

Patterns and circumstances of girl child marriages in Mount Darwin district in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: *Girl child marriage is a major problem in Zimbabwe. The girl child marriages are affecting families in all the ten provinces of the country. Literature shows that child marriage is an international problem which is more prevalent in developing countries in Africa and Asia. Child marriage has several negative consequences on victims, therefore the United Nations declared it a violation of human rights. The aim of this study was to find out patterns and circumstances of girl child marriages in Mount Darwin district in Zimbabwe. This was a cross-sectional descriptive study involving fifty-two (52) women who were conveniently sampled from eight wards of the district with the highest prevalence of child marriage. Data was elicited using a self-report questionnaire and was analysed using frequencies and percentages. Findings were presented in the form of tables and figures. The study revealed that most spouses of victims of child marriages were older men in polygamous marriages and boys of their ages. Most girl children entered these marriages while staying with their parents and out of school. The majority (40%) of girls eloped into marriage after being impregnated while a third (32%) of them initiated their marriages and eloped without pregnancy. The factors which encouraged girls into early marriages were poverty, pressure from significant others (peers, parents and guardians), ignorance, lack of support from parents/guardians and influence of church doctrines. It was recommended that families, communities and institutions such as churches and schools be mobilised as agents of change, by creating awareness of the harmful impacts of child marriage. More research is needed to establish patterns and circumstances of girl child marriage in other parts of the country. More research of large magnitude is needed to establish patterns and circumstances of girl child marriage in Mt Darwin and in other parts of the country.*

Key Words: Patterns; circumstances; factors; child marriage; Mount Darwin.

Research Area: Social Science

Paper Type: Research Paper

1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a universal social institution (UN, 1990) through which an adult male and an adult female generally involve in marriage relationship and acquire new social status as a husband and wife. Child marriage is a marriage of a child under 18 years of age. These marriages are very prevalent worldwide. Nour (2009) estimates that worldwide, over 60 million girls marry before they are 18 years old. Although research suggests that in countries like United States parents sometimes approve the marriage of girls aged 14 to 15 years, child marriage problem is more prevalent in developing countries (UNICEF, 2012). This trend was confirmed by Hassan (2014) who claims that 20-25% of the 14 million girls who are forced into marriage before the age of 18 years live in developing countries. The most affected developing countries are in South Asia, Central Africa and West Africa respectively (Walker, 2012). The prevalence of child marriage in South Asia is given as follows; Bangladesh 65%,

Afghanistan 54%, India 48%, Sri Lanka 14% and Nepal, 7% (Mathur, 2003). Current child marriage statistics in the ten provinces of Zimbabwe are; Mashonaland Central 50%, Mashonaland West 42%, Masvingo 39%, Mashonaland East 36%, Midlands 31%, Manicaland 30%, Matabeleland North 27%, Harare 19%, Matabeleland South 18% and Bulawayo 10%. According to Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) (2015), Mashonaland Central has the highest proportion (26%) of children out of school.

2. CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD MARRIAGE

The justification for child marriage from the African perspective is to protect young girls from premarital sex, pregnancy outside of marriage, rape and even prostitution thereby enhancing the integrity of the family (Hassan, 2014). However, the reality is that girls who are forced to marry a person much older than their own age are put under piles of domestic chores and responsibilities; and they give birth in their early childhood risking the lives of both offspring and mothers. Makoni (2016) concluded that child marriage reinforces the notion of poverty and powerlessness stultifying the physical, mental, intellectual and social development of the girl child and heightens her social isolation. Sometimes, girls who are forced into early marriage are vulnerable to illness or death. Consequently, the United Nations declared that child marriage violates human rights and children's rights.

3. PATTERNS OF CHILD MARRIAGES

Patterns refer to forms of girl child marriages that include child-to-child, child-to-older man, polygamy or monogamy these differ markedly by age at marriage and by educational attainment. There are various forms of child marriage, depending on a community's traditions. For example, in rural northeast Ethiopia, *ulfilm* is a practice by which a man kidnaps, hides and rapes a girl and then, as the father of her unborn child, can claim marriage. In South Africa, *ukuthwala* is a practice by which a girl or young woman is kidnapped by a man with the intention of compelling the girl's family to endorse marriage negotiations. A common practice across Ghana, Benin and Togo, *trokosi* is the practice by which a young virgin girl who is oared to a local priest in exchange for the gods' forgiveness when a relative (often a man) commits a crime (Girls Not Brides, 2015). According to Hassan (2014), child marriage may be seen by families as a way of protecting young girls from premarital sex, pregnancy outside of marriage, rape and even prostitution. By marrying a girl off early, the risk of uncertainty to her prospects or damage to a family's honour is significantly removed, although not the physical, psychological and other risks to the girl herself. This justification for child marriage only makes sense where women and girls have no greater value than as repositories for family honour or where girls' potential sexuality is seen as a risk that must be monitored and contained.

4. CIRCUMSTANCES OF GIRL CHILD MARRIAGES

Circumstances refer to internal and external enabling environments that might lead to girl child marriages, for example, being out of school, pregnancy, staying with siblings or relatives. Tahir (2013) states that girls who are married off as children are forced to drop out of school. Drop-out rates seem to be associated with trends in child marriage. Child marriage reinforces the cycle of poverty and perpetuates gender discrimination, illiteracy, malnutrition as well as high infant and maternal mortality rates. According to International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) (2007) study, any effort aimed at ending forced child marriage, must address how to strengthen girls' education programmes to ensure that girls stay in school and learn enough for parents to consider it worthwhile postponing their marriage. Education is the single most important factor associated with girls marrying before the age of 18. The study by Nasrin and Rahman (2012), revealed the family's monthly income as one of

the most influential factors in determining the likelihood of early age into marriage and conception as well. For many poor families, marrying their daughter at an early age essentially is a strategy for economic survival; it means one less person to feed, clothe and educate. In Asia and Africa, the importance of financial transactions at the time of marriage also tends to push families to marry their daughters early. Jarallah, (2008), alludes that difficult financial situations have forced many women to resort to marriage as a way to escape poverty. In concurrence, Girls Not Brides (2015) states that where poverty is acute, parents may feel that giving a daughter in marriage will reduce family expenses, or even temporarily increase their income, in cases where a bride's parents are paid a bride price. For example, in many sub-Saharan cultures parents get a high bride price for a daughter who is married near puberty. In Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal, parents feel that their burden of paying a dowry at their daughter's marriage will be lower if she is married at a young age. A girl from a poor household in Senegal is four times more likely to marry as a child than a girl from a rich household. In impoverished situations, parents see few alternatives for their daughters, aside from early marriage. The Ministry of Women and Child Development Government of India (2008), concurs that girls in the poorest households marry as early as 15 years of age.

5. CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

It is evident from the section on circumstances that factors frequently associated with child marriage are poverty, religion, culture and tradition, gender inequalities, level of education, lack of alternatives to child marriage, lack of awareness of law and lack of political commitment (ICRW, 2007). Each of these factors is discussed a little bit more in this part of the paper.

5.1. Poverty

Malhotra (2010) notes that globally child marriages are more common in poorer countries and households. For many poor families in these countries, marrying their daughters at an early age essentially is a strategy for overcoming economic burden (Johansson, 2015). As noted by Khanna et al. (2013) poor parents in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal feel that their burden of paying dowry at their daughter's marriage will be lower if married at a young age. In Zimbabwe most people are living below the poverty datum line hence marrying off the girl child fetches a higher bride price especially if she is still a virgin. Some children are forced into marriage early to avoid the expense of educating them or settle debts (Girls Not Brides, 2015). Therefore, the girl child is taken as an economic burden which families need dispense with as early as possible (The Ministry of Women and Child Development Government of India, 2008). The poverty argument is dismissed by Hassan (2014) who believes child marriage is fuelled by negative attitudes towards women and girls where there is no tradition of educating them, allowing them to exercise choice about their future or expecting that they will work outside the home and contribute to family resources. In fact, the families are not interested in their daughters' well-being as they sell them into a life of sexual exploitation, labour, or domestic violence under the guise of marriage.

5.2. Religion

The impact of religion on child marriage has been documented especially in the developing world (ICRW, 2007). A study done by UNICEF (2001) in Pakistan conducted revealed that 66.7% of early marriages were practiced by the holy prophet. In Zimbabwe, child marriage is common among the Johhane Marange Apostolic Sect which has approximately 1.2 million members (Jabson, 2015). This religious practice is anchored on the

belief that marrying off a daughter who is a virgin brings honour and morality to the family. Malhotra (2010) concluded that a variety of religions throughout the world were associated with high prevalence of forced child marriages.

5.3. Culture And Tradition

In the Africa context child marriage continues to be practiced as an old tradition. For example, in rural northeast Ethiopia, *ulfilm* is a practice by which a man kidnaps, hides and rapes a girl and then, as the father of her unborn child, can claim marriage. In South Africa, *ukuthwala* is a practice by which a girl or young woman is kidnapped by a man with the intention of compelling the girl's family to endorse marriage negotiations. A common practice across Ghana, Benin and Togo, *trokosi* is the practice by which a young virgin girl is oared to a local priest in exchange for the gods' forgiveness when a relative (often a man) commits a crime (Girls Not Brides, 2015). Jabson (2015) identified three cultural practices in Zimbabwe which promote child marriage. These include *kuripira ngozi* where a girl is used as a compensation for a serious crime committed by the her family, *kuzvarira* where a girl is married off in return for financial support and *kugara mapfiwa* where a brother's daughter replaces an aunt who fails to conceive children or dies. These practices are common in patriarchal communities where status derives from social stratification which values man more than woman (Koeing & Foo, 1992). Therefore, in these societies, parents are under pressure to marry off their daughters as early as possible in an effort to prevent her from becoming sexually active before marriage; a woman who does so brings fulfilment to her family and community (Johansson, 2014).

5.4. Gender Inequalities

Issue of gender inequalities are found across the world. In Africa the law regarding the legal age of marriage differs for boys and girls. For example, in Niger and Chad boys are by law prohibited to marry before the age of 18 while girls are allowed to enter marriage at the age of 15 years (UNFPA, 2012). Furthermore, in developing countries the girl children are prone to unequal treatment as they are denied the right to education and health. While the boy child is given an opportunity to go to school the girl child is expected to marry young so that the family can benefit financially. Evidently parents in some developing countries perceive educating their daughters as wasted investment because they would be married and leave home (Naveed, 2015). In the Pakistan society male domination is strengthened and reduces alternative opportunities for girls. Due to these cultural and traditional beliefs which suppress deny girl children equal opportunity to participate in society, girl children assume lower societal status (Cohoon, 2010 cited in Ganira et al., 2015). In addition, a girl's sexuality is perceived to be the property of her husband once married.

5.5. Level of Education

Child marriage is influenced by both the girl child's and parents' education. For example, study conducted in India by the NHFS-II show that the majority of girl children who married young (i.e., while still in the age bracket 15-19 years) were illiterate. In addition, this study shows that the majority of girls drop out by the time they reach the 9th or 10th standard. As indicated elsewhere in the study illiterate parents believe that investment in a girl's education is a waste of money because ultimately she would have to get married and go away to the husband's house where she will take care of the household. Resultantly, they withdraw their daughters from school in order to force them into marriage. A girl married off at early age is too young to adapt with the requirements of an adult relationship like marriage both, physical and psychologically (Tahir, 2013). Lack of education among parents perpetuates the practice as it is often accentuated by poverty and limited economic

opportunity and lack of awareness of the consequences of child marriages (Naveed, 2015). Child marriage denies schooling for girls and their right to education, necessary for their personal development and their effective contribution to the future wellbeing of the society. Needless to say, the lack of education also affects reproductive behaviour, use of contraceptives, health of the new-born child and proper care and hygienic practices. People have little knowledge of the negative impact of early marriages on children especially girls as the impact on a girl is multi-fold which include psychological trauma and physical health hazards. A girl married off at early age is too young to adapt with the requirements of an adult relationship like marriage both, physical and psychologically (Tahir, 2013). Lack of education among parents perpetuates the practice as it is often accentuated by poverty and limited economic opportunity and lack of awareness of the consequences of child marriages (Naveed, 2015).

