

MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY



FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

RESEARCH TOPIC:

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTS OF CHILD MARRIAGES ON ADOLESCENT
GIRLS IN ZIMBABWE: THE CASE OF SEKE DISTRICT IN ZIMBABWE**

A RESEARCH PROJECT

**BY
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**SUBMITTED TO MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE BACHELOR OF ARTS HONOURS DEGREE
IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

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NOVEMBER 2016

APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommended to Midlands State University for acceptance of the dissertation entitled “An assessment of the effects of child marriages on adolescent girls in Zimbabwe: The case of Seke District in Zimbabwe” Submitted by Vincent Chapananga R131546T in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts Honors Degree in Development Studies.

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DECLARATION

I Vincent Chapananga, Registration Number R131546T do hereby declare that this entire research is a product of my own work. It is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors Degree in Development Studies, in the Faculty of Arts at Midlands State University.

.....

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...../...../.....

Date

DEDICATION

To my loving mother and father who showed me love, care and for supporting me throughout my trials, my supervisor for his support throughout the making of this research and for encouragement to carry on and above all the lord almighty for seeing me through the four year course.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to register my indebtedness to a number of people for their contributions without which the study would not have been completed. I would like to express my immense gratitude to my dedicated supervisor Mr Hahlani for his relentless guidance throughout the entire study period. Indeed without his academic excellence and diligence the study might not have seen the light of the day. His dedication to her work and commitment gave me the urge to keep going on. I would like to thank him for his patience. I am extremely grateful to the chairperson, Mr Munhande and all my lecturers in the department for the guidance and various contributions directly or indirectly during my study time at Midlands State University

Great acknowledgement to my family; always urged me to keep on going, and are always there for me. Special thanks go to my mother and father for her priceless assistance throughout the most difficult times of this study, love you. I would also like to thank my family at large and my brothers who supported me during the research. I would also like to thank my friends Bongani Mushawa, Given Gumbo, Beaula Ncube, Aaron Makoni and Augustine Chikungwa.

I further extend my gratitude to my fellow workmates and the management at Seke Rural Home Based (SRHBC) for the contributions made in making this dissertation a reality and for always opening their arms for me to work with them.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the personnel at Midlands State University library for their patience and assistance. Most importantly, my honor and thanks goes to the Lord my Creator and Provider for making everything possible.

ABSTRACT

Global trends of early adolescent girl's marriage have been escalating worldwide and mostly the impacts and effects are felt in developing countries. In many developing countries, child marriage is attributed to poverty, gender discrimination and lack education, peer pressure for instance in Seke District. District Household Survey (DHS) conducted in Seke District in 2007 found that 40 % of adolescent girls are being married before the age of 18 despite the existence of the Prohibition of Customary Marriage Act (chapter 5:07) as of 2004. In Seke District girls under 15 years of age are more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth due to lack of child birth skills and mostly they experience substandard child delivery. The goal of this study is to conduct an analysis on the effects of early child marriage in Seke District. The methodology engaged on this analysis was mainly based on primary data and the involvement of caregivers. The author argues that early marriage violates the human rights of children that are coerced and violated by parents without the fairness of weighing the long term developmental effects on the child. The social, mental and scholarly development of the girl child are dissatisfied the moment they are engaged in child marriage. The main aim of the study is to assess the effects of child marriages on adolescent girls in Seke District.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

In this study, the terms listed below are defined as follows:

- Adolescent-Any person below the age of 18
- Child marriage - the unlawful marriage of a person below the age of 18

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CRC: Convention On The Rights Of Children

CSO'S : Civil Society Organisations

CTRF: Changing The River Flow

DHS: District Household Survey

DSS: District Social Service

GBV: Gender Based Violence

GNC: Girl Child Network

NGO: Non Governmental Organisation

ROOT's: Real opportunities for transformation support

SRHBC: Seke Rural Home Based Care

STD: Sexually Transmitted Diseases

STI: Sexually Transmitted Infections

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children

ZICHIRE: Zimbabwe Community Health Intervention Research Project

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The whole world is in a crisis of fighting child marriages which have been increasing in many poverty stricken countries. The issue of child marriage is one of the world's focal areas in addressing child rights. Child marriages are believed to have far reaching problems for the girl child particularly rights to education, health, reproductive and sexual rights, as well as the right to be free from violence. The Convention on the rights of the child (CRC) of 1989 defines a child as any human person who has not reached the age of eighteen years. Moreso using the child right's codification, child marriage refers to the unlawful marriage of a person below 18 years. Child marriage, is when a girl child younger than 18 years is taken to the responsibility of a house wife according to World vision (2012). An adolescent refers to a stage and period in human growth and development that occur after childhood. The United Nations (1990) defines child marriage as the marriage of any younger person below 18 years of age in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (Article 1) (UNCRC).

