

Impact of Child Marriage on Health of Adolescent Girls in Kaduna State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was designed to find out the impact of child marriage on health of adolescent girls in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The study identified the causes of child marriage, physiological and psychological consequences of child marriage on adolescent girls. The study adopted an ex-post-facto research design. The sample size for the study was 276 married young girls in Kaduna South selected through purposive sampling techniques. The instrument for data collection was a self-developed questionnaire by the researchers. The data collected were analysed using frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation. From the analysis, the results of the study revealed that most respondents got married within the age of adolescent which was 13 – 19 years; some girls were forced into child marriage due to religious and cultural beliefs. The result also showed that poverty and illiteracy were the major reasons of early marriage. Some recommendations made based on the results were that government should enforce laws against child marriage on perpetrators, government and non-organizations should organize seminars, workshops and conferences to enlighten illiterate parents on the negative impact of child marriage on health of adolescent girls and professional women should be invited to the communities to talk to girls as role models and source of inspiration.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a global issue that cuts across all cultures in the world. Marriage according to Hernandez [1] refers to the basic union of a man and a woman as they join together as one, and start their lives of sharing everything with one another [2]. Marriage is that social contract between two individuals that unite their lives legally, economically and emotionally. Marriage is the most natural and intimate relationship any two people could ever experience in life. Marriage is a union between two or more people. According to Majumdar [3] marriage is a socially sanctioned union of male and female or a secondary institution devised by society to sanction the union and mating of male and female for the purpose of establishing a household procreation and providing care for the offspring. Marriage is a social union or legal contract between people that create kingship. It is an institution in which inter-personal relationship usually intimate and sexual, is acknowledged in a variety of ways, depending on the culture or sub culture in which it is found [4]. Marriage is an institution developed over considerable period of time. It may

have been accepted as a measure of social discipline and as a tool for the elimination of social stress.

In the context of this study, marriage refers to a social and legal union or contract between males and females upon which interpersonal relationship is built for the purposes of satisfying the partners' socio- emotional needs and most importantly for the gratification of their sexual desire and procreation. Marriage has various types and functions that vary from culture to culture. For instance, there are Traditional, Christian, Islamic, Court and Same-sex marriages (homosexuals). Traditional marriage is a union conducted according to the native laws and customs of the people. Christian marriage is a union between a man a woman and their children. Islamic marriage is sanctioned between a man and many wives, that is, a man can marry up to four wives. Court marriage is a union between a man and a woman which takes place at government/ court registry office. While same-sex marriage is a union between two persons of the same biological sex or gender identity. In any type or form of marriage, there are several reasons why marriage has endured for so long and why people marry. Throughout the world, marriage is regarded as a moment of celebration and transition to adult life. The reason is because marriage offers a lot of benefits to the couple and to society at large. The benefits include companionship, procreation of children emotional support, financial security, functional division of labour and social and legal recognition for the family and the society [5].

Family lays the foundation for marriage and the benefits gained from it. In other words, for couples to enjoy all these benefits, there must exist in the union or among the couples, interpersonal relationship for peaceful marital and harmonious coexistence. In a family, for peaceful marital relationship to continue to thrive in any marriage, the couples must do the followings: commitment to the mutual welfare of each partner, have mutual respect for each other, and openness to a "check up" on the relationship, honesty, using dialogue to settle problem, tolerance for conflict, willingness to submit to information and formal grievance process, use of non-abusive or non-violent words on each other, flexibility and loyalty [6]. However, unhealthy marriages lack all these vital elements that enhance or promote peaceful marital relationships among couples which could be found in such marriages like early or child marriage which most adolescent girls and adults find themselves. Sadly the practice of early marriage gives no cause for celebration to family.