5.6. Lack of Alternatives to Child Marriage

Child marriage is often regarded as the only option. Yadav (2006) argued that child marriage can only be eradicated when alternative opportunities are provided. However, as noted elsewhere in the study denying girl children educational opportunities hampers the development of their personality, autonomy, and employment skills. From childhood, daughters are socialized to believe that marriage is the sole goal of their life and their own interests are subordinate to those of the family group.

5.7. Lack of Awareness of Law

One of the reasons for child marriages is that people to a large extent are not aware of the provisions of the law. Illiteracy and legal illiteracy are the common features among rural people and more so among women. If people have no knowledge about the law, one can hardly expect them to abide by it. Tahir (2013), argues that lack of awareness sustains girl child marriage. People have little knowledge of the negative impact of early marriages on children especially girls as the impact on a girl is multi-fold which include psychological trauma and physical health hazards. A girl married off at early age is too young to adapt with the requirements of an adult relationship like marriage both, physical and psychologically. On one hand people are unaware of presence of Acts and Laws that forbid early girl child marriages, and do not know that an early marriage is not allowed according to law. Child marriages continue due to poor implementation of the existing laws. Even though some people are aware about the law, they still practice child marriage. In addition, the lack of political will also enables this practice unabated. Further Hassan (2014), argues that child marriage legitimizes human rights violations and abuses of girls under the guise of culture, honour, tradition, and religion. It continues a sequence of discrimination that begins at a girl's birth and is reinforced in her community, in her marriage and which continues throughout her entire life. Child marriage, therefore, is a way of dealing with the perceived problems that girls represent for families, the problems that arise from the low value given to women and girls.

5.8. Lack of Political Commitment

There is a need for stronger political will to amend, enforce, or create awareness about the laws and acts on child marriage. Women's interests are accorded less weight in the political process thus hindering any further improvement in their status. In war zone areas such as Somalia, Syria, Burundi and Somali the girl child is married off to militia members to secure protection for themselves and the girl.

6. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the current study was to survey patterns and circumstances of child marriage in a sample of Zimbabwean women. It sought to answer the following questions: What are the patterns of girl child marriages? In what circumstances do girl child marriages occur? What factors sustain girl child marriages? What should be done to alleviate the girl child marriage problem? Findings might be helpful to inform interventions for the psychosocial adaptation of girl children who are forced into marriage at an early age and their social support system. Study findings might assist stakeholders who provide care to victims of child marriages in understanding the psychosocial aspects of the child marriages important for rehabilitation considerations.

7. METHODS

Participants and setting: As shown table 1 below, the study participants comprised 62 girl children, five were aged 15 years, nineteen 16 years, thirteen 17 years, eleven 18 years, five 19 years, one 20 years and eight were above 20 years of age. Therefore participants' ages ranged from 15 to 21 years. Women who had been in marriage for more than six months were selected.

Study site: Mount Darwin District is located in Mashonaland Central Province about 152 km North East of Harare. Mount Darwin is the administrative capital of the District surrounded by commercial and communal farming areas. At the time of the study the 8 wards of Mount Darwin district had 78 reported cases of child marriages constituting the highest prevalence in Mashonaland Central Province. Of these cases 52 cases were purposively selected to participate in the study.

Table 1: Ages of Respondents

Age in Years	Total	Percentage (%)
15	5	8
16	19	31
17	13	21
18	11	18
19	5	8
20	1	2
Above 20	8	12
Total	62	100

10 respondents' papers were rejected.

8. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

This was a cross-sectional study in Mount Darwin district. The researcher used questionnaire to collect data for the study. Self-administered questionnaire was used as it gave respondents' privacy to state their views without the interference of the researcher. The questionnaire included questions about demographic information, patterns, circumstances and factors that led to child marriage.

9. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Researchers sought permission from Health Facilities in Mount Darwin through the Ministry of Health to carry out the study. The Ministry was assured by the researchers that data would be treated with confidentiality and used for academic purposes only. Questionnaires were distributed to participants directly using purposive sampling and completed questionnaires were immediately collected the same day. Participants were assured of confidentiality throughout the process. No names were used on questionnaires. This was done to prevent possible physical or psychological trauma through stigmatisation and discrimination of respondents.

10. DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse study data. The aim was to obtain a condensed and broad description of patterns and circumstances of child marriage among girl children in Mount Darwin district. This involved punching in the frequencies of participant demographic data and information on patterns and circumstances of child marriages and then compute their various percentages. The researchers used SPSS version 22 to manage and process the data collected for the purpose of the study. Figures and tables were used to present the findings.

11. RESULTS

11.1. *Parents of Girl Children Who Married Before 18 Years*

The figure 1 below shows that 58% of the respondents from Mount Darwin had alive parents while 42% had either one or both parents who had passed on. The data was critical to determine the prevalence of girl child marriages in terms of the status parents. In Zimbabwe, the traditional collective parenting is fast giving way Western parenting models which leave few care options for orphans and vulnerable girls. Consequently, they marry early to avoid poverty.