Child marriages can also be called, "early marriages" and "child brides" according to Nour (2006). Child marriages have been recognized as a social cancer for all African communities. According to Mathur et al (2003) in 2002, 52 million girls aged less than 18 years of age were married, translating into 25,000 girls aged less than 18 years being married each day. Addressing child marriages has become one of the world's focal points and this is because child marriages have far reached consequences for the girl child's right to education, health, reproductive and sexual rights as well as the right to be free from violence. In many low- and middle-income countries, child marriage is extensive, with one-third of girls being married before age 18 and one in nine being married before age 15. Child marriages have been increasing due to many push factors that range from high poverty levels, low educational

levels, cultural and religious attributes. Child marriages are mostly known to be high in countries with local incomes where child marriages are influenced by economic incentives in form of bride price, in which the groom's family pay the bride's family for a marriageable girl. According to Bajracharya & Amin (2010: p3, 14) child marriages can best be described and analysed by the application of neo-classical household economic theory. Community, household and individual-level determinants of child marriage include household status, wealth and income, the educational attainment of parents and relatives, religion and ethnicity.

According to the Sustainable Development Goals, child marriages is one of the factors that is undermining development because it is leading to high poverty rates, loss of freedom, high illiteracy rates due to high drop outs and spread of diseases. Early marriages have been found to have many effects especially on adolescent girls. Some of the effects of child marriages include loss of freedom, increase in diseases, high poverty and increase in school dropouts. In Zimbabwe approximately 1 in 3 girls was married before their 18th birthday according to ROOTS (Real opportunities for transformation support) 2013. According to Real opportunities for transformation support) ROOTS (2013), in Zimbabwe child marriages contribute most of all school drop outs. On district level besides Seke District, Mangwe and Tsholotsho have the other higher records of school drop outs due to child marriage practices. Early marriages mostly bear a negative impact on the life of the adolescent girls. According to the Girl Child Network (GCN) (2004), 21% of girls are married before their 18th birthday in Zimbabwe. Early marriages tolls differ with area where one lives and has grew up in. In rural communities of Zimbabwe, child marriages are regarded to be high due to high poverty rates, cultural aspects and low educational levels of knowing they will be infringing someone's rights. In urban areas the opposite is true due to empowerment of the girl child to know about her rights as well as advocacy and law enforcement which is active. Hastings (1994) suggests the Zimbabwean situation of a child to be at its peak because of the apostolic

sects that operate in rural areas which encourage early marriages and polygamy. Moreso, church memberships has been affected by polygamy were it is leading in the spread of HIV/AIDs pandemic. On the other hand, these religious attributes have led to the loss of sexual reproductive human rights were these children fail to demand for safe sex or even birth contraceptives. Adolescent girls face many challenges due to early marriages and forced marriages. Child marriages are characterised by both positive and negative effects though negative effects outweigh positive effects.

Background to the study

Child marriages have now become one of Africa's under development point to the attainment of human development under the human rights indicator where many African countries are faced with the challenge of early marriage and harmful practises. According to the Sustainable Development Goals (2015), child marriage practises have eroded the girl child's education, health, and they have also altered development. In Africa, child marriages are said to be of more prominence in the western and central Africa, where girls are being married during their adolescent stages and 37% in east and south Africa have been involved in these cultural practises as according to the UNICEF (2014) (Ending child marriage: progress and prospect).

In Zimbabwe child marriages can be dated back since the state system were child marriages were fostered by cultural norms such as "*kuzvarirwa and chimutsamapfihwa*". These attributes have facilitated and increased child marriages in Zimbabwe. This also led to an increase in marital diseases due to sexual exploitations which is contradictory with the Convention of rights of the children (CRC) article 34 that gives children right of protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Article 36 of the CRC further states that a child has the right to protection from all forms of exploitation and to any aspect of the child abuse. According to Seke Rural Home Based Care (2014) child brides is more

prominent in rural areas were about 30% of girls in the area are married before their 16th birthday.

In most developing countries including Zimbabwe early marriages have been affecting community development where children are taken as brides particularly adolescent girls and this has affected their right to access education and health facilities. In Seke District, school enrolment for girls is evidently lesser than that of boys due to dropouts caused by marriages. According to Changing the River flow (CTRF) (2015) Zimbabwe is among the 40 countries that has a huge record of early marriages in Africa. The CTRF rest much of the blame on the failure of the government to enforce laws on the protection of children. Although Zimbabwe is a signatory to some world conventions on the protection of children, failures have arisen from our cultural systems and commodification of the girl child and also child marriage is viewed as a cultural necessity though in literal cases the marriage will be a licensed sexual abuse and exploitations.

Statement of problem

Given that girls and women are forced to engage in marriages by many factors such as culture, poverty and religion the key issue is to assess the effects of child marriages on adolescent girls and how these effects affect the development of the girl child. The research will give an analysis on the issue of 'child marriages,' the major objective being to unearth the effects of child marriages on adolescent girls. The research problem is mainly based on looking at the effects of child marriages on adolescent girls in Seke District.

