

The Causes of Teenage Pregnancies and Early Marriages in Zambia

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Abstract: *The current research was initiated with the main purpose of identifying the causes of teenage pregnancies and early child marriages in Zambia. The research further examined the significant impact of causes of teenage pregnancies and early child marriages and effect of girl child in Zambia. Early marriages were an issue because the girls were being disadvantaged in terms of education. The Ministry of Education in collaborating with other partners have been trying to make sure that there is equality and equity in the attainment of education among our boys and girls but the cases of early child marriages had kept increasing from time to time. Between 2002 and 2010, there had been an increase in the number of school girls who got married. Despite the introduction of the re-entry policy, many school going girl children have dropped out of schools because of early marriages. As a result, there was still a gap between the intended goals of the government towards girls' education and what existed in schools especially in rural areas. The research was conducted among selected girls in the four selected Schools of Mansa District in Luapula province. The research design adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study sites areas studied included Mabumba Secondary School, Mansa Secondary School, Mutende secondary School, and Holy Trinity Secondary School. The population of the study targeted for this study was all the girl schooling at Mabumba Secondary School, Mansa Secondary School, Mutende Secondary School and Holy Trinity Girls Schools of Mansa district. The size of 70 participants was purposively chosen. The choice of this number agreed with Creswell (1978) and Marron and Smith (1995) who argued that for studies following the tradition of grounded theory, sample sizes ranging between 57 and 100 participants were adequate. The sample size consisted of teachers, parents, administrators, traditional leaders, DEBS and pupils who were directly involved and knowledgeable in the study. The data collected was analyzed manually. The analysis of quantitative data involved frequencies and percentages of particular responses which were presented using tables, graphs and charts. The qualitative data presented in the questionnaire was also analysed manually. Hence it was concluded that the early child marriage issue is a matter of great concern, there is far too little concrete information on its prevalence or its impact but consequently, the first requirement in addressing early marriages must be addressed meaning there is need for more research and more understanding. More effective advocacy and programming must follow to address it. National advocacy campaigns to be conducted to raise awareness. The legal age of marriage be implemented or more importantly ensuring implementation of the legal age of marriage, building on recommendations made at the 2000 UN Special Session on Women (Beijing+5); Promoting an effective system of registration of births, marriages and deaths; Setting up small-scale studies into the implications of early marriage and publication of the findings of such studies; Using national and international Women's Days to raise awareness; via social mobilization involving women's networks, opinion leaders at the national level, politicians and community leaders; Working with the media and other institutions.*

Keywords: Gender differences, Early marriages, Teenage Pregnancies, Gender Equality, Girl child marginalized, rural Areas, Millennium Development goals, United Nations Development Programs, UNDP

1. Introduction

The Zambian National Gender Policy aims at attaining gender equality in all developmental processes and it does that by redressing the existing gender imbalances. But still men dominate women in every country in the world, resulting in widespread discriminating against women and girls. The impact of unequal power relations and discrimination is often felt most severely when poverty exists, as this increases vulnerability. Inequality in society inevitably has an impact on the provision and content of education, as well as on the ability of girls to enter, and remain in school.

Gender differences, in Primary School enrolment were a major concern in several countries, particularly Africa, Southern Asia and the Middle East. This poses a great challenge to achieving gender equality by 2015 which was one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Studies had shown that an early marriage was one of the major factors which violate the right to education of a girl child. According to UNDP report of 2003 stated that the incidence

of early marriages had been identified as a serious and growing problem in the world, especially in the poor nations. Early child marriage and teenage pregnancies was a global issue which can violate the rights of girls and boys, both in this generation and the next. It affected the education and well being of millions of children and had effect on the poverty and development of communities. When girls dropped out from school to get married, there is a knock-on effect for the community as a whole, and for future generations.

Early child marriages were a major challenge to the fight against illiteracy, Gender equality in education and progression rate of the girl-child in the education system worldwide. In addition, (Sifuniso, 2008) stated that by limiting literacy and other benefits of education for girls, early marriages had a negative impact of females' opportunities for economic success and political participation. Evidence suggested that children of young, uneducated mothers were less likely to have a good start to their education, did well in class or continued beyond the minimum schooling.

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The Ministry of Education, 1966 stated that the empowerment of the girl-child with education was particularly associated with significant reductions in infant mortality, mobility, improvement in family nutrition and health, lowering of fertility rates, improved chances of girl-child education and improved opportunities in both wage and non-wages sectors. In addition Odaga and Heneveld (1995) contended that most of the social and economic problems experienced in the Sub-Saharan Africa were compounded by the marginalization of women in education. Early marriage can, therefore, be a significant barrier for communities seeking to raise education levels and break the cycle of poverty.