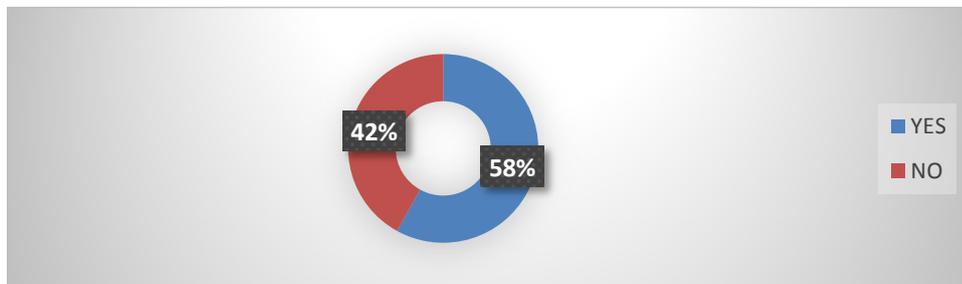


Figure 1: Participants by living arrangements

11.2. *Denomination of Girl Child Who Marry Early*

As in figure 2 below 66% of girl children who participated in the study belonged to the African traditional churches/apostolic, 23% did not specify their church denominations, 5% were Evangelical, 3% were Pentecostals while another 3% were Catholics. It is evident that child marriage is very prevalent in apostolic churches. Members of the apostolic churches in Zimbabwe believe that marry off their daughters early is a noble way of protecting girl children from rape and prostitution.

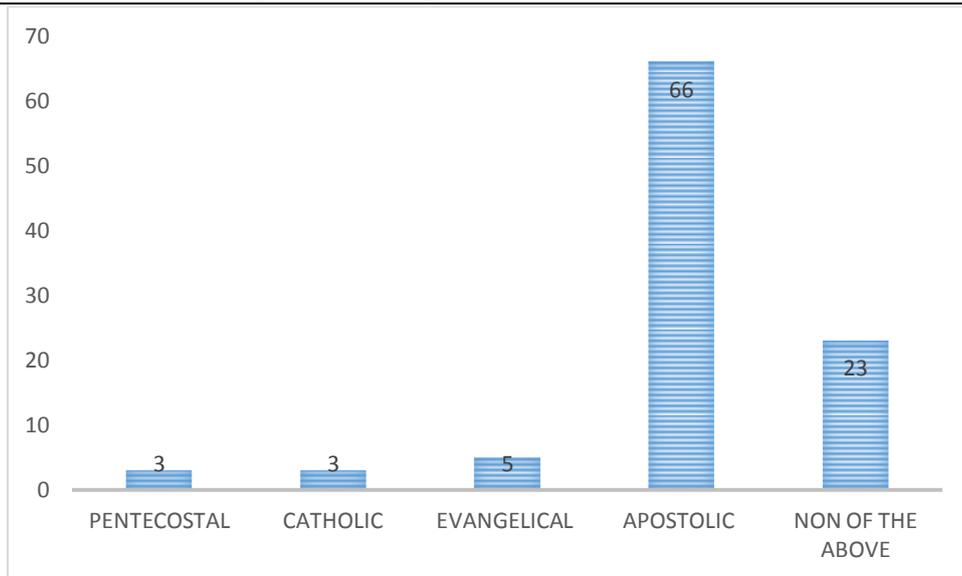


Figure 2: Type of denomination

11.3. Level of Education of Girl Children Who Enter Marriage before 18 Years

Figure 3 shows that 61% of the respondents had primary school level of education, 34% had secondary school level education while 5% had never been to school. Traditionally African are reluctant to invest in girl children whose roles are limited to household chores which are performed in other people’s families. Mount Darwin is a rural setting and these values expected to be quite dominant. This is contrary to the current thinking in reproductive health that the knowledge acquired from education helps girl children to delay marriages, pregnancies and childbearing.

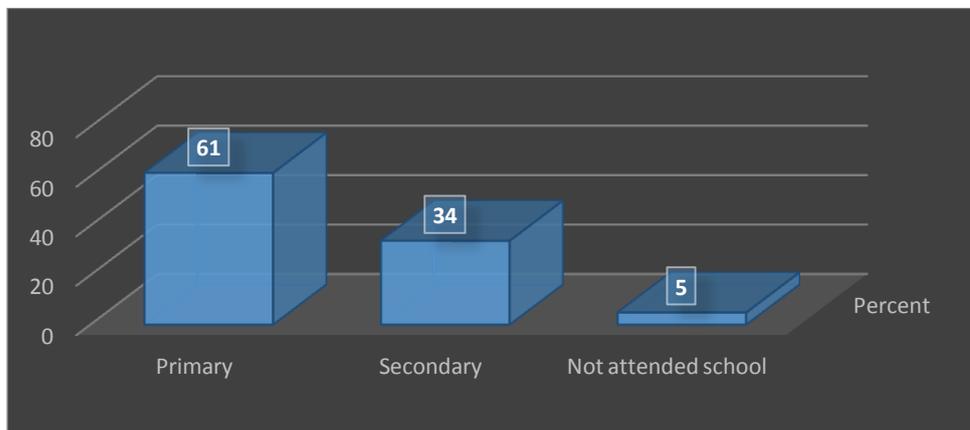


Figure 3: Level of education of girl children

11.4. Age at the Time of Marriage

As indicated in figure 4 below 74% of the respondents entered into marriage while they were between 13-15 years of age, while 19% did not know the years they got married and 7% were married when were in the age range of 17-18 years. It should be recalled that the majority of the participants disclosed belonging to apostolic churches who value marrying off their daughters as a way of protecting them.