Child marriage means formal marriage and informal unions in which a girl lives with a partner as a married wife before the age of 18 [7]. Child marriage also refers to any marriage

carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, physiologically and psychologically ready or prepared to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing [8]. This type of marriage involves either one of both spouses being a child and may take place with or without formal registration, under religious or customary laws [8]. In the context of the study, child marriage is any marriage conducted formally or informally below the age of 18 years before the spouse is physically, physiologically, psychologically or emotionally ready and matured to take up the responsibilities and challenges of marriage, childbearing and childrearing practices.

Some child marriages are by force as a result of the culture of a given society. Culture simply means peoples way of life. Culture [9] is what is socially learned, socially shared and socially transmitted to people of a particular group from one generation to another as a member of a given society. It refers to people's beliefs, norms, values, language, mores, laws and any other capabilities that make an individual a full-fledged member of a society. In different cultures in the world, people marry at different age range. Some people marry in adult age of 30 and above, some marry at middle age of 25 and above while some marry at a very tender age of 10 to 18 years. This last group is the category of people who fall victims of child marriage; and girls are more vulnerable to this type of marriage. Child marriage involves the use of force or coercion. It is usually based on the parents consent and often fails to ensure the best interest of the girl child [10]. Some of the adolescent girls are forced into marriage at a very early or tender age when they are just very young to take decision concerning their marital partner or about the implications of marriage itself. The girls may have given what qualifies for consent, in the eyes of the custom or the law, but in reality, consent to their binding union has been made by others on their behalf [7].

Child marriage is largely a problem of adolescent girls and not boys. Majority of adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa, mostly between the ages of 12 to 20 experience child marriage [11]. An adolescent refers to someone who is between the ages of 10 to 18, who is developing into an adult. It also means a teenager who is between the ages of 13-19, who is changing from a child to adult [12]. Adolescent is defined as someone between 10-19 years of age, who is transforming from childhood to adulthood [13]. The author further states that adolescents needs differ with their gender, stage of development, life circumstances and the socio-economic conditions in which they live; and most of these adolescents suffer due to the life circumstances and socio-economic background of their parents which compel the parents to force the young girls into marrying very early. In this study, the adolescent girls are considered those between the ages of 12 to 24 who are already married.

In other words, there is a wide prevalence of early marriage in sub-Sahara Africa among the above age group, Nigeria inclusive [8]. For instance, 19% of girls were married by age 15, and 43% by age 18 nationwide. The proportions of married teenagers are much higher in the Northern regions of Nigeria, being highest in North West, North-East and North central and the proportions of married teenage girls aged

within 15 to 18 years respectively [14]. The Northern girl child is brain-washed right from age seven or eight as she grows up believing it is socially and religiously appropriate to marry at a very early age and at her parents behest (request). In the North-central part of Nigeria especially Kaduna South, female children are trinkets for giving out for marriage by their parents at a tender age. These girls get married and begin their sexual experience when they are young, sometimes as young as 12 years [7]. The young girls are usually married to older men chosen for them by their parents. To the parents, education of female children is a taboo. Those parents that belong to this school of thought believe that western education would make female children to be proud and abandon their domestic roles as mothers at home. Many parents are thus afraid of allowing their daughters to go to school, for the fact that they may get premature pregnancy and shame, that would be brought to the family. Hence, some parents are ignorant of the fact that there is a direct relationship between mothers' level of education, nutrition, health and educational status of their children.

Similarly, child marriage may contribute to reproductive health problems as a result of early pregnancy [15]. In the North-Central region of Nigeria, 73% of girls aged 18 are married and these young married girls are often pressurized by their mother in-law and families to become pregnant right away, despite evidence that early pregnancy may result in death or disability for the mother or the baby because pregnancy is the leading cause of death for young women aged 15 to 18 (Population Council). Marriage, birth and death are the standard trio key events in human lives, but marriage is the only one that is based on choice [7]. The right to exercise that choice is recognized as a principle of law and has long been established in the international human rights instrument. Yet a lot of adolescent girls and very little number of boys contract marriage without any chance of exercising their right to choose [7].