Due to the close link between early marriages and teenage pregnancies in education, those involved in education were well placed to find out more about the causes and impact of such marriages on the attainment of education. They would try to find ways of reducing the incidence of harmful early marriages and enable those that were married realized the benefits from a continued education to the benefits of our society as a whole. As earlier alluded to, early marriage and teenage pregnancies was a global issue but it was rampant in under developed countries especially in rural areas. Zambia being one of the above, mentioned countries was not an exceptional of the problem of early marriage and teenage pregnancies. In this regard, the research was carried out in one of the rural districts of Zambia which was Mansa district of Luapula Province. The purpose of the study was to investigate the causes of teenage pregnancies and early marriages and their effect on the attainment of girls' education at Mabumba Secondary School, Mutende Secondary School, Mansa Secondary School, and Holy Trinity Girls School and to investigate the reasons which prevented girls from returning to school after getting married or withdrawing them from marriages. The objectives of the study was to investigate the causes of teenage pregnancies and early child marriages and also to establish the impact of teenage pregnancies and early marriages on the education attainment of the Mabumba Secondary school, Mansa Secondary School, Mutende Secondary School and Holy Trinity Girls Secondary. The other one was also to identify factors that prevents girls from returning to school while in marriage and lastly to probe the perceptions of the community towards girls education. In meeting the objectives of the study a number questions were asked such as what are the causes of early child marriages and teenage pregnancies? What is the impact of teenage pregnancies and early child marriages on the attainment of girls' education and what factors prevent girls from returning to school after getting marriage and pregnant? What is the role of the community in promoting and discouraging girls' education and early child marriages respectively?

2. Literature Review

Taking the problems associated with the attainment of girls' education at Mabumba Secondary School, Mansa Secondary School, Holy Trinity Girls School and Mansa Secondary School Schools of Mansa District in Luapula Province, most seriously with the Early Marriage and teenage pregnancies, it was no longer possible to laugh and say that other areas

were not affected, but it was the cry of every community worldwide. The cases of early marriages and their impact had been there for a long time now. There were many theories and research pertaining to the same. As a researcher, it was very significant to review the existing literatures which had been put in place on the causes and impact of early marriages and attainment of girls' education. In this regard, the review of literature was related to girls' attainment of education with special emphasis on the global trends on teenage pregnancy and early marriages in Zambia. Teenage pregnancy was reviewed because they were inter-related. There were also other areas which were reviewed which included the re-entry policy, the trend in re-admission of girls who get married while at school and the challenges that have been faced with the re-entry policy in different countries of Africa but in particular Zambia.

Girl's Education

Zambia was a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) goals, both protocols compel Zambia to make a commitment to eliminate gender disparities at Basic and High School levels and achieve gender equality by 2015. The Zambian government through the Ministry of Education identifies strategies for gender equality which included putting in place mechanisms and facilities to encourage the retention of girls in the education system and to provide facilities in education institutions that are girl-friendly. These mechanisms and facilities took place into recognition factors and actors which hindered the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for all (EFA) goals. Various factors had identified as a contributing to disparities at the global level and can be categorized as being on the demand side and the supply side. The demand side included social and cultural factors, economic and familiar factors and what the author considers as other factors, which include HIV and AIDS. The supply side factors include political factors bureaucratic and institutional factors as well as contextual factor.

For Africa, Diaw, (2010) argues that poverty remains the single most overarching barrier to educational access for girls and women. The most vulnerable and marginalize children, those living in rural areas and urban slums, those with disabilities, those from minority ethnic and linguistic communities constitute the last mile to purity in access in African and Asia, primarily school fees remain a challenge for many poor families and contribute to cheating girls and young women of educational opportunities, particularly at post-primary/post-basic level. In Zambia, Sifuniso, (2006) argues that beginning in the colonial period men had a head start; they were offered education that was superior to that offered to women. This trend continued well into the independence period, when there were more school places for boys and technical subjects were offered to boys only. In addition, there were, and still are, more barriers for girls to surmount in order to access education. Most of the barriers were school-based, including; School location – long walking distances that tire girls out and expose them to sexual abuse. The other thing also girls' low levels of achievement in comparison to boys, which make parents, feel that the time girls spend in school is wasted. School

infrastructure – poor sanitation which affects girls much more than boys.