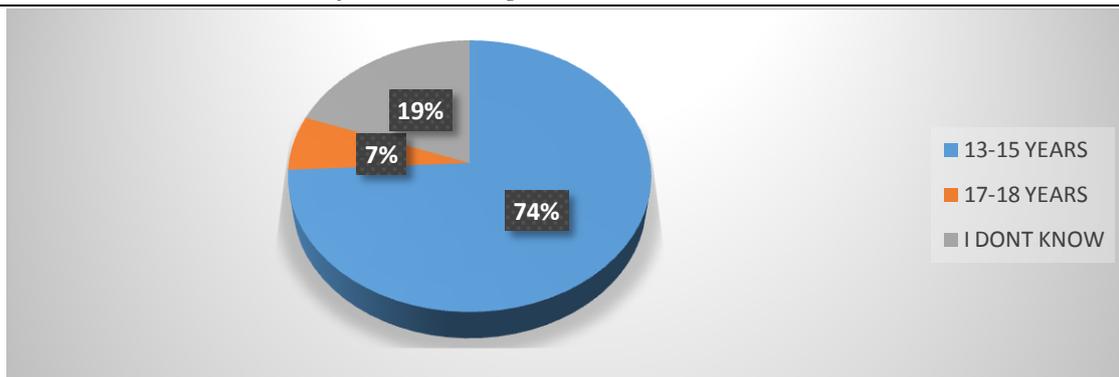


Figure 4: Age at the time of marriage

11.5. Type of Marriage Girl Children Entered Into

The figure 5 below shows that the majority (65%) of girls were in non-polygamous marriages while 35% of them were in polygamous marriages. In the African culture girl children are either married of spouses of their own ages or to wealth elderly men. In the African context child marriages are prompted by the need to protect the girl children, settle debts and please avenging spirits.

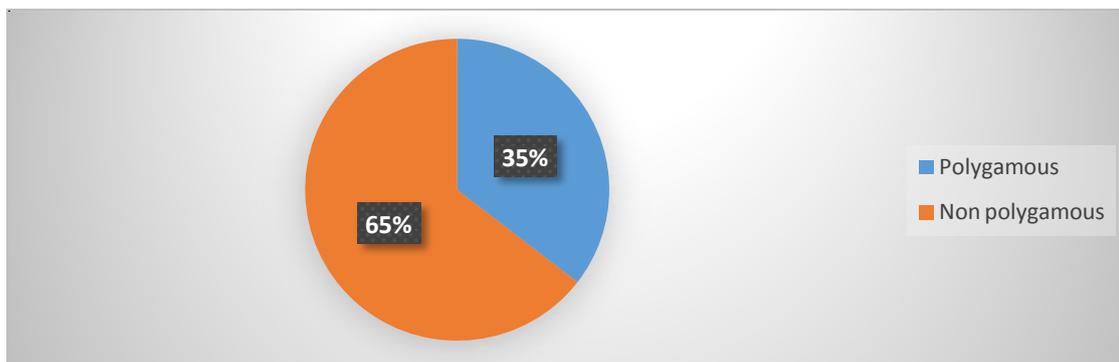


Figure 5: Type of marriage girl children marriage entered into

11.6. Age Range of Girl Children's Husbands

Table 2 below shows the age ranges of girl children's husbands. 9.6 % of the husbands were in the age range 16-18 years, 26.9 % in the age range 20-25 years, 25% in the age range 26-28 years and 38.5% were in the age range 30-41 years. The majority of girl children who were included in the study had older husbands.

Table 2: Age of girl children's husbands

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
16-18 years	5	9.6%
20-25 years	14	26.9%
26-28 years	13	25.0%
30-41 years	20	38.5%
Total	52	100.0%

11.7.Ways Girl Children Got Into Marriage

As reflected in figure 6 below 40% of the girls got into marriage after being impregnated, 32% eloped without pregnancy, 14% were forced into marriage by their parents or guardians, 10% went after a formal bride prize was paid while the church forced 4% of the girls into marriage.

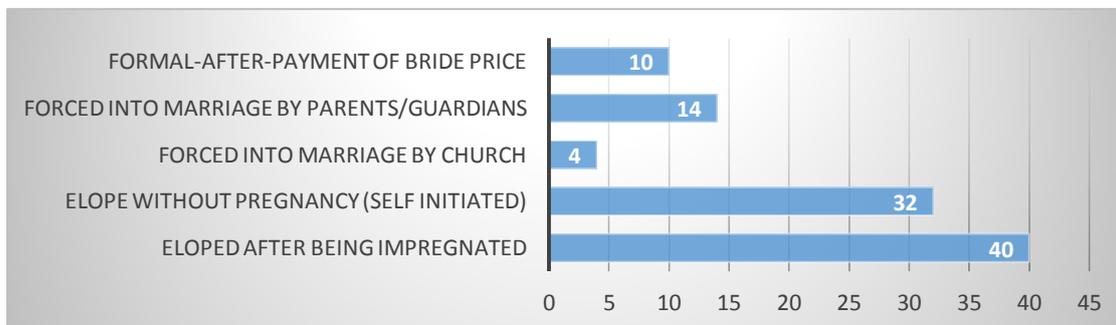


Figure 6: Ways girl children got into marriage

11.8.Factors Which Forced Girl Children into Early Marriage

Figure 7 below shows that 26% of the girls got into marriage because of poverty, 22% because of peer pressure, 16% because of parents/guardians pressure, 12% due to ignorance, 6% due to lack of support from parents/guardians while 4% got into marriage due to church doctrine that compelled them to do so.