Theoretical framework

According to the Human rights theoretical framework, child marriages are a sexual exploitation which is an offence under the, Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, Chapter 19:23 in section 61: 1 on the interpretation of a child, which later defines a child as anyone under the age of eighteen. The prime concern of the framework of human rights is to offer protection from tyrannical and authoritarian calculations. Donnelly (1987) has written, "We have human rights not to the requisites for health but to those things `needed' for a life of dignity, for a life worthy of a human being, a life that cannot be enjoyed without these

rights" As pointed out earlier, a 'child' in Zimbabwe in terms of section 81 of the Constitution is any boy or girl below the age of eighteen. This already gives a framework for defining what a 'child marriage' therefore is, Section 78 of the Constitution which deals with marriage rights states. The link that exists between the effects of child marriages and the human rights framework is that the theory advocates for freedom of thought and freedom of expression which is undermined by child marriages. Another theory used is the sex role theory by Connell in (1987). The role concept have been used since the 1930s, it is suitable for human conducts, both broadly and limited. The fundamental concept of sex role is the two different sexes, to be a male or a female. The man and woman are taught the meaning of their role, what accepted behaviour is and what is not. Women are more often viewed upon as submissive instead of being contributory thus somehow making them docile and indecisive and engage into early marriages without their consent. The relationship that exists between the sex role theoretical framework and the effects of child marriages is that the sex role theory hypothesizes that girls and women are commodities of man basing on their sexual orientation which makes men a superior being than women. According to Connell (1987:47-50) child marriages coexist due to male superiority which allows the existence of patriarchy and polygamous attributes to quench their thirst for power over the female.

Conceptual framework

According to Mhembere (2011) an adolescent refers to a stage and period in human growth and development that occur after childhood, from ages 10 to 18. The child rights convention also denotes a child as anyone under the age of 18 years. Using the same approach child marriage refers to the unlawful marriage of a person below the age of 18. Child marriage, particularly when a girl child younger than 18 years is taken to responsibility of a house wife according to World vision (2012). Child marriages are highly linked to gender inequality which is a deep-rooted norm, attitudes and behaviors that assign adolescent girls and women

as second citizen status compared to men and boys within the household, the community and in society at large Sibanda (2013) .

Research aim

The research aim was mainly to assess the effects of child marriages on adolescent girls in Seke District.

Research objectives

- To assess the causes of child marriages in Seke District.
- To analyse effects of child marriages on adolescent girls.
- To examine the ways in which Seke District is dealing with child marriages.

Research questions

- What are the main causes of child marriages in Seke District?
- What are the effects of child marriages?
- In what ways has Seke District managed to deal with child marriages?

Scope of the study

This research will focus on Seke District. There are 12 wards in Seke Districts but information and data is to be drawn from 8 wards of Seke District. The research was carried out in 8 wards only due to easy accessibility. The study is looking at assessing the effects of child marriages on adolescent girls in Zimbabwe having Seke district as an area of study.

Literature review

Literature review refers to a connotation of conceptualising, justifying, implementing and interpreting research investigations Simpson (1984). The study intends to unearth the main causes of child marriage and the effects of these child marriages on adolescent girls. Despite international agreements and national laws, marriage of girls under 18 years of age is common worldwide and has affected millions of adolescent girls. Child marriages are a human rights violation that prevents girls from obtaining an education, enjoying optimal health, bonding with others their own age, maturing, and ultimately choosing their own life partners. Sweetman (2006) is of the idea that up to half of the girls in developing countries are mothers before they turn 18 years. According to Gage (2011) and Kanyi, (2008) the causes of early girl child marriages in developing and under developed countries are numerous, and some of these causes may include poverty and cultural factors such as religion, the patriarchal systems. These causes have resulted in many effects on girls' health, increased risk for sexually transmitted diseases, cervical cancer, malaria, death during childbirth, and obstetric fistulas.

Girls' and young women are at increased risk of having premature birth and death as neonates, infants, or children. The consequences of child marriage are devastating and often determine a life's trajectory. Girls who marry young are at a higher risk of dying during childbirth, contracting AIDs and becoming victims of domestic violence. Girls who marry and give birth before their bodies are fully developed are at greater risk of death, befalling a terrible injury and developing illness during childbirth. According to the UNICEF (2014), girls under the age of 15 years are five times more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth than a woman in her 20s. If a mother is under 18 years of age, her baby's chance of dying in the first year of life is 60 per cent greater than that of a baby born to a mother older than 19 years. In Zimbabwe, child marriages are said to be at their highest peak because of

the existing cultures that facilitate and foster child marriages. Some of the push factors may include poverty and lack of knowledge about child rights. According to Snejana Farberov (2012) there are about 51 million girls below 18 years of age who are currently married, although this is against the laws of many countries and prohibited by the International treaties. Girls that engage in early marriage live in the world of darkness and secret where abuse and exploitation are the order of the day.