Other Barriers Are Community Based

The Poverty levels – when parents decide to send sons to school rather than daughters. Some Household chores and other community duties, which keep girls out of school and divert their attention from learning and the High level of illiteracy. In addition, Sifuniso (2006) argues that, Zambia continued to spend less on education than other countries in the region. This indirectly affects the education of girls because it means more dilapidated infrastructure, poor sanitation, not enough school places all factors that militate against girls access to education.

Another barrier to gender equity in education attainment was marriage. Girls who got married were usually made to leave school and, in many cases, historical and today, do not continue schooling. This last barrier was the one that was being militated against by instituting measures which enabled and encouraged girls who got married continue school.

Global Trends in Teenage Pregnancies

The global trends indicate that early marriages are a major social problem UNFPA (1995) identifies it as a problem which has assumed epidemic proportion, especially in the poorer nations. Hannagan and West (2004). The significant of early marriages globally was that more than 80 percent of teenage marriages were unintended. The implications of this problem were particularly serious because the majority of the teenagers who got married were in school and if drop out at this point, it undermines the fight against illiteracy and gender equity in education.

According to Voyadnoft and Donnelly, (1990), every year 14 million out of the 260 million women aged 15-19 become pregnant worldwide and the majority were in the developing countries, particularly in the Sub-Saharan Africa. The average rate of teenage pregnancy and early marriage was 143 per 1,000 females in Sub-Sahara African countries, a figure that was higher than any other regional globally. In this region, Niger had the highest rate of teen pregnancies 133 per 1000 females in Niger gave birth to a child before the age of 18. The next highest teenage pregnancy rate was found in Nigeria 103 per 1000. Among developed countries, in a year the United States 110 per 1000 and New Zealand 56 per 1000 had the highest level of teenage pregnancy, while Japan 4 per 1000 and South Korea 3 per 1000 had the lowest rates: Wikipedia. Moreover, unlike developing countries the rate of pregnancies for women of all ages in the developed countries has been declining and this has been attributed to more effective birth control practices. In Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, birth control practice was not as effective as in the USA. Hamagan and West, (2004) also contended that sexual behaviour was still highly risky; hence teenage pregnancy was still high. The authors further argue that 25 percent of teenage girls who gave birth have another baby within two years. This kept girls away from school for a long time and were denied chance of going back to school.

The Zambian Demographic and Health Survey of 2007 indicates that 6 in 10 women aged 25-49 and 5 in 10 men aged 25-49 were sexually active by the age of 18. 16 percent of women and 12 percent of men had sex by the age of 15. Women and men start sexual activities at about the same age. However, women living in rural areas begin sexual activity almost a year earlier than those living in the urban areas (CSO: 2007)

Person Responsible for the Teenage Pregnancies

The research carried by Hamusonde, (2003) in Lusaka revealed that to a large extent, adolescent pregnancies resulted from younger girls having sex with older men or “Sugar daddies”. Out of 30 girls interviewed 27 out of the total of girls interviewed got pregnant by intercourse with older men and only 3 of them had age mates responsible for their pregnancies. Nunn and Parish, (1932) came up with similar findings that older men engaged in sexual relations with young girls.

According to Hamusonde, (2003) the older men were already in marriage union but had material and financial resources which they used to attract and deceive the young girls. The research further revealed that the older men went after young girls with a belief that the teenagers had low risks of HIV and AIDS, which was a misconception.

Hamusonde, (2003) showed that 80 percent of the girls were rejected by men responsible for their pregnancies, while most men accepted the responsibility, they never took care of the babies and other relocated to other towns and were never seen by the young mothers. The grandparents in most cases took responsibility of the upbringing of the grandchild. Hamusonde further revealed that most teen mothers were not only rejected by the boyfriends but most parents chased them away from their homes. This had implication on the girls regarding financial, material and psychological support and this contributed to the failure of most young mothers to go back to school. In most cases, while the pregnant girls were unceremoniously thrown out of school, the boys responsible for the pregnancies continued attending school (Banda, 2010).

Sifuniso, (2006) states that there were some girls who became pregnant after having been raped and in many cases by fellow students. These boys were also expelled from school if they were reported to the school authorities. In the majority of cases, the boys were not reported and they continued with their education. There was always the promise that the boy, if allowed to complete his education, would be able to take better care of his child and probably marry the mother of his child, which they rarely did. Sifuniso (2006) also reports that in a few cases, the culprit was a teacher. Again, a teacher could be disciplined if reported, but only a few were reported.

Gender Policy

The Gender Policy emphasizes on reducing all forms of Gender Based Violence (including child marriages) and the need to create equal opportunities in the development of both boys and the girls (MoG, 2012).