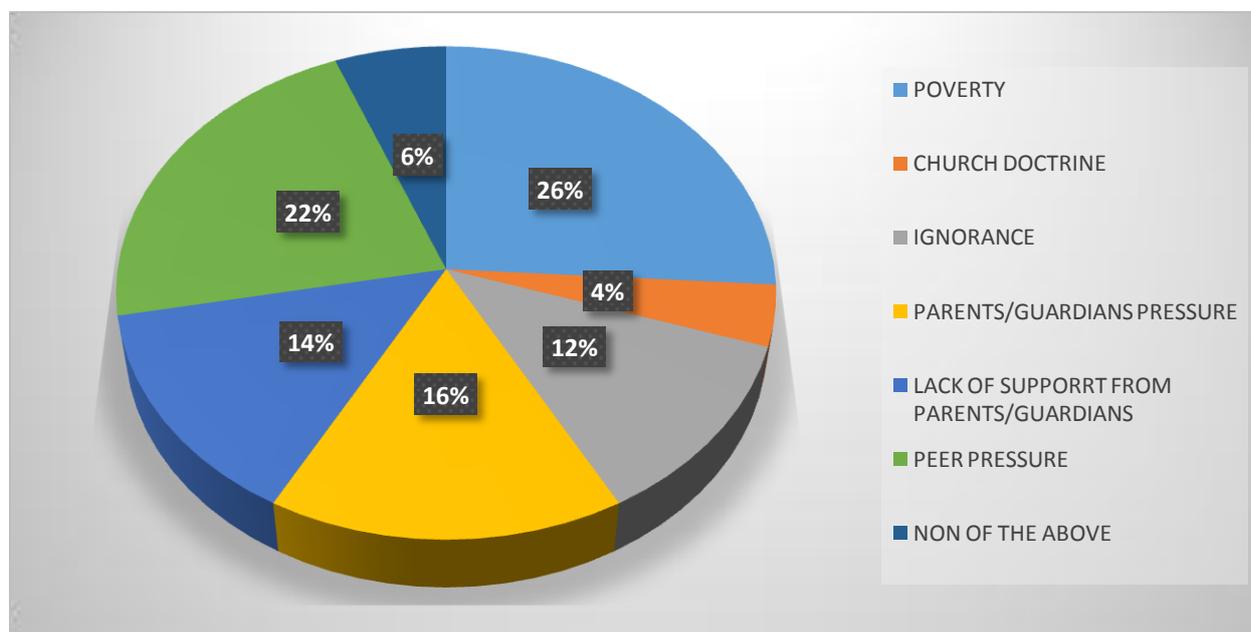


Figure 7: Factors Which Forced Girl Children into Early Marriage

11.9.Persons Girl Children were staying with Before Marriage

As shown in figure 8 below 56% of the girls went into marriage while staying with their parents, 38% were staying with guardians, 4% were staying with their siblings while 2% were alone just before marriage.

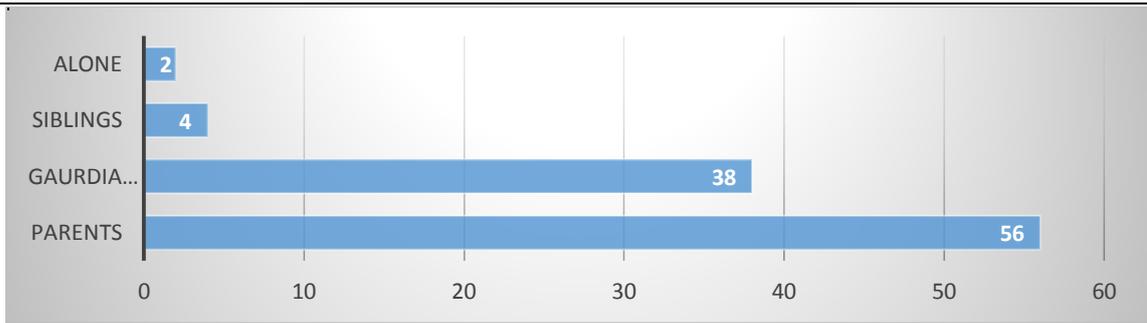


Figure 8: Person staying with before marriage

11.10. Occupations of Girl Children before Marriage

Figure 9 below shows that 48% of the girls went into marriage were at home, staying with their parents and out of school, 36% of these girls were in school, 14% of them were staying with relatives and were out of school, while only 2% of these girls were at work.

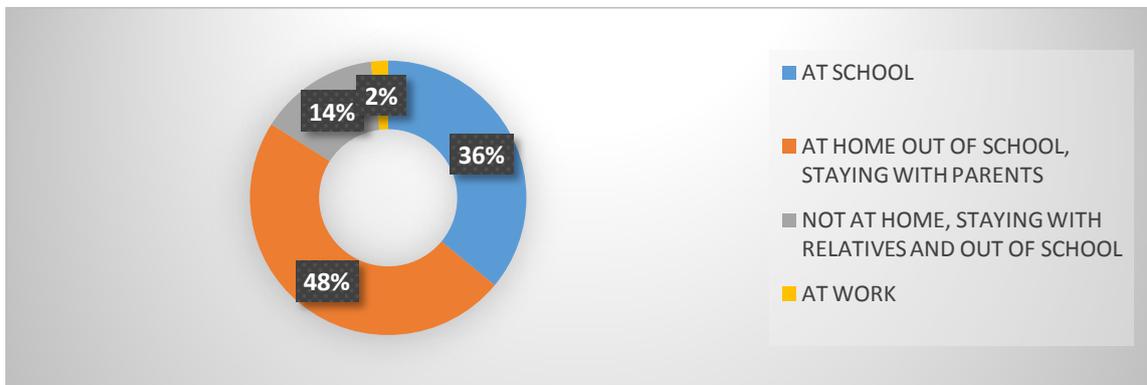


Figure 9: Occupation before marriage

11.11. What Encourages The Persistence Of Child Marriages?

Figure 10 below shows that 58% of the girls in marriages reported their marriages were encouraged by family members, 26% of the girls in marriage said the church was the enabling factor, 10% felt that their marriages were encouraged by their communities while the 6% of the girls in marriage blamed social norms for encouraging their marriages.

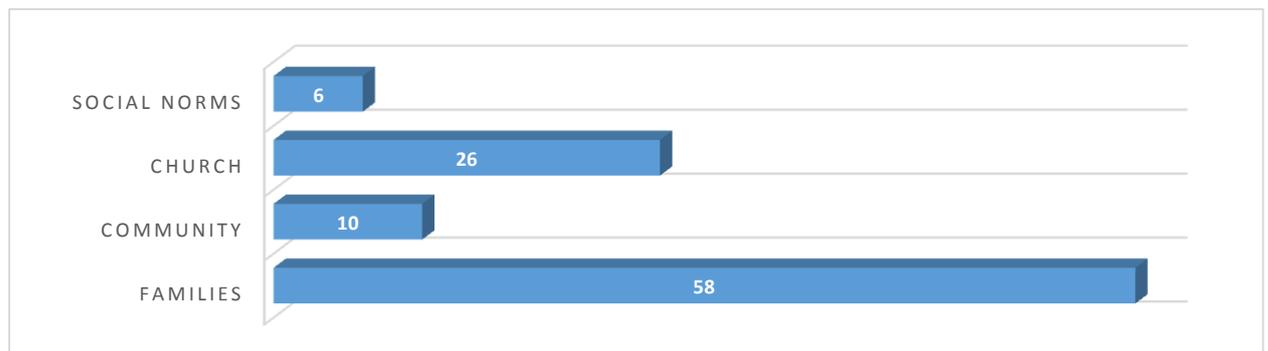


Figure 10: What encourages the persistence of child marriages?