Child brides also are at far greater risk of contracting HIV than their counterparts who marry later. Often they are married to older, more sexually experienced men with whom it is difficult to negotiate safe sexual behaviours, especially when under pressure to bear children. A study conducted in Kenya and Zambia in 2004 shows that married girls aged 15-19 are 75 percent more likely to contract HIV/ AIDs due to sexual exposure, than unmarried girls of the same age. Child brides are at a risk of contracting HIV because they are marrying men who have multiple sexual partners so as to be sexually experienced. In most cases child marriages result from men who are aware of HIV/AIDS danger and they seek younger, virgin brides, who are presumably not infected.

Nguyen and Wodon (2012) use the contemporaneous and past incidence of child marriage in the area where a girl lives as instruments, and also find that in Africa each year of child marriage reduces the probability of literacy by 5.6 percentage, and the probability of secondary school completion by 6.5 points, with the impact on the probability of having at least some secondary education being slightly larger. According to Mhembere (2011), child marriages rob of the rights of the girl child to attain education. Due to high illiteracy rates on adolescent girls in Zimbabwe, most cases indicate that lack of education also affects the life of babies who are born of uneducated parents, who never know the importance of child immunisation and child nutritional support.

Tsanga (2003), the girl child is at risk of losing sexual rights once she is married at an early stage. This is one of the greatest effects that has affected the girl child in Zimbabwe were ,if a child is married earlier she is at risk of contracting sexually related diseases because she lacks her sexual rights to advocate for contraceptives since she is lowly educated and afraid of the man she would have married.

Research methodology

Introduction

In this section an outline of the research methods, population sampling techniques and research instruments is going to be given. The research was qualitative in nature and primarily an exploratory research. Qualitative researches are used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research. Qualitative Research is also used to uncover trends in thoughts and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem. Qualitative data collection methods differ using unstructured or semi-structured techniques. Some common methods include focus groups (group discussions), individual interviews, (Chinombo, 2010). The sample size is typically small, and respondents are selected to fulfil a given quota. It is also used for further probing for issues of interest and exploring things related to the problem at hand.

Target population

In carrying out the research the researcher set a target population on which he was going to reside much of his findings and recordings from and in this case the researcher targeted victims of child marriages especially adolescent girls, the District social service department , religious and traditional leaders and child protection organisations in Seke District. The selection criteria for the targeted population of victims of child marriages was carried out by caregivers who had the knowledge of the cases in the wards they operate and also they are

trusted by the people for their confidentiality. Moreso, caregivers were responsible to choose one participant per ward basing on the severity of their cases.

Sampling design and Sample size

A sample refers to a smaller proper subset of the population and sampling therefore refers to the systematic selection of cases for inclusion in the study or this is a process of choosing participants for the performance of the study. The sample size depended on the total number of the target population from which the sample was drawn. In this research the target population included 20 victims of child marriages, 5 religious leaders from influential churches and 5 local leaders. The target population also constituted 1 organisation and the District social service. Sampling is the inclusion or exclusion criteria for certain components from a population.

Sampling technique

Purposive sampling technique was used in carrying out the research. Purposive sampling technique was used because it allowed the researcher to attain and receive information from a selected few participants who are known to be possessing the information and in this case victims were the main attraction. During this research, the researcher had help from caregivers, health workers and cases workers who worked with cases. They helped the researcher to purposively select the purposive participants whom we extracted information from. The researcher relied on help from organisations like Seke Rural Home Based Care (SRHBC), “*Shamwari Yemusikana*” and the DSS to meet up with the selected population for the purposive sample at meetings and gatherings, even on home visits. More so it directed the researcher to the targeted group with the information which is under survey. Purposive sampling technique was useful in carrying out this research because it consumed less time since the researcher was going direct to the person with the information and also it allowed the researcher to gather required information from the selected individuals.

Data collection instruments

A qualitative research was used in developing the research findings. Some of these methods used during this research include guided interviews and focus group discussions, etc.

Questionnaire

This was an appropriate tool in carrying out research because respondents stay in different areas so the questionnaires were passed around for participants to complete and they were collected at a weekly gathering. Questionnaires were ideal because they were an easy method to reach them and collect enough data. Questionnaires were completed by 20 child marriage victims, 10 religious and local leaders from Seke District. Unstructured questionnaires were used and these were to allow further probing and to extract more information.