Re-entry Policy

This is a policy that was introduced in 1997 under the Ministry of Education that requires all schools to allow the girls that fall pregnant to be re-admitted back into school two years after giving birth. According to the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education, the reentry policy gives the girls a second chance by granting them maternity leave when they fall pregnant and readmitting them back into education hence keeping them away from child marriages.

National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage

In 2015 the Zambian Government developed a policy document that aims at quickening the national efforts to end early marriages by the year 2030. This document is called the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriages. This document provides an operational framework that mirrors the prevailing national and global trends and efforts. The strategy is to run from 2016 – 2021; and intends to tackle the devastating developmental and human rights impediments that are related to marrying off children also encouraging the realization of all children's rights and protection services. The main objective of the strategy is to reduce the prevalence rate of Child Marriages by 40% by the year 2021 and its vision is to see a Zambia free of Child marriages by the year 2030. The National Strategy of Ending Child Marriages in Zambia (ECMZ) is the only government document that specifically and directly addresses matters relating to child marriages in Zambia.

The Laws of Zambia

There are no specific Acts in the laws of Zambia that talk about child marriages, but there are some Acts that talk of defilement, equality and the rights of children that are mostly used in the fight against Child Marriages. The following Acts are mostly used: **Anti-Gender Based Violence Act:** This Act forbids all forms of Gender based Violence and violence against children. It gives law enforcement institutions the mandate to prosecute all the offenders of Gender Based Violence. **The Defilement Act:** This is Section 138 of the Penal Code Chapter 87 of the Laws of Zambia that prohibits any sexual acts with minors (with or without consensus with the minor) under the 16 years of age and it states that any acts of this nature are a criminal offense.

Child Protection Act: This Act emphasizes on the Protection of children and fair trail of children who come into conflict with the law. It also gives emphasis on the importance of the rights of children.

Research Methodology

The research paradigm to be used both qualitative and quantitative methods. The areas to be studied include Mabumba Secondary School, Mansa Secondary School, Mutende secondary School, and Holy Trinity Secondary School. The population of the study targeted for this study will be all the girls schooling at Mabumba Secondary School, Mansa Secondary School, Mutende Secondary School and Holy Trinity Girls Schools of Mansa district. The size of 70 participants was purposively chosen. The choice of this number agreed with Creswell (1978) and Marron and Smith (1995) who argued that for studies

following the tradition of grounded theory, sample sizes ranging between 57 and 100 participants were adequate. The sample size consisted of teachers, parents, administrators, traditional leaders, DEBS and pupils who were directly involved and knowledgeable in the study. The researcher collected data from 70 participants consisting of 5 male teachers and 1 female teacher. Among the parents there were 4 males and 6 females. Only 5 male Head teachers participated while traditional leaders 8 males participated and 1 female. Pupils consisted of 8 boys and 20 girls. DEBS office also consisted of 1 male and 1 female. Among the church leaders, 5 males and 5 females participated.

3. Result and Discussion

The data collected was analyzed manually. The analysis of quantitative data involved frequencies and percentages of particular responses which were presented using tables, graphs and charts. The qualitative data was also analyzed manually. From the information recorded in each discussion, researchers identified major themes and sub-themes and critically analyzed various expressions with a view to gaining deeper insights into the subject matter. The purpose of this research was to investigate the causes teenage pregnancies and child marriages in Zambia and the effectiveness of the System used to curb child marriages and teenage pregnancies in Zambia through policy evaluation. As eluded earlier, there is no policy or legal frameworks that are particularly meant to address child marriage issues. As a result, policies and legal frameworks from other disciplinarians that have similar (but not exact) mandate with child marriage issues (such as those that look at Child affairs, Gender matters and Social welfare issues) are used to curb child marriages. The first policy to be used in the curbing child marriages was the Child Policy which was developed in 2006 (MYSCD: 2015) then other policies were added to the fight against child marriages in the subsequent years. From the data of the Median Age at First Marriage, the researcher observed that the (MAFM) for 2002 was the lowest in all the data at all levels. This shows that during the period between 1997 and 2002, the child marriages increased at a very high rate. This can also be observed from the prevalence rates of child marriages in Zambia. It was very high in 2002 at 42% and then it dropped in 2014 to 31%. This is the same time that different policies were incorporated to the system of curbing child marriages so as to reduce the vices.