11.12. Do You Know the Legal Age of Majority in Zimbabwe?

As shown in figure 11 below 65% of the girls in marriage knew the legal age of majority in Zimbabwe while 35% did not know the age at which one is expecting to marry.

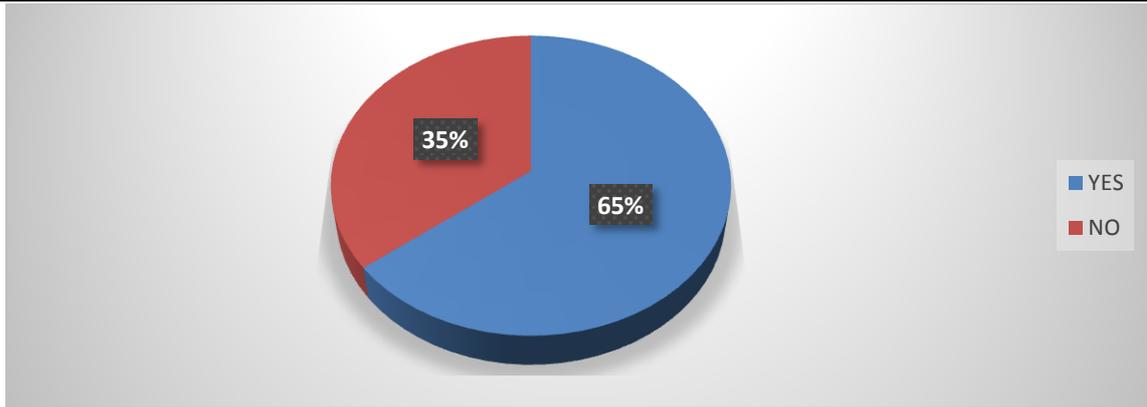


Figure 11: Do you know the legal age of majority of Zimbabwe?

11.13. If You Know the Legal Age of Majority State It

Figure 12 below shows that of the 68% who knew the legal age of marriage only 60% stated it correctly while 40% were unable to do so. This may reflect the lack of knowledge in the community because it is the community which should pass this knowledge. Although Zimbabwe has high literacy rate, rural communities lack information sources.

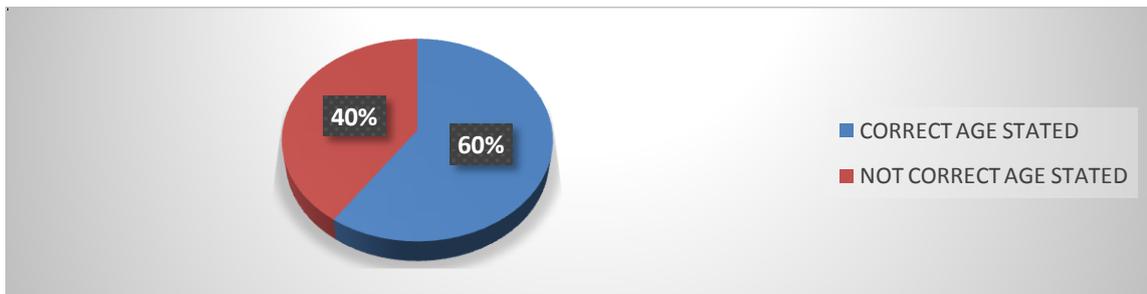


Figure 12: If you know the legal age of majority state it

11.14. General Push Factors behind Marriage

The participants felt that 26% of the child marriages are perpetuated by parents and guardians, 24% happen because of lack of support of girl child by parents, 18% are due to peer pressure, the envy of others girls in marriage, 16% happen because girls and parents do not value education, 12% happen because of other reason beyond this research scope and 4% are due to lack of support from the community.