Interviews

Semi structured interviews were used to gather information and this had an advantage of capturing data in depth where the interviewee tells the interviewer all they think referring to a directed conversation. This technique allowed questions to be developed and administered to capture relevant information from the participants. Direct questioning and personal interviews facilitated capturing of data from the illiterate groups of the community. About 20 victims of child marriages and 10 religious and local leaders were interviewed during this research. 20 victims of child marriages were interviewed so as to extract experiences they face in their relationships and this helped the researcher to craft effects that are resultant to child marriage. In carrying out this research only 20 adolescent girls were interviewed as the total population were these girls were selected on ward basis where each ward had 2 representatives and the 10 religious leaders and local leaders were selected from the most influential parties for example we had representatives from “*Johanne masowe and Johanne Marange churches.*” In carrying out this research the researcher engaged in door to door

interview sessions with victims of child marriages and their families. Interviews were also carried out during weekly meetings with caregivers at Dema District Social Service grounds.

Observation

This is one critical tool that was used to gather data. Facial expressions of the interviewee were being analysed and recorded during the course of questioning. This is important in order to pick untold response of an interview. Observations as a method of data collection was used, when a respondent fails to answer a typical question and the interviewer is supposed to record facial expressions on what the respondent is trying to say. The researcher recorded body language of participant and he had to anticipate the suggested answer by someone's expressions. The researcher used body language as a response. A typical example is during facilitations where one would nod her head in agreement to what is being said and addressed.

Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were used whereby participants were involved and sometimes we would divide them into groups basing on their gender. Focus Group discussions yielded large amount of information over a relatively short period of time. The research gave the researcher the impetus of collecting and producing data that has insights through interaction found in a group setting. Four focus group discussions took place in Seke District. Class clusters were used where participants were separated into sessions and groups basing on their sex orientation. In carrying out this research, the researcher had an opportunity to attend some focus group discussions in different wards. The researcher recorded some valuable information during the focus groups where in some cases you would meet a group of men to tell you what they think about child marriages, whilst you record their arguments. In some cases the researcher had to fit into a group so that he will allow disclosure of information.

Document Review

Information to carry out this research using desk research analysis was sourced from the library, journals and reports from researching organisations. This method called for in-depth analysis of a nation's constitutional laws and policies for child protection. This was done by the researcher for ratification of cases to the articles of the constitution and conventional treaties, the country is obliged to.

CHAPTER 1: THE CAUSES OF CHILD MARRIAGES IN SEKE DISTRICT

1.1 Introduction

Internationally and regionally, many organisations, civil societies, governments are engaging and boasting resources in the fight against child marriage which has become more prominent in most and every developing country. According to The Research and Advocacy Unit (2014), a prediction of 38,000 adolescent girls is said to be married every day and in a decade an approximation of 142 million will be married before they celebrate their 18th year birthday. The issue of addressing child marriages has become the world's focal point in trying to address the girl child's rights. This is because child marriages are believed to have far reaching consequences on the girl child's right to education, socialization, reproductive and sexual rights and health. Child marriages are also considered to be posing threats to the social welfare, public health, human rights and economic development. Child marriages are forested by many push effects that stimulates and catalyse the process. In as much as adolescent girls face the horror of child marriages some of the causes of child marriages include limited economic options, poverty in the household, religious and cultural attributes and low educational levels.

The African continent is fenced with child marriages and many countries have failed to deal with the issue due to budgetary strains and economic failures though the issue has become so focal world over. Zimbabwe is one of the African countries which is failing to secure the safety of the adolescent girls. According to Research and Advocacy Unit (2014) recent studies shows 31% of adolescent girls in Zimbabwe are being married before their 18th birthday. According to the Multiple Indicator Africa Scorecard on Girls and Women's Reproductive Health (MIASoGWRH), Family Planning and Human Development (FPHD) (2013) Zimbabwe's ranking by countries with the uppermost number of adolescent girls marriage has moved from position 27 in 2012 to 21 in 2013, indicating an increase in the number of girls who are getting married before their 18th birthday. In Seke District, child

marriages are noted to be more prominent were (3/4s) three quarters of the adolescent girls are married before they get to secondary level. In some wards of Seke District once a girl has completed her primary school education and reached teenage hood, she is given a separate room to sleep in, away from the main family house. This gives her the opportunity to meet man at night and even go to local clubs. Such clubs will be attended mostly by young people. They dance together and may engage in sexual activities. In Ward 8 (Jonasi) of Seke child marriages are being fuelled by poverty and the general lack of knowledge in parents who opt to give children full freedom. According to observations carried out by the researcher when he attended one of the night gatherings in the Jonasi where he met up with these young adolescent girls for a questionnaire yet he pretended to be an interested party to the girls, he asked a question;

“pamuri makadai who is the older one and ane makore mangani?” and they all replied “nhai iwe zvaurikuda zvakanyorwa makore here, kusiiwa ndichibuda kumba kureva kuti ndakuita nyange kuita mukadzi wemumba”

Translation:

“Among all of you, who is the older one and how old is she?” and they replied “does what you are looking for concern my age? My presence at this place signifies that I have my parents’ consent and I’m even ripe to be a wife.” and he let them flee only to find one of the girls in a school uniform the next day.

