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Effect of Early Marriage on Transition Rates of Girls from Primary to Secondary Schools in Nyamusi Division of Nyamira County, Kenya

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to establish the effect of early marriages on transition rates of girls from primary to secondary schools in Nyamusi Division, Nyamira County, Kenya. Evidence collected from education offices in Nyamira County and in Nyamusi Division indicates low transition rates of girls from primary to secondary schools. This study used descriptive research design. The study targeted 61 public primary schools and 14 public secondary schools in the division, 567 teachers, 75 headteachers and 3,728 girls and Area Education Officer in Nyamusi Division. Therefore, the accessible population was 4,371. In this study, public primary and secondary schools were stratified into three educational Zones from which stratified simple random sampling was used to select a total of 45 schools to participate in this study. Simple random sampling was used to select the schools from each zone. All the 45 headteachers of the selected schools were purposively selected to participate in this study. This study used questionnaires, interview schedules and documents analysis to collect data for the study. The validity and reliability of the research instruments were tested before being used in data collection. Data in this study were collected by use of both closed-ended and open-ended questionnaire items. Quantitative data was presented by use of frequency tables and analyzed by use of percentages. The qualitative data was categorized into distinct themes as shown by the responses of the respondents. The results were presented by use of frequency tables and analyzed and interpreted by use of percentages. Based on the findings of this study, it was established that early marriages are practiced within the division and it affects girls from proceeding to secondary schools. It also leads to girls dropping out of school. It was also established that early marriages has led to repetition of the girls once they go back to school and also lowers completion and graduation rates of the girls. This leads to repetition and dropout rates to be high as the girls are engaged on socio-economic activities at tender age. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:- the National and County Governments to reinforce the Children Act that discourages early marriages to ensure that all children attain basic education, the parents should be sensitized about the provision of free secondary education to enable girls attend school. Sponsors and well wishers to assist girls from economically challenged backgrounds to enable proceed and complete the education and the Basic Education Act No. 14 of 2013 should be reinforced for all children to get basic education. The findings of this study may be useful to the government to curb the wastage of resources by improving transition rates of the girls to reduce gender parity in secondary schools. The field officers including the Area Education Officers (AEOs), the Quality assurance and standards officers (QASOs), the school and other local government administrators and teachers may use the findings of this study to come up with ways of encouraging girls to further their education and avoid wastage.

Keywords: Early Marriages, Transition rates, dropout and repetition rates

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I. INTRODUCTION

Education is important in social economic development (Unesco, 2010).Education enhances productive capacity of an individual and is a source of earning differentials. Girls' education is an issue of concern worldwide and in the African continent in particular. Advances in girls' education enable them to participate in and contribute to their societies and economies more broadly. Quality education also helps to change their lives for the better life. According to the World Bank (2005), secondary education promotes active citizenship as well as enhances social cohesion by increasing trust and tolerance amongst individuals. While a lack of education may not be the primary reason for conflict, countries that have seen a marked improvement in social cohesion post conflict are often those that have invested heavily across the education sector (UNESCO, 2011).

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 & 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 (Department for International Development, DID, 2002). 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.

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 & Samara 1996 cited by LeFevre et al., 2004). The significant contribution of female education is expressed in terms of economic, cultural and political aspect a country. Obanya (2002) stated that an educated female is likely to become: a more competent and knowledgeable mother, a more productive and better paid worker, an informed citizen, a self confident individual and a skilled decision maker.

Young girls who get married will most likely to 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 (DID, 2002). 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. 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 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)

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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 (UNIFPA, 2006). Additionally, poor families tend to marry off girls at the same time to help reduce the burden of high marriage ceremony expenses.

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). 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). 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 careers 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).

Statement of the Problem:

Republic of Kenya (2007) observes that despite the introduction of Free Primary Education and other interventions, transition rates of learners from primary to secondary schools are still very low. The report indicates that transition rates for girls from primary to secondary education has been identified by international community as a key measure towards education access for all. Additionally, Sessional Paper No. 14 of 2012 notes that there are low rates in secondary subsector as a result of poor transition from primary to secondary. The records in the A.E.O's office in Nyamusi Division indicate that the transition rate of the girls from primary to secondary schools in the division is at 43.2 percent as compared to that of boys which is at 75.8 percent (MOE, 2012).