Child marriage is a violation of fundamental human rights of the child. For instance article 21 of the 1990 African Charter on the right and welfare of the child states that child marriage and betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited [13]. Furthermore, effective action including legislation shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years. Marriage in general can only take place with full consent of both parties. Nevertheless, knowledge of and respect for law is limited among many rural and urban communities. Convention on the rights of the child recognizes early marriage as harmful traditional practices and as such is regarded as a form of gender based violence against women, girls and children. Thus the marriage between the former Zamfara State governor and the thirteen years Egyptian girl arranged by the parents and celebrated in Nigeria was a total violation of the child rights act. Despite the fact that the issue was fought by human rights groups, women activists and other groups, the case was knocked out on the basis that it was a private/ family affair. This could only happen in a country where the due process of the law is not followed and not binding on every individual, even when it is clear that the person in question has violated the law [7]. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has been ratified and

adopted by all countries and virtually every provision of CRC is of some relevance to the issues of child marriage which include the followings:

A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier; freedom from discrimination on any grounds, including sex, religion, ethnic or social origin, birth or other status; in all actions concerning children...the best interests of the child shall be given primary consideration; maximum support for survival and development; the right to express his/her views freely in all matters affecting the child, in accordance with age and maturity; the right to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse, while in the care of parents, guardian or any other person; the right to health and to access to health services; and to be protected from harmful traditional practices; the right to education on the basis of equal opportunity; the right to protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse; the right to protection from abduction, sale or trafficking and the right to protection from all forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspect of the child's welfare. [19]

Child marriage does not only violate the rights of the child but also have negative impact on health and psychological well being of the girls. Psychologically, girls/ women may suffer from loss of self-esteem and self confidence. Girls or women who married early seem to engage in early child bearing and unwanted pregnancies or have too many children above their means of livelihood; suffer from domestic violence and sexual abuse from her older husband, and may have pregnancy related complications such as Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF), pre-eclampsia and obstructed labour [16]. Babies born by these young adolescent girls are more likely to die because the immaturity and lack of education of young mothers undermine their capacity for nurturing the infants. This is because the young girls do not have the capacity for nurturing the infants, thus evidence abound that infant mortality among the children of very young mothers is higher, sometimes twice higher than among those of older peers or mothers [7, 13]. However, despite the legal sanctions against child marriage before age 18, parents continue to insist upon marrying their daughters in their mid-teens and to some lengths to resist all oppositions. The author [13] further states that the reason behind this situation seems to be the desire or need to maintain the family's good name and social standing, poverty and religious beliefs or values. Parents push their daughters into marrying early because of culture and personal gain for economic survival without considering the effect it will have on their girls.

From the foregoing it is alarming that child marriage is very common in the Northern Nigeria, and is even being practiced at present in Kaduna state despite the legal backing of the rights of the child act. The prevalence of child marriage in this part of the country may be attributed to their cultural and religious beliefs and poverty, irrespective of the consequences of this practice on the girls; or perhaps people do not see it as a problem or developmental challenge. Therefore, to tackle

this challenging phenomenon, actions to fulfill or restore the rights of those already married should go hand in hand with preventive measures on the girls that are available to get married as well as to unmarried girls. Hence, the researcher is interested on investigating the impact of child marriage on health of adolescent girls in Kaduna South Education Zone.

METHOD

This study adopted an ex-post-facto research design. Ex-post-facto "seeks to establish cause-effect relationships between two or more variables. but the researcher usually has no control over the variables of research interest and therefore cannot manipulate them" [13]. The population is made up of diverse ethnic groups. The main ones are Hausa, Gbagyi, Fulani, Yoruba, Kaje, Igbo, Katab, Idoma, Igala, Tiv and others. The two main religious in Nigeria, Christianity and Islam are practised. The study was carried out in Kaduna South Education zone made up of Barnawa, Kakuri, Makera, Nassarawa, Television and Tudun-Wada Local Government Areas.