After so many attempts of trying to reach to her to carry out a direct research they agreed on having lunch while she was to tell the researcher what he intended to know, according to the researcher whose name was *Matipaishe (pseudo name)*.

The question was; Why do you engage in night work and also why do many girls in this area marry early?

“Our parents think that we are old enough to cater some of our basic needs as young girls. Some things like sanitary wear, toiletries and we should provide something for our younger sisters so the only way we can get the money from is to look for blessers (referring to man) and sometimes we are even forced to engage into marriages.”

In Seke rural District the girl child is viewed more of being a commodity and a means of enrichment due to a plethora of facts such as high poverty rates, cultural and religious attributes. Seke District is characterised by many causes of child marriages and these act and foster child marriages. These causes will be discussed below.

1.2 Limited economic options and poverty

In many developing countries the girl child is a commodity and is used as a tool for enrichment as she is married off at an early age. The sole aim is to fetch high prices since adolescent girls will be regarded as pure because most of them will still be virgins. Globally forced marriages are common in poor countries and regions within the countries. Zimbabwe is characterised by high unemployment rates and this has went in as far as affecting the lives of the adolescent girls who are now being married off at an early stage so as to strengthen the household. In Seke District, the girl child is forced to marry by parents because they will be in dire need of the dowry to feed, clothe, educate and house the rest of the family. The unemployment rate has even forced many parents to marry off their daughters to sustain themselves economically child marriages are even done to reduce responsibility on the parents. According to Cvorovic (2004), the practice of paying bride price is still common within developing countries that have unstable economies. These practices are carried out for financial gain by the parents of the children not knowing that this perpetuate an inter-generational cycle of poverty and lack of opportunity. According to Filmer and Schady (2006) where poverty is acute, giving a daughter in marriage allows parents to reduce family

expenses by ensuring they have one less person to feed, clothe and educate. In communities where a dowry or 'bride price' is paid, it is often welcome income for poor families.

According to the Seke District Social Work department (DSS) poverty is a push factor in most cases and girls sometimes cohabit with older men in order to escape poverty in their household. This system of cohabitation most known as "*kutizira*" (*cohabiting*) in native language has become the form of marriage nowadays. Even though poverty is acting as a push factor to child marriage the parents and the government are failing in safe guarding the best interest of the child by protecting their rights, health, development and overall well-being of the child. Apart from the violation of health rights, early marriage disrupts girls' schooling opportunities as guaranteed by the CEDAW and the CRC. According to the CRC rights to marry and found a family are the rights of adults and not children and adolescents. The CRC endorses both the principle of the "best interest of the child" and the "evolving capacity" of the adolescent.

1.2 Religious and cultural attributes

1.2.1 Religious attributes

Religion and culture are other causes of child marriages in Zimbabwe. Religion and culture are complimentary aspects that have been used to lure adolescent girls in marriages. The Apostolic Sect Churches in Seke District such as *Johanne Masowe* and *Johanne Marange* are mostly dominant indicative of many followers than other churches. These churches use prophecy as a tool to force children to marry unwillingly. The churches give no right of choice to the children and hence marriage will be solely out of respect the customs of the church and to please their parents. The sect is well known to have more influence on issues pertaining to polygamy. In Seke District, most of the married girls are daughters of church followers. According to the church followers the other real reasons for child marriages is to serve purposes of expansion and to keep marital issues within the church walls. According to

interviews, observations and views from other people in the area, older men want to marry young girls because they are easier to control and manipulate, paving way for the practice of patriarchy, power, and control. In many wards of Seke District the basis of their assumption on adolescent girl child marriages is that a grownup child who has reached puberty and has started her menstrual cycle, has greater chances of committing adultery, so the only solution to keep the child away from having sex before marriage is to marry them off and assist them to live according to the will of God. In Seke District both boys and girls are married off to start their lives as young couples even during their early ages.

According to the DSS and Zichire publications in (2013), many followers of the apostolic sects are said to manipulate and abuse prophecies in order to handpick their targets of child marriage. Many local people confirmed the act even though church elders dismissed these allegations to be false. *Johanne Marange* is known for the use of prophecy in luring young girls into marriage. Participants also admitted that the practice of child marriages was more common among apostolic followers in their community and specifically identified the apostolic sects where this is happening as culprits. They explain that these child marriages are based on fearing to embarrass their families. In some cases young girls are forced into marriage with men twice their age because of ridiculous beliefs that if an HIV positive man sleeps with a virgin he will be cured. The apostolic churches believe sleeping with a minor cures HIV. In Ward 6 (Dzandura) of the Seke District there was a case of a girl who was married off to a forty eight year old church leader so that the family of the girl might acquire a post in the apostolic cult. The girl was married off to secure the family's ambition to be in leadership. According to local caregivers in Seke District, if a girl is said to have made a decision and refuse the marriage proposal she will have to live under shame, stigma and humiliations for going against social, cultural and religious beliefs.

