today because of its harmful implications (Forward, 2008). A childhood marriage is defined as a union where one or both partners are 18 years of age or younger. This usually happens through arrangement or parental consent (Population Council, 2004). In most cases, it is the female who is underage and married off to a much older male. This creates many problems that affect the rights of women globally. When married off at such a young age many girls experience lower access to education, healthcare, and general freedom of will (Population Council, 2004). They are more prone to diseases such as HIV/AIDS, as well as maternal and infant mortality. Because of the recognized dangers and implications, with the help of international conventions the marriage age has been established at 18 (Population Council, 2004; International Women's Health Coalition, 2005). The issue, however, is still a major problem as there are other circumstances surrounding the issue.

In Nigeria, the incidence of child marriages has heavy implications that affect the healthcare and treatment of women in the Fry. The incidence is much higher in the northern region of Nigeria where prenatal care and free will for young married women are lower than in other regions of the Fry (Bello and Erulkar, 2007).

3. Girl-child Marriage in Nigeria

In Nigeria, young girls find themselves married off to men who are as much as 12 years older than them (Population Council, 2004). The younger the child, the larger the age difference tends to be (Bello and Erulkar, 2007). In many cases, girls are place great risks and implications on their life and health (Forward, 2008). The harmful effects of the childhood marriage derive precisely from this gap in age. A difference in age usually means a difference in education, and what is most harmful, sexual experience (International Women's Health Coalition, 2005).

The lack of education is a major consequence of girls who marry young (Population Council, 2004). Many times the incidence of poverty forces the parents to take the child out of school to marry her off in order to get money from the lebola (Forward, 2008). In Nigeria, about 73% of young married girls receive no formal schooling at all, compared with 8% of young girls who are unmarried. Research also shows that only 2% of young married girls between the ages of 15 and 19 are currently in school. This is compared to 69% of their unmarried parts. Literacy rate among these young girls is low as well (Bello and Erulkar, 2007).

4. Causes of Child Marriage

Perhaps the most common factor amongst these Fries is the practice of Sharia, the law derived from Islamic religion. In Nigeria, Islam had taken firm root even before the arrival of the Colonial government. The Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio not only infused the practice of Islam in its purest form in the region, but equally replaced the people's culture with the culture of Islam. The belief is that girls should be married at a tender age to prevent promiscuity and to strengthen existing bond between families. From the religious

perspective, a marriageable age under Islamic law is the period of attainment of puberty.

Closely related to the above is the belief that girl-child marriage protects virginity. The notion that when a girl marries at a tender age, it helps to keep the honour of the family as she remains a virgin before marriage. This is also to prevent unwanted pregnancy and abortion as is common among teenagers.

Poverty, an economic and social menace plays a major role in the prevalent of child marriage in Nigeria. Most parents are poor and cannot afford basic amenities such as food, clothing and shelter. As a result they are less concerned with family planning and focused on their survival. It is therefore this survival instinct of most parents that prompt girl-child marriages. The burden of caring for these girls is automatically transferred to their spouses. On the other hand, girls are giving out in marriage in exchange for unpaid loans or erasing debts owed by the parents.

A high Illiteracy rate in rural areas especially in Northern Nigeria has perpetuated the culture of child marriage. Ignorance is also pervasive as people do not understand the negative consequences the practice is having on the society.

5. Health Implication of Girl-child Marriage

Whatever justifications or explanations are given for girl-child marriage, scholars and health professionals believe that the consequences of girl-child marriage are largely negative, particularly for young women. In this regard, WHO (1999, in UN ECA 1999) argues that:

By remaining in subservient roles, whether as daughters within the parental household or as girl-child brides, opportunities to develop the psychological and social skills necessary to make decisions and life choices remain severely restricted. These restrictions are compounded further by the fact that young women are denied educational opportunities, even at the primary level.

When we come to Ethiopia, many studies on the consequences of girl-child marriage have been primarily concerned with the health risks of the practice. According to the baseline survey results of the National Committee on Traditional Practices in Ethiopia (NCTPE 1997), the most frequently mentioned harmful effects of girl-child marriage are

1. Problems related to girl-child pregnancy and Childbirth;
2. Harm to the uterus and/or the body in general including the lack of thrive, sickness of the girl-child and damage to the uterus and the vagina sometimes leading to death;
3. Psychological problems;
4. Loveless marriage often ending in divorce or separation;
5. The girl-child being not mature enough to run a household; and
6. High expenses related to the marriage, since it often ends in girl-child divorce or the running away of the bride.

Sample Size

The framework below show the population of the resident in the urban, semi-urban and the rural areas. The total sample size of this study is 352 respondents (i.e. 330 questionnaire respondents and 22 interviewed respondents).