The population comprised 862 married young girls including 31 divorced marriages in Kaduna South Education zone which are girls between ages 12 to 45 years that have had child marriage or that have married and are out of the marriage from the six (6) local government areas. The total population was 893 (Source: Marriage Registry/Social Welfare Department of Local Headquarters 2012, Kaduna South).

The sample of the study comprised 276 respondents, where 240 responded to the questionnaire items and 36 respondents were interviewed. These respondents were selected using purposive sampling technique to help the researcher to select the adolescent girls that fall within the category of married and divorced from women's meeting (known as Zumunta Mata) in each LGA. Purposive sampling technique was also used to select six (6) respondents each from Barnawa, Kakuri, Makera, Nassarawa, Television and Tudun-Wada areas respectively for the in-depth interview (IDI) making a total of thirty six respondents.

The instruments for data collection were questionnaire titled Impact of Child Marriage Questionnaire (IEMQ) and in-depth interview (IDI) guide. To ascertain the face validity of the impact of early marriage questionnaire (IEMQ) and in-depth interview (IDI) guide, the researcher gave the initial drafts of the instruments to three experts. To establish the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was trial-tested using 20 respondents in Kaduna North Education zone which is outside the area of study. Data collected was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha method to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability coefficient values yielded 0.87, 0.79, 0.89, 0.86 and 0.81 for the five clusters and the overall reliability value yielded 0.84.

Copies of the questionnaire were administered directly to the respondents using three trained research assistants. The data collected were analyzed using frequency and percentage to answer research question 1 while mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions 2, 3, 4 and 5. A criterion mean of 2.50 was used as bench mark for decision

making. Any item rated 2.50 and above was accepted, while any item below 2.50 was not accepted. The in-depth interview (IDI) was analyzed using qualitative analytical tool known as content analysis. The in-depth interview IDI was tape

recorded and the tape recordings were transcribed verbatim after each discussion.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What is the age range at which adolescent girls marry?

Table 1: Frequency, percentage and age range of adolescent marriage

Item No	Age Range	Frequency	Percent
1.	Below 14 Years	115	47.9
2.	15 - 18 Years	71	29.6
3.	19 - 24 Years	28	11.7
4.	25 and above Years	26	10.8
		240	100.0

Table 1 shows the frequency, percentage and age range of adolescent marriage. The result on the table shows that majority (47.9%) of the respondents got married at age below 14 years. Similarly, (29.6%) got married within the age range

of 15 – 18 years; (11.7%) got married within the age range of 19 – 24 years; and only (10.8%) got married at age range of 25 and above years.

Research Question 2

What are the causes of child marriage among adolescent girls?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the response to the causes of child marriage among adolescent girls (N = 240)

Item No	Causes of child marriage among adolescent girls	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
5.	Poverty or economic survival for the parents and family members.	3.84	0.38	Agreed
6.	Social-cultural and religious value of maintaining the family name status.	3.59	0.52	Agreed
7.	Protecting the girls' virginity or sexuality.	3.66	0.52	Agreed
8.	Prevent premarital sex.	3.61	0.58	Agreed
9.	To strengthen relationship between families.	3.66	0.48	Agreed
10.	The betrothal of children is used for sealing deals over land or other property or even for settling disputes.	3.44	0.52	Agreed
11.	The families needed to protect their prestige in order to avoid being victims of gossip.	3.28	0.59	Agreed
12.	Child marriage helped to maximize the number of pregnancies and ensure enough survival children to meet household labour needs.	3.20	0.98	Agreed
13.	The quest to avoid late marriage or having difficulty to get married if older or at older age.	3.49	0.61	Agreed
14.	Parents/guardians resort to child marriage during war or civil conflict as a protective mechanism or survival strategy	3.54	0.72	Agreed

Table 2 shows mean and standard deviation of the response to the causes of child marriage among adolescent girls. The result shows that the respondents agreed that all the items listed are the causes of child marriage among adolescent girls. This is because, each of the item has its mean between 3.20 and 3.84; each of these values is greater than 2.5. Similarly, the overall reflects that the mean is 3.53, which is an

indication that the respondent agreed with the items in the cluster A as causes of child marriage among adolescent girls.