Many cases of child marriages among apostolic sects happen but they cannot be reported due to the brother hood nature of their communities and they also view this as the right way of marriage for the young girls. In ward 8 of Seke District many adolescent girls do not go to school because they are main liabilities since they are married off. Their fathers think that they do not have to be educated since their duty is to be child bearers. Adolescent girls in ward 6(Dzandura) of Seke District are mostly illiterate and many of them are school drop outs. Mostly these adolescent girls who are involved in early marriages are also involved in polygamous relationships increasing their risk of contracting STIs and other sexual diseases. Due to the dominance of the apostolic sects in Seke District an average of 60 -80 adolescent girls are married yearly according to SRHBC Report (2015). Most of these church marriages occur during church gatherings “*kugungano*” that is where the interests of the man are laid out in form of prophecy and a vision to make the crowd believe the lust.

1.2.2 Cultural attributes

Many cultural attributes have been acting as a cause of child marriages in Zimbabwe were culture is being used as an umbrella to influence child marriages in many rural districts including Seke District were many cultural norms are still working and are still active. In Seke District children are being married off during their childhood to satisfy cultural desires. Seke District is one of the few villages in Zimbabwe that has stuck to up hold its culture and in this district cultural marriage systems still exist. The research findings give evidence of attitude and cultural practices by some members of the community who participated in this study and research. To confirm these findings one of the interviewed men stated that:

Cultural leader

“Hapana chikonzero chekurega madzimai achingo tenderera vasinakuroorwa nokuti tinoda kuvedzera huwandu hwevanhu munharaunda yedu kuwanda kunorerutsa basa.”

Translation:

“There was no reason to leave females and girls loitering around unmarried because we want to increase the population in our area and labour in the families”.

Cultural marriages like *kuzvarira*, *kuripa ngozi* and *chigadzamapfihwa* are still being practised in the district. In many wards of Seke District adolescent girls are being married off at birth, some of the girls are married to their husbands even before their birth and this so happens in a way that parents of the child received aid and promised the pay back with their unborn child which is known as *”kuzvarira”*. The system was adopted from primitive communities of the early states systems. In Seke District the system of *“kuzvarira”* is more prone in traditional believers and some of the parents are suffering from the consequences of these actions even though they benefited long back.

In Seke District, in Wards 7 the researcher was lucky to interview an adolescent girl who was in a situation of *“kuzvarirwa”*:

She said her “our parents are cultural upholders and they believe in their traditional systems. I became a victim of this system when the man I got married to, bailed my parents out during a difficult moment of a funeral where my father failed to assume his role of burying his deceased mother in-law and opted for a loan on which he promised me for marriage to the man who helped them.”

In Seke District the people believe that when a girl has begun menstruating she has to be married and assume the responsibilities of taking care of the extended family she got married to. They believe that, in their communities, girls are not responsible for economic activities in that they are viewed as potential wives and mothers so they are considered the perfect people to take care of family members, including sick and elderly people. They are also child bearers and housekeepers. This perception leads to various violations of women’s rights, as there are

few chances for girls and women to air their feelings on how they are suffering in their families.

(a) "Chiramu"

"Chiramu" system is one of the common cultural ways that causes child marriages. This is one of the traditional ways that are practised in order to influence patriarchy within the societies and communities. The system of "chiramu" is when a man is allowed to refer to his wife's young sisters or female cousins and nieces as his wives and it also includes a number of wife roleplaying to the husband which is seen as a way to make the females to feel welcome at their female relative's home. Traditionally, a typical sister's or aunt's husband would call the girl "my wife" and jokes about her owning everything in the house including the property, himself and the children. Nowadays, many men are abusing this traditional practice by using both forced and consensual sexual relations with their wives' young female relatives. In Seke District when an incident like this happens, the men mostly offer to marry the adolescent girl and in this area they mostly accept since their culture supports and embraces "chiramu" and polygamy, though this would have endangered the young child who had no or less say in the actions. According to a focus group discussion attended and facilitated by the researcher under the banner of SRHBC, "chiramu" practices are still being carried especially in families that have failed to conceive or to have a child. The men make it a point that they find reason to blame their wives so that they can attract a new wife and in most cases the younger sister is an option. In many societies and mainly in Third World countries, adolescent unions are used as a platform to build or fortify coalitions between families Mhembere, (2011). Despite children being protected by the law and conventions against harmful cultural actions traditional leaders are continuing supporting the idea of "chiramu" even though they know that their actions are against child liberation and child rights conventions. Tsanga (2003:52) states, people see law as imposing values and practices

that oppose their interests, needs, attitudes and convictions, their reactions are generally negative. This is true in the case of the traditional leaders and cultural attributes were man really know the law and know that they could get arrested but nevertheless continue to go ahead and marry an underage girl.