This research therefore evaluated the causes early marriages and teenage pregnancies and discovered the effectiveness of these policies in the system of curbing child marriages especially since they were from different disciplinarians. From the analyzed data the following are some of the observations: the data shows that the Median Age at First Marriage was high in urban areas and low in rural areas; the rate of change similarly was high in urban areas. There were more stakeholders in urban areas than in rural areas; traditional practices were more eminent in rural provinces than in urban provinces. From the analysis, we observe that in the urban areas the system for curbing child marriages is stronger than that of the rural areas. In the urban areas there are more stakeholders from both government and NGOs while in the rural areas there most NGOs tend to shun

working from there due to the harsh conditions there. We also observe from the analysis that more resources are allocated towards projects that benefit the urban areas than rural areas. In addition to that, most NGOs prefer not having permanent offices in the rural areas hence there are no consistent presence of the NGOs.

Another factor is that in the rural areas is where customary laws are more recognized than statutory laws. This weakens the system because customary laws support child marriages. Therefore, this has been proven correct as urban areas have stronger systems than rural area and the MAFM improves tremendously in the urban areas than for the rural areas. This was accounted to the traditional practices of the province where young girls are allowed to have children before they get married as it is seen as a prestige among the people in the villages.

4. Recommendations

The teenage pregnancies and early marriage issue are a matter of great concern, there is far too little concrete information on its prevalence or its impact. Consequently, the first requirement in addressing early marriages must be such as, there is need for more research and more understanding. More effective advocacy and programming must follow to address it and National advocacy campaigns can take various forms such as Campaigning to raise the legal age of marriage; or more importantly ensuring implementation of the legal age of marriage, building on recommendations made at the 2000 UN Special Session on Women (Beijing+5); Promoting an effective system of registration of births, marriages and deaths; Setting up small-scale studies into the implications of early marriage and publication of the findings of such studies; Using national and international Women's Days to raise awareness; via social mobilization involving women's networks, opinion leaders at the national level, politicians and community leaders; Working with the media and other organisations.

The other important strategy must be to improve data collection. Actions must be informed by knowledge, and for this reason, an essential first step is to ensure that existing data collection and programmes must run by national governments, international organizations, or NGOs. The people must be sensitized to the issue of early marriage. They should be encouraged to provide full information on the marital status of children and young people, disaggregated by age and gender. Comprehensive data such as these are essential for making significant progress in understanding the risks associated with, and the dynamics of, early marriage.

Changing Legislation- The legal situation on early marriage is complex. Marriage is legally regulated in Zambia, but national legislation may bear no relation to the ages at which parents can and do marry off their children in practice. Changing legislation is, nevertheless, an important strategy. Legislation on its own may have only limited impact, but the very process of legislative examination and reform, together with related advocacy efforts, is an essential step towards lasting change. It is important, for example, that

governments revise or enforce legislation regarding minimum age of marriage if we see change. Governments should be encouraged to create a policy climate that supports later marriage, through scholarship provision, legal reform, and affirmative policies and programmes on behalf of women.

Deliberate efforts to improve participation of women and girls in civic and public life and to give them equal access to training and employment opportunities, can enhance their status and thereby decrease the likelihood of early marriage. Early marriage of girls and boys impairs the realization and enjoyment of virtually every one of their rights. The imposition of a marriage partner on children or adolescents who are in no way ready for married life, and whose marriage will deprive them of freedom, opportunity for personal development, and other rights including health and well-being, education, and participation in civic life, nullifies the meaning of the CRC's core protections for those concerned. Unless measures are taken to address early marriage, it will continue to be a major stumbling block to the achievement of human rights. This Digest is intended merely as a starting point, drawing attention to a practice that has been neglected by both women's and children's rights campaigners in recent decades. It is hoped that it will provide an incentive for a campaign to prevent early marriage and end the silent misery of millions of girls in many Zambia and around the world, to open up new horizons for them, and contribute to the development of policies, programmes and advocacy to bring this about

5. Limitations of the Study

Limited time during which the research study was to be conducted. Faced difficulties in getting information about the causes of early child marriages and teenage pregnancies due to the community's mind set. Married teenagers were not allowed in most cases, by their husband to be interviewed. This made the researchers face challenges to gather direct information from the victims.

6. Conclusion

It was also observed that since there is no policy or legal framework that is directly associated to child marriages, the policies and laws adopted to assist in curbing child marriages were not very sufficient as they were failing to address cardinal issues concerning child marriages and teenage pregnancies and as such as prosecuting the offenders of child marriages and finding a universal definition of a child since different disciplinarians have different definitions of a child.

It is therefore cardinal for the government of the Republic of Zambia to consider creating a policy specifically meant for child protection and amending a law that criminalizes child marriages. The government must further harmonize the age dilemma by providing the minimum age at which a person can get married without providing any exceptions.