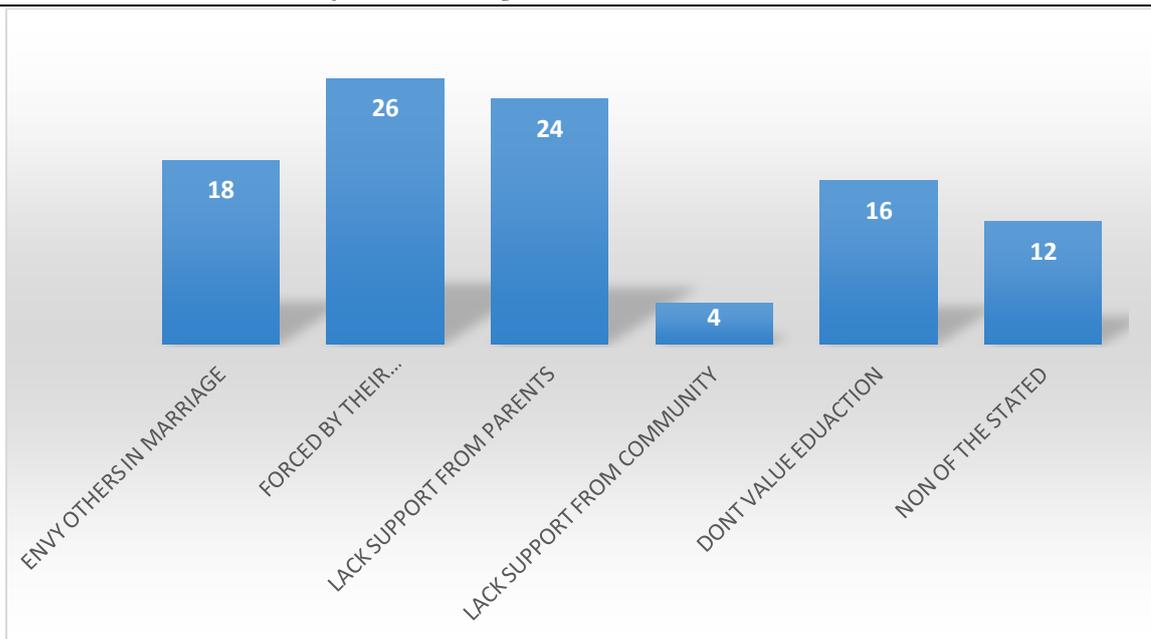


Figure 13: General push factors behind marriage.

12. DISCUSSIONS

12.1. Patterns of Child Marriages

The study revealed that the majority (58%) of the girls in marriage had live parents, (74%) of them entered into marriage between 13-15 years of age, (65%) of girls in marriage were in non-polygamous marriages while 35% of them were in polygamous marriages. Though 35% might seem to be the minority, it is a tip of the iceberg. This is a clue on the existing patterns of marriages in Mt Darwin, in the sense that these girls do not marry the young men of their age ranges, but older man with already other wives. The results almost in agreement with Ahmed et al. (2013)'s study which found that the girls in marriage are at times married to, and even sold off to men who are a lot older than these young girls. The research showed that (35%) of the marriages had husbands who ranged from 20-25 years, and (11%) had the husbands ranging from 26-28 years, 10% of the marriages were amongst the teenagers themselves, while (5%) had ages that ranges from 30-41 years. The widest range of years between two couples was 16 years (wife) as to 40 years (husband) in Mt Darwin. Globally, according to UNICEF (2007), 36% of women aged 20-24 were married or in a union, forced or consensual, before they'd reached 18. The results revealed that (40%) of the girls got into marriage after being impregnated, (32%) eloped without pregnancy, (14%) were forced into marriage by their parents or guardians, (10%) went after a formal bride prize while the church forced (4%) of the girls into marriage. No matter how large or small the percentage, the results show the multidimensional spectrum of patterns and circumstances of how the girls end up in marriages.

12.2 Circumstances of Child Marriages

The study showed that (61%) of the girls in marriage had gone up-to- primary school level and this in line with the UNICEF, State of the World's Children, (2015) which states that the less education a girl has, the more she is likely to marry during her childhood. The results are further aligned to Ahmed et al. (2013) who asset that education is not only effective in delaying marriages, pregnancies and childbearing but also school based knowledge of reproductive health issues can be effective in changing attitudes practices that

leads to risky sexual behavior in marriage (Dakar, 1984). The research indicated that the majority of the girls in marriage (26%) got into marriage because of poverty. The results are in tandem with (Nasrin & Rahman, 2012; Girls Not Brides, 2015; Jarallah, 2008), who revealed the family's monthly income is one of the most influential factors in determining the likelihood of early age at marriage, a strategy for economic survival and a way to escape poverty. However in disagreement with the results from Hassan (2014) who argues that while often a contributing factor, poverty by itself is not the cause of child marriage. The study showed that the majority (56%) of the girls in marriage were staying with their parents, just before marriage. It is evident that these marriages somewhere, somehow have the blessing of parents. The results agrees with Ahmed, et al (2013)'s findings that the girls' marriages are generally arranged by parents, any other family member or local leaders. The majority (48%) of the girls in marriage were at home, staying with their parents and out of school, when they got into marriage. The results are tandem with Tahir (2013), who posits that that girls who are married off as children are forced to drop out of school. Drop-out rates seem to be associated with trends in child marriage. Child marriage reinforces the cycle of poverty and perpetrates gender discrimination, illiteracy, malnutrition as well as high infant and maternal mortality rates.

12.3 Factors That Encourage Child Marriages

The results showed that (66%) of the girls in marriage belonged to Traditional African Churches, (22%) went into marriage because of peer pressure. The study also revealed that (16%) of the girls in marriage was due to parents/guardians pressure and this in line with finding from Yadav (2006) who observed, tremendous pressure from older members of the like grandparents and also the community prevails on parents of children to marry off their young children. Also (12%) of the girls in marriage was due to ignorance and these results are in agreement with (Tahir, 2013; ICRW, 2007) who suggests that at one hand people are unaware of presence of Acts and Laws that forbids early girl child marriages, and do not know that an early marriage is not allowed according to law and that people to a large extent are not aware of the provisions of the law. Illiteracy and legal illiteracy are the common features among rural people and more so among women. If people have no knowledge about the law, one can hardly expect them to abide by it. The results are showed that (6%) got into marriage because of lack of support from parents/guardians while (4%) got into marriage due to church doctrine. The results are in convergence with Girls Not Brides (2015) which states that the causes of child marriage is common across Africa: parents may feel that giving a daughter in marriage will reduce family expenses, or even temporarily increase their income, in cases where a bride's parents are paid a bride price. The results clearly show the lack of parents in supporting the girl child. The results are complimentary to Ahmed et al. (2013)'s statement that uniformly across the countries, early marriage is associated with lower educational attainment.

13. CONCLUSION

The patterns of girls in marriage in Mt Darwin varied from polygamous to non-polygamous, teenager marriages to older many, with in-laws to none sharing. Circumstances that lead into girl child marriages included being out schools, pregnancies, ignorance of the Zimbabwean legal age of majority, lack of support by parents or guardians and poverty. The social norms, church, parents and guardians were sustaining the girl child marriages. Girl child marriages were also found to be contributed to by personality factors (cognitive, behavior) as seen by high percentage in self-initiated marriages (that is eloping without pregnancies and influence of peer pressure).

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