Research Question 3

What are the impacts of child marriage on physiological health of adolescent girls?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of the response to the impacts of child marriage on physiological health of adolescent girls (N = 240)

Item No	Physiological health of adolescent girls	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
15.	Forced or unwanted pregnancies.	3.68	0.49	Agreed
16.	Pregnancy related complications such as preeclampsia/eclampsia and obstructed labour leading to vesico vaginal fistula (VVF) illness.	3.56	0.50	Agreed
17.	Delivery of premature of low birth weight babies.	3.61	0.50	Agreed
18.	Contraction of sexually transmitted infections.	3.43	0.54	Agreed
19.	Contraction of Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV and AIDS).	3.46	0.57	Agreed
20.	Illness as a result of severe beating by the husband due to refusal of sex.	3.55	0.55	Agreed
21.	Unsafe abortion leading to high rate of maternal mortality as a result of hemorrhage and sepsis.	3.45	0.52	Agreed
22.	Having injuries, infections and disabilities which go untreated and some which are lifelong.	3.54	0.52	Agreed
23.	Victims of early marriage suffer prolonged domestic violence and abuse.	3.48	0.53	Agreed
24.	Physical pain associated with sexual intercourse as a result of the physiological immaturity of their sexual organs.	3.63	0.52	Agreed
25.	Post-traumatic stress disorder such as anxiety and depression to the victims.	3.39	0.53	Agreed
26.	Lack of decision making power concerning their reproductive health care.	3.49	0.54	Agreed
27.	Imposition of the responsibilities of raising children alone without the husband or families financial support due to death of husband early widowhood thereby living in poverty which will affect health of children and their mother.	3.62	0.53	Agreed

Table 3 shows mean and standard deviation of the response to the impacts of early marriage on physiological health of adolescent girls. The result shows that the respondents agreed that all the items listed are the impacts of child marriage on physiological health of adolescent girls. This is because, each

of the item has its mean between 3.39 and 3.68; each of these values is greater than 2.5. Similarly, the overall reflects that the mean is 3.53, which is an indication that the respondent agreed with the items in the cluster B as impacts of child marriage on physiological health of adolescent girls.

Research Question 4

What are the impacts of child marriage on psychological health of adolescent girls?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of the response to the impacts of child marriage on psychological health of adolescent girls (N = 240)

Items No	Impacts of child marriage on psychological health of adolescent girls	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
28.	The girls feel isolated and unhappy because they have no one to talk to as they are surrounded with people who endorse their marriage	3.50	0.62	Agreed
29.	Girls are confined to the home and household roles which make them loose mobility and this affect them psychologically	3.46	0.56	Agreed
30.	The girls suffer traumas from premature sex and childbearing	3.49	0.55	Agreed
31.	The girls are distressed and they suffer emotional damage due to repeated pregnancies which devastate them	3.47	0.53	Agreed
32.	Victims feel inferior and develop low self- esteem in the community	3.46	0.56	Agreed
33.	Due to illiteracy victims lack decision making power for themselves and their children and to make economic contributions to the family	3.49	0.56	Agreed
34.	Girls lack the ability to develop their self-esteem and confidence to voice their opinions and to take control over their own actions, lives and bodies due to inability to go to school	3.43	0.55	Agreed
35.	Victims/girls are denied the opportunity to acquire social skills and personal capacities needed to access key resources and form social networks for support assistance to alleviate poverty due to lack of education	3.48	0.55	Agreed
36.	Uneducated married young mothers are less likely to have say in decision making regarding the size of their families and the spacing of their children	3.52	0.65	Agreed

Table 4 shows mean and standard deviation of the response to the impacts of early marriage on psychological health of adolescent girls. The result shows that the respondents agreed that all the items listed are the response to the impacts of child marriage on psychological health of adolescent girls. This is because, each of the item has its mean between 3.46 and 3.52;

each of these values is greater than 2.5. Similarly, the overall reflects that the mean is 3.48, which is an indication that the respondent agreed with the items in the cluster C as response to the impacts of child marriage on psychological health of adolescent girls.