Table 1: Area Population with Sample Sizes of the Study

	Area	Population of Resident	Sample Size
Urban	Nasarawa Jahun	1500	58
	Kobi	1300	58
Semi-Urban	Inkil	1150	58
	Yalwa	1280	58
Rural	Bishi	980	58
	Bayara	800	58
Total		7010	348

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Sampled ward distribution with their respective area were presented in the tables below: the distribution pattern of the study wards as can be seen in table 1 was done based on the samples size of the study population in accordance with the Krejcie & Morgan method of sample size, 254 samples represent 100% was distributed in three form as 19.3% in Nasarawa Jahun, 17.7% in Inkil, Kobi and Yalwa while 13.8% in Bayara and Bishi.

A total of 330 respondents were selected using Krejcie's and Morgan sample size (2000) for this study which can be detailed as 110 respondents from the urban areas, 110 from the semi-urban areas and 110 respondents from the rural areas using simple random sampling techniques. Also a purposive sampling techniques was used in selecting Nasarawa Jahun and Kobi as an urban area due to high level of educated people and social amenities; Inkil and Yalwa

1. Socio-Demographic Variable of Respondents

Table 3: Socio-demographic Variables of Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	160	63
	Female	94	37
	Total	254	100
Age	15yrs and below	6	2.4
	16 - 25yrs	70	27.6
	26 - 35yrs	97	38.2
	36 - 45yrs	36	14.2
	Above 45yrs	45	17.7
Total		254	100
Educational Qualification	Qur'anic/Islamiyya	52	20.5
	Primary	21	8.3
	O-level	66	26
	Graduate	89	35
	Post Graduate	26	10.2
Total		254	100
Occupation	Civil Servant	88	34.6
	Business	57	22.4
	Farming	27	10.6
	Others	82	32.3
	Total	254	100

Sources: Field Survey, 2024.

The table 3 reveals the majority of the respondents were males while only 37 percent are as females, age distribution of respondents shows the least respondents to be at age group of 15years and below with only 2.4 percentage of respondents whereas all other respondents were above 15 years old with the age category of 26 - 35yrs to record the highest respondents which implies that majority of the respondents were aged enough to proffer information regarding marriage issues.

Town as semi-urban area due to moderate level of educated people and some few social amenities then Bishi and Bayara village as rural area with virtually no school, hospital or basic social amenities. For the interview, a total of 22 respondents were selected purposively in such a way that each ward, 2 religion leaders and a ward head was selected making a total 18 respondents while the remaining four (4) were selected from 2 non-governmental organizations (NGO) staff for interviews and all this was achieved with the help of 2 research assistants.

Results

Table 2: Distribution of Study Area

Location	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Urban	94	37
Semi-Urban	90	35.4
Rural	70	27.6
Total	254	100

Sources: Field Survey, 2024

From table 2, it reveals that respondents in Urban area fo Bauchi local governemnt area constitute 37 percentage of the study, respondents in Semi-Urban area Bauchi local governemnt area constitute 35.4 percentage of the study and finally the respondents in rural area of Bauchi local government area are 27.6 percentage.

2. General Trend of Girl-child Marriage

Data presented here were basically addressing the issues of girl-child marriage as perceived by respondents in the three divisional zones of the study area.

What is considered as girl-child marriage according to respondents during an interview who indicate that: Majority of the respondents as affirm that girl-child marriage is considered as marriage below the age of 15 years since must relate it to religion perspective.

Table 4: Custom and traditions influence girl-child marriage

Categories		Frequency	Percent
Responses	Yes	228	89.8
	No	26	10.2
	Total	254	100

Sources: Field Survey, 2024.

Most (89.8%) of the respondents in the study area indicates that custom and traditions has influence on the cases of girl-child marriage while only few (10.2%) of the respondents indicates custom and traditions has no much influence on girl-child marriage in the study area as can be seen from the data in table 4.

Table 5: Influence of religion on girl-child marriage

Categories		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Responses	Yes	234	92.1
	No	20	7.9
	Total	254	100

Sources: Field Survey, 2024.

Most (92.1%) of the respondents in the study area indicates that religion has a greater influence on the cases of girl-child marriage while only few (7.9%) of the respondents indicates religion has no much influence on girl-child marriage in the study area as can be seen from the data in table 5.

Table 6: Influence of education on girl-child marriage in the study area

Categories		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Responses	Yes	180	70.9
	No	74	29.1
	Total	254	100

Sources: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 6 reveals that majority (70.9%) of the respondents in the study area perceived that illiteracy has a great influence on girl-child marriage while only 29.1 percentage of them denied that illiteracy has no influence on girl-child marriage in the study area.

Table 7: Parent poverty influence girl-child marriage

Categories		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Responses	Yes	156	61.4
	No	98	38.6
	Total	254	100

Sources: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 7 data reveals that majority (61.4%) of the respondents in the study area perceived that parent poverty influence girl-child marriage issues while only 38.6 percentage of the respondents ignour that parent poverty influence girl-child marriage in the study area.

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