The enrolment of the boys and girls in standard eight between 2008 and 2012 with those admitted to form one from the Division in the subsequent years is represented in table 1:

Table 1: Rates of Transition by Gender from Standard 8 to Form 1 in Nyamusi Division								
Year	Boys			Girls				
	Enrolment standard 8	in	Admission in Form 1	Enrolment standard 8	in	Admission in Form 1		
2008	800			690				
2009	812		500 (62.5%)	650		298(43.2%)		
2010	805		510(62.8%)	700		280(43.1%)		
2011	780		505(62.7%)	684		302(43.1%)		
2012	890		600(76.9%)	718		296(43.3%)		
2013			598(67.2%)			310(43.2%)		

Source: A.E.O's Office Nyamusi Division, 2013

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There is a disparity in the figures of those enrolled in form one compared with those who sat for the standard eight but for girls, the disparity is more pronounced than that of the boys as depicted in table 1. Girls' secondary education is beneficial to more than just economic and social development. Hence, this study established the effect of early marriage on transition rates of girls from primary to secondary schools to ensure that the girls get quality education to boost their transition rates in Nyamusi Division, Nyamira County, Kenya.

Objectives of the Study:

The general objective of this study was to establish the effect of early marriage on transition rates of girls from primary to secondary schools in Nyamusi Division, Nyamira County, Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were:

- To find out the extent to which early marriage leads to dropout of girls in schools in Nyamusi Division
- To establish the extent to which resources are wasted due to early marriages of girls in schools in Nyamusi Division
- To assess the extent to which repetition of girls in schools in Nyamusi Division is due to early marriages

Significance of the Study:

This study yielded data that would show the effects of early marriages on transition of girls from primary to secondary schools. The findings of this study would be useful to the government to curb the wastage of resources by improving transition rates of the girls to reduce gender parity in secondary schools. The field officers including the Area Education Officers (AEOs), the Quality assurance and standards officers (QASOs), the school and other local government administrators and teachers would use the findings of this study to come up with ways of encouraging the girls' to transit from primary to secondary schools to avoid wastage. This study would also help parents and guardians to join efforts with teachers to encourage the education of girls to not only secondary level but to higher levels of education.

2. RESEARCH WORK

This study used descriptive research design. This is because the study established the effects of socio-cultural factors on transition rates of girls from primary to secondary schools in Nyamusi Division, Nyamira County, Kenya. This design was used because it would help in collecting data through questionnaires and administering interviews to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2005). It was therefore useful because it was economical to take a sample of the population to generalize results for the whole population.

The study targeted all the public primary and secondary school teachers, headteachers, girls and area education officer in Nyamusi Division. Records in area education office-Nyamusi showed that at the time of the study there were 61 public primary schools and 14 public secondary schools in the division, 567 teachers, 75 headteachers and 3,728 girls (1800 in standard 6, 900 in standard 7, 718 in standard 8 and 310 in form one). The target population comprised of 4,371 respondents.

Sampling is a process of selecting a number of individuals from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group (Orodho, 2005). Sample size selection was done in accordance with Nassiuma (2000) using the following formula:

$$n = NC^2 / (C^2 + (N-1) e^2)$$

Where n = Sample size N = Population C = Coefficient of variation of 0.21.

e = Standard error of 0.02.

The sample size in Table 2 was derived from the Nassiuma (2000) formula.

Table 2:	Sample	Size agai	inst Target	Population
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	Population size N	Sample size S		
Teachers	567	92		
Girls	3,728	107		
Headteachers	75	45		
AEO	01	01		
Total	4,371	245		

Source: AEO's office Nyamusi Division, 2013

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In this study, public primary and secondary schools were stratified into three educational Zones from which proportionate random sampling was used to select a total of 45 schools to participate in this study. Simple random sampling was used to select the schools from each zone and the researcher considered this to be representative sample because the sample size was large enough to contain all the variation in the population and equal and independence chance was given to each individual in the population that was selected. Therefore, 17 schools were selected from Magwagwa zone, 17 schools from Nyamusi zone and 11 schools from Nyageita zone. All the 45 headteachers of the selected schools automatically qualified to participate in the study. Simple random sampling was used to select 35 teachers from each selected schools in Magwagwa and Nyamusi zones whereas 22 teachers were selected from Nyageita zone. The AEO-Nyamusi Division was purposively included in the study.

This study employed questionnaires and interview schedules to collect data for the study. Questionnaires were used to collect qualitative data and interview schedules were used to collect qualitative data. The validity and reliability of the research instruments were tested before being used in data collection. To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was carried out among the respondents in Nyamusi division who were not involved in the study using test- retest methods. The research instruments were administered to the same pilot group twice after an interval of two weeks and the results compared. The reliability coefficient alpha of 0.885 was obtained using the SPSS version 17.0 and therefore indicating high reliability was adopted for the study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

Data in this study were collected by use of both closed-ended and open-ended questionnaire items. Quantitative data were analysed by use descriptive statistics using percentages in consideration of the research questions. The qualitative data was read and categorized into distinct themes as shown by the responses of the respondents.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Data:

The characteristics of the respondents collected in the study included gender of the respondents and the length of service of the respondents.