Research Question 5

What are the strategies that will help to address the problem of child marriage?

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation of the response to the strategies that will help to address the problem of child marriage (N = 240)

Item No	Strategies that will help to address the problem of child marriage.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
37.	Promoting education of girls through developing strong support systems to keep girls in school by providing scholarships where necessary and encourage teachers to support girls	3.71	0.55	Agreed
38.	Providing economic opportunities to young girls by expanding their employment and entrepreneurial opportunities through micro-credit programs.	3.45	0.60	Agreed
39.	Governments, NGOs and individuals should provide support needed for girls' education such as free books uniforms and school fees	3.41	0.60	Agreed
40.	Advocacy that is creating awareness and sensitizing the whole community using mass media, traditional communicating methods about the consequences of early marriage on girls, their families and on the community as a whole	3.51	0.62	Agreed
41.	Establishment of skill acquisition centers by different arms of government for empowerment of girls into skills for self-confidence, assertiveness, speaking out, decision making and negotiation	3.50	0.60	Agreed
42.	Create a supportive network of (religious) leaders and teachers who can empower girls to negotiate with their parents	3.35	0.67	Agreed
43.	Expand training for health and community workers on the dangers of early marriage engaging them as change agents in their communities and institutions	3.53	0.61	Agreed
44.	Strengthen and partnerships involving girls club, teachers, local government officials, women and youths, elders, community and religious leaders that will jointly work towards ending early marriage	3.47	0.61	Agreed
45.	Strengthen the role of the judicial system particularly the police, judges and persecutors through training on enforcement of the law against early marriage	3.60	0.59	Agreed
46.	Invite leading professional women to communities to talk to girls as role models and a source of inspiration	3.59	0.59	Agreed

Table 5 shows mean and standard deviation of the response to the strategies that will help to address the problem of child marriage. The result shows that the respondents agreed that all the items listed are the response to the strategies that will help to address the problem of child marriage. This is because, each of the item has its mean between 3.35 and 3.71; each of these values is greater than 2.5. Similarly, the overall reflects that the mean is 3.51 which is an indication that the respondent agreed with the items in the cluster D as response to the strategies that will help to address the problem of child marriage.

In-Depth Interview

Results of the In-Depth Interview (IDI) of married and divorced adolescent girls from the six local government areas in Kaduna South education zone totaling 36 subjects also

selected through purposive sampling technique. They include: Barnawa, Kakuri, Makera, Nassarawa, Television and Tudun – Wada areas respectively.

The age range of marriage of the adolescent girls

According to IDI respondents, the age range at which they married were between the age of 11 years to 19 years. The following excerpts from IDI respondents illustrate the age range at which they got married.

I got married at the age of 16 year.

I married at the age of 14 years.

I married at the age of 19 years.

I got married at the age of 13 years.

I married at the age of 13 years.

I was 11 years old when I married.

The above responses of the respondents IDI from the six LGDS showed that the average age range at which the adolescent girls marry in the area of the study is 14 years of age.

Reasons for child marriage

Views of IDI respondents on reasons why adolescent girls marry early in life. Information from the respondents indicated reasons that push girls into child marriage in the following excerpts.

I married early because my parents felt I was matured to avoid a situation where I will be fleeing around. It was my parents that pushed me to marry due to our cultural belief as Hausa people; also our tradition and culture demand that.

Because I was matured.

Because it was the practice then, considering the era but it's not easy for such a marriage .

My parents were poor, so there was financial crisis at home so my father had to give me out (at 13 years) for marriage to settle his problems.

My uncle who I stayed with gave me out for marriage.

Causes of Early Marriage

The IDI respondents identified other causes of child marriage in the following excerpts

My parents had not wanted me to be sleeping around with men since I was a matured lady, so they felt the need for me to get married. Early marriage could be as a result of poverty and the belief that female child should not be educated.

Most females do not want to go to school even with monetary rewards by teachers, they refuse because of their parents backing them up and by the time we would be desiring to go to school, it would be too late and now is the time. Early marriage as I said earlier can be caused by lack of money, poverty, food crisis at home and my father was a polygamist, and so he sees nothing

wrong in giving me out for marriage. Also ignorance can cause it. As I said, I stayed with my uncle, so he decided to give me out to his friend for marriage, and also poverty and custom are causes of early marriage.

Health consequences of Child Marriage

According to IDI respondents, the health consequences of child marriage are depicted in this excerpt:

Yes, a woman may have difficulty in child bearing and if not operated early would lead to "wowo fitsiri" (vesico vaginal fistula – VVF), it could even lead to early divorce.

To me there wasn't any as at that time. But some had this common sickness known as "wowo fitsiri" (vuf), which mostly occurs to women/girls who gave birth at the early ages of 12 or 13 years it has a lot of problem during child birth since the woman is not fully matured, there would be difficulty in delivery which cause "wowo fitsiri" (vuf). In fact I am a victim of that disease, and we were up to 10 at that time and one of us had serious complication that she was just passing out urine which lead to her death.

yes, it has, it makes a lot of child delivery becomes very difficult and health workers suffer a lot in the process which could lead to death of a patient. I was a victim too of "wowo fitsiri" (vuf) and that took me to Jos for operation.

Strategies that could be used to reduce child marriage and its negative consequences

The IDI respondents suggested the following strategies to reduce child marriage and its negative consequences in the excerpt below.

Female children should be educated in school, and be allowed to attain mature age before marriage. A woman/girl should not be forced into marry o f early if they are not matured.

Female children should be properly educated and engaged in their early age, by way of organizing workshop and seminars on the need for proper education, with that they would attain age of 22 – 25 years before marriage and by then they would have been fully matured and contributed positively towards development even after marriage.

Female children should be engaged in school, to be educated for self-reliance and maturity before marriage

The cultural/traditional values that support child marriage of female children should be

modified and there should be laws against the child marriage of female children in place of their education because they marry at the age they are supposed to be in school.

RESULTS

The age range at which adolescent girls marry: The findings of the study showed that adolescent girls in the area of the study marry between the age range below 14 years and 19 years. The findings are in agreement with the research conducted by authors [17] which reported that adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa marry at a very tender age of less than 20 years. Also the findings are in agreement with the studies [6,7] which stated that 56% of girls marry before the age of 15 and of these, 17% were married before they were 10 years. The authors reported in a survey study conducted in 1998 in Madhya Pradesh that nearly 14 percent of girls were married between the ages of 10 and 14 years. UNICEF [7] also reported that in Kebbi State Northern Nigeria, the average age of marriage for girls is just over 11 years, against a national average of 18 years.

The IDI participants also acknowledged that the age range at which the adolescent girls marry in the Northern Nigeria is between the ages of 11 years and 19 years. The IDI excerpts support the findings from the participants.

The causes of child marriage among adolescent girls

The findings of the present study revealed that the causes of child marriage include the followings: poverty, economic survival strategies, socio-cultural and religious values, protection of girls' virginity or sexuality, lack of knowledge or illiteracy/ignorance, gender discrimination, the quest to avoid late marriage among others [6, 7, 18]. The findings of the present study supported the studies which stated that some of the causes of child marriage are poverty, economic survival strategies (because girls are seen as a means to reduce economic burden), socio-cultural and religious values, protection of young girls' virginity and sexuality, ignorance, or illiteracy, gender discrimination, the quest to avoid late marriage or having difficulty to get married if older or at older age and families' needs to protect their prestige in order to avoid being victims of gossip among others. The IDI respondents confirmed the findings on the causes of child marriage to include: to avoid sleeping around with men (protection of girls virginity and sexuality), poverty, monetary rewards, food crisis and ignorance among others.