Gender of the Respondents:

The study sought the gender of the respondents as an important variable. This was for the teachers, headteachers and the AEO. The findings are as presented in Table 3:

Gender	Teac	hers	Hea	dteachers	AEC	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Male	52	56.5	36	80.0	01	100.0
Female	40	43.5	09	20.0	-	-
Total	92	100.0	45	100.0	01	100.0

Information from Table 3 shows that slightly more than half 56.5 percent (52) of the teachers were males whereas 43.5 percent (40) were females. Concerning the head teachers, the table shows that the majority 80.0 percent (36) were males while 20.0 percent (09) were females and 100.0 percent male for the AEO. This implies there was gender disparity in the teaching force and the management of public schools as well as in the AEO's office. This is in line with the government findings on gender imbalances. The government should strive to implement the third rule in the new constitution to enhance gender equity (ROK, 2010).

Length of Service:

The study further sought the length of service of the respondents. The findings were as presented in Table 4:

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Table 4: Length of Service of Respondents									
Length of service	Teachers		Head	teachers	AEO				
	F	%	F	%	F	%			
1-5	37	40.2	03	6.7	-	-			
6-10	38	41.3	10	22.2	-	-			
11- 15	12	13.0	26	57.8	-	-			
16 and above	05	5.5	09	13.3	01	100.0			
Totals	92	100.0	45	100.0	01	100.0			

Table 4 shows that 40.2 percent (37) of the teachers and 6.7 percent (03) of the head teachers had a working experience of 1-5 years while another 41.3 percent (38) of the teachers and 22.2 percent (10) of the head teachers had worked for 6-10 years. It is also revealed that 13.0 percent (12) of the teachers and 57.8 percent (26) of the head teachers had worked for 11- 15 years. Finally, table 4.2 reveals that the AEO, 5.5 percent (05) of the teachers and 13.3 percent (09) of the head teachers had worked for 16 and above years. This implies that most of the respondents had work experience of more than one year and therefore were in position to give information effects of the socio- cultural factors on transition of girls from primary to secondary schools.

Effects of Early marriages on Girls' Transition:

The purpose of this study was to establish the effect of early marriage on transition rates of girls from primary to secondary schools in Nyamusi division of Nyamira County. The responses from the respondents were presented in Table.5

Table 5: Teachers' Responses on the Effects of Early marriages on Girls' Transition									
Statement	Agree		Unc	Uncertain		Disagree		1	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
	64	69.6	5	5.4	23	25.0	92	100.0	
Early marriages are practiced									
Girls do not proceed to secondary schools	52	56.6	5	5.4	35	38.0	92	100.0	
Girls drop out of school	46	50.0	6	6.5	40	43.5	92	100.0	
There is wastage of resources	58	63.0	11	12.0	23	25.0	92	100.0	
Girls elope in class 7 and 8 as well as form 3 & 4	71	77.2	3	4.2	18	19.6	92	100.0	
Repetition of the girls once they go back to school	66	70.8	3	4.2	23	25.0	92	100.0	
Lowers completion and graduation rates	81	88.0	4	4.4	7	7.6	92	100.0	
Girls get married for protection and provision of basics	69	75.0	6	6.5	17	18.5	92	100.0	

Data from Table 5 indicated that majority 69.6 percent (64) of the teachers were of the opinion that early marriages were practiced within the division whereas 25.0 percent (23) disagreed. Only 5.4 percent (05) were uncertain. Concerning the fact that early marriages affected girls from proceeding to secondary schools, it was indicated that slightly more than half 56.6 percent (52) of the teachers agreed that early marriages affected girls from proceeding to secondary schools, it was secondary schools whereas 38.0 percent (35) disagreed. Those that were uncertain were 5.4% percent (05). This implied that most of the girls did not

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become competent and knowledgeable mothers. This is in line with the findings of Obanya (2002) who stated that an educated female is likely to become: a more competent and knowledgeable mother, a more productive and better paid worker, an informed citizen, a self confident individual and a skilled decision maker.

The findings further showed that half 50.0 percent (46) of the teachers were of the opinion that most of the girls dropped out of school due to early marriages whereas 43.5 percent (40) disagreed. Only 6.5 percent (06) of them were uncertain. The Information on the fact there was wastage of resources due to early marriages indicated that 63.0 percent (58) of the teachers agreed that there was wastage of resources due to early marriages while 25.0 percent (23) disagreed. The teachers that were uncertain constituted 12.0 percent (11).