Physiological Health of Adolescent Girls

The result of the study indicates that the physiological health of child marriage include the following: forced or wanted pregnancies, pregnancy related complications such as (V.V.F) illness, contraction of sexually transmitted infections such as (HIV and AIDs), unsafe abortions, suffer prolonged domestic violence and abuse, physical pain associated with sexual intercourse, post-traumatic stress, lack of decision making

power concerning their reproductive health care and imposition of the responsibilities of raising children alone without the husband due to the death of husband.

The findings of this study are in line with the findings [6, 12] which stated that young mothers are at risk of malnutrition, high blood pressure, linked to preclampsia than women who are over 20 years. The authors also further stated that young married girls are involved in contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) HIV and AIDs. UNICEF [19] reported that girls who are physically immature have high risk of Vesico Vaginal Fistulae (VVF) and Recto Virginal Fistulae (RVF) problems.

The IDI excerpts supported the findings of the data analysis on physiological consequences; difficulty in childbearing, "wowo fitsiri" disease (vesico vaginal fistulea (VVF).

The impacts of child marriage on psychological health of adolescent girls

The result of the study revealed that the psychological impacts of child marriage include that the girls feel isolated and unhappy, girls are confined to the home and household roles which make them lose mobility which affect them psychologically, victims feel inferior and develop low self-esteem, girls, suffer traumas from premature sex and childbearing, they are distressed and they suffer emotional damage due to repeated pregnancies which devastate them, they lack decision making power for themselves and their children and victims are denied the opportunity to acquire social skills and personal capacities to access key resources and form social networks for support/assistance to alleviate poverty among others.

The findings are in line with the study [6] which stated that psychologically, the victims of child marriage suffer from loss of self-esteem and self confidence which make them to be fearful of mixing or socializing with other people because they lack the will power to act or save themselves from the abusive situations they find themselves in. Equally, UNICEF [7] reported that psychologically, most adolescents girls are unhappy in an imposed marriage and are very isolated because they have nobody to talk to as they are surrounded by people who endorse their situation. The author further revealed child marriage has such intangible effect of loss of mobility on girls and their confinement to the home and the household roles. The author also reported that most adolescent girls suffer traumas as a result of child marriage, premature sex and childbearing; and distress is generally endured in silence by girls. The IDI excerpts provided support for the survey findings on the psychological impact of child marriage.

The Strategies That Help To Address the Negative Impacts of Child Marriage

The result of the study showed that the strategies for addressing the negative impacts of child marriage include the following: promoting education of girls, providing economic opportunities to young girls, government, NGOs and

individual should provide support needed for girls education such as free books, uniforms and school fees, creating awareness and sensitizing the whole community, establishment of skill acquisition centers, create a supportive network of (religious) leaders and teachers who can empower girls to negotiate with their parents, expand training for health and community workers on the dangers of child marriage, strengthen and partnerships involving girls club, teachers, local government officials, women, youth and community leaders, strengthen the role of judicial system, invite leading professional women to communities to talk to girls as role model and source of inspiration.

The findings is in agreement with the studies [6,7] which stated that provision of economic support and opportunities to young girls, support for physical well being, education for empowerment and intellectual development, support for psychological well being, addressing cultural and traditional values and norms that support child marriage advocacy/strengthening of judicial system to enforce laws against early marriage on perpetrators among others were some of the strategies to address the negative impacts of early marriage. the excerpts from the IDI participants were also in support with the survey findings on the strategies that will help to address the negative impacts of child marriage.

Recommendations

Base on the findings of the study, the recommendations are suggested:

- 1) Advocacy/strengthening the judicial system to enforce laws against child marriage on perpetrators.
- 2) There will be enlightenment campaign for parents, religious and community leaders on using child marriage of girls as a means of settling debts and building relationships with friends and other families.
- 3) Professional women should be invited to the communities to talk to girls as role models and source of inspiration.

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