The findings further revealed that majority 77.2 percent (71) of the teachers agreed that most of the girls that elope were in class 7 and 8 as well as form 3 & 4 while 19.6 percent (18) of the teachers disagreed on the issue. Only 4.2 percent (03) were uncertain.

Concerning the fact that early marriages led to repetition of the girls once they went back to school, it was revealed that majority 70.8 percent (66) of the teachers agreed on the opinion while 25.0 percent (23) disagreed. Only 4.2 percent (03) of the respondents were uncertain.

The findings further showed that the majority 88.0 percent (81) of the teachers agreed that girls who got married in the candidate classes lowered completion and graduation rates whereas 7.6 percent (07) disagreed. Only 4.4 percent (04) of them were uncertain. Finally, information on the fact that for young girls who were orphans or separated with their parents or relatives the only way to survive and to get protection was to get married revealed that the majority 75.0 percent (69) of the respondents agreed with that fact while 18.5 percent (17) disagreed. The respondents that were uncertain constituted only 6.5 percent (06). These findings are in line with those of the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) (2008), 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.

The responses of the students on the effect of early marriage on transition rates of girls from primary to secondary schools in Nyamusi division of Nyamira County were presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Students' Responses on the Effects of Early marriages on Girls' Transition										
Statement	Agree		Uncertain		Disag	Disagree				
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Early marriages are practiced	87	81.3	3	2.8	17	15.9	107	100.0		
Girls do not proceed to secondary schools	54	50.5	4	3.7	49	45.8	107	100.0		
Girls drop out of school	65	60.7	10	9.4	32	29.9	107	100.0		
There is wastage of resources	55	51.4	8	7.5	44	41.1	107	100.0		
Girls elope in class 7 and 8 as well as form 3 & 4	72	67.3	6	5.6	29	27.1	107	100.0		
Repetition of the girls once they go back to school	86	80.4	3	2.8	19	16.8	107	100.0		
Lowers completion and graduation rates	56	52.3	7	6.6	44	41.1	107	100.0		
Girls get married for protection and provision of basics	55	51.4	8	7.5	44	41.1	107	1000		

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The findings from the students in Table 6 confirm the responses from the teachers. This information is also in line with the qualitative and quantitative data obtained from the head teachers and the AEO. It therefore implies that early marriage affect the transition rates of girls from primary to secondary schools in Nyamusi division of Nyamira County.

4. CONCLUSION

From the study findings, it was evident that majority 69.6 percent of the teachers were of the opinion that early marriages were practiced within the division. Concerning the fact that early marriages affected girls from proceeding to secondary schools, it was established by slightly more than half (56.6 percent) of the teachers that early marriages affected girls from proceeding to secondary schools.

It was further established by half (50.0 percent) of the teachers that most of the girls dropped out of school due to early marriages. This implied that most of the girls did not become competent and knowledgeable mothers. This is in line with the findings of Obanya (2002) who stated that an educated female is likely to become: a more competent and knowledgeable mother, a more productive and better paid worker, an informed citizen, a self confident individual and a skilled decision maker.

The findings on the fact that there was wastage of resources due to early marriages indicated that 63.0 percent of the teachers agreed that there was indeed wastage of resources due to early marriages. It was further established by majority (77.2 percent) of the teachers that most of the girls that eloped were in class 7 and 8 as well as form 3 & 4.

Concerning the fact that early marriages led to repetition of the girls once they go back to school, it was established by majority (70.8 percent) of the teachers that the girls were subjected to repetition once they went back to school after marriage. It was further established by majority (88.0 percent) of the teachers that girls who got married in the candidate classes lowered completion and graduation rates. Finally, information on the fact that for young girls who were orphans or separated with their parents or relatives the only way to survive and to get protection was to get married revealed that the majority (75.0 percent) of the teachers that it affected transition of girls from primary to secondary.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that early marriages were practiced within the division and affected girls from proceeding to secondary schools. It also led to most of the girls dropping out of school, wastage of resources as well as has led to high repetition rates of the girls.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The National and County Governments to reinforce the Children Act that discourages early marriages to ensure that all children attain basic education.
- ii. The parents should be sensitized about the provision of free secondary education to enable girls attend school. Sponsors and well wishers to assist girls from economically challenged backgrounds to enable proceed and complete the education.
- iii. The Basic Education Act No. 14 of 2013 should be reinforced for all children to get basic education.

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