(b) “Chimutsa mapfihwa”

“*Chimutsa mapfihwa*” is commonly when a widower is offered another bride among the deceased’s younger sisters. The younger sister has to assume the role of wife and compensate the gap that the sister would have left. The replacement is someone related to the deceased in form of a younger sister, cousin or a niece. To support child marriages, people in Seke District believe in child bearing and if one fails, this is seen as a weakness in their lives. Hence in trying to curb this they give out their younger children as second wives to bear children for her sister’s husband. In some wards in Seke District, people and families are more interested in having grandchildren and this solidify the union of marriage so they do anything within their power to try and influence child bearing in all ages including young adolescent girls. Giving out a younger sister’s hand in marriage through the system of “*chimutsa mapfihwa*” is a way of trying to avoid humiliations to the family of the female and it is also to allow the men’s family to have an offspring.

(c) “*Kuripa Ngozi*” (Avenge spirits of the deceased)

This is no longer prevalent in many villages but in some areas of Seke District, this system of appeasing the dead is still being practised. “*Kuripa ngozi*” is when a virgin adolescent girl is offered for marriage to a murdered person to make peace between a murderer’s family and that of his/her victim. In many cases, a virgin teenager girl, together with cattle, is given as atonement for the murder. The adolescent girl is usually given to the victim’s male relative without her concern and depriving her right to make her own decision.

This is done so that she can bear a child to replace the murdered victim. In Seke this system has been abolished but there are some extreme cases where this happens. According to chief Dema of the Seke District, customary laws are meant to be observed and respected, if not so, “*mhuri yese inopera kutsakatika*”(*the whole family will be affected as they will experience mysterious deaths*), he said whilst responding to what the researcher had asked concerning “*kuripa ngozi*” at a planned gathering of elders. Cultural beliefs were cited as one of the causes of the girl- child marriage in the area.

Speaking at same ceremony, Village head Savanhu, said that girls are married off to older men to appease avenging spirits of the deceased. In Besa Ward in Seke District, the issue of early child marriages has attained an alarming level and the effects are serious that there is need to intervene so as to rescue the girl-child from further abuse and exploitation as a result of early marriage.

1.3 Peer pressure

Peer pressure is considered one of the major causes of child marriages in Zimbabwe. In many rural districts it is prevalent to hear adolescent girls advising each other to get married early in order to cure menstrual pains and also to avoid problems associated with child bearing at old age. In Seke District peer pressure among children is vast within remote secondary schools, where an adolescent girl’s main aim is to be married and be a child bearer. According to caregiver “*Mawere*” (*pseudo name*)

“*vanasikana vemuno kufurirana ndokwakawanda. Mwedzi wapera uyu mapatya ekwa sabhuku Materera akatizira panguva imwechete achienda kuward yekwaMarikopo uko. Mumwe akaona kuti mumwe ayenda ndosarira akaendawo nekuda kwekufurirana. Izvozvi twakawanda tunoendawo tukaona izvi. Zvimwe zvinokonzerwa nekutiza mabasa kudzimba zvimwewo kutiza nzara*”.

Translation:

“Peer pressure has ruined our adolescent girls. Last month some twins from the village of “headman Materera” ran away from home to cohabit (kutizira) with a man from “Marikopo village” (ward 4). Many other teenagers will follow what these two have done in a way to try to run away from house chores and hunger.”

In many cases when the girl child starts her menstrual cycle they start to view themselves as adults not considering their young ages for marriage.

According to SRHBC (2015) Seke District has about 65% adolescent girl’s marriage rate. At Dema growth point many of the present prostitutes are children of ages 13 to 16 years old. These children are being involved in prostitution because of peer pressure. Local secondary schools are also facing low enrolment because of peer pressure were many teenage girls opt to marry old boys in order to stop going to school and also to curb menstruation by being pregnant.

1.4 Limited access to education

According to ZIMSTAT (2009) the survey shows that the less educated a girl is, the more prone she is to early marriage. This claim was supported by the SAFAIDS(2015) survey which alludes that 33 percent of women aged 20-24 with no education and 55 percent with primary education were married or in union at age 18, compared to 23 percent of women with secondary education or higher.

Lack of education often disempowers the adolescent girl child. Lack of access to education reduces their employment opportunities and this often leads into submission to early marriages and unions. Lack of money for school fees and distant secondary schools also contribute to the limited access to education, further contributing to school dropout. In Seke rural District adolescent girls from as young as grade 6 are engaging in early marriages. Ward 2 of Seke (Dema / Svinurai) many young girls are being married at around 12 to 15 years after they drop out of school. Parents are partnering with them in early marriage as they try to

curb shame that should the child fall pregnant while staying with them and also to keep purity in virginity so as to charge much dowry.

Despite local people being educated about the equilibrium between the male child and the female child, people still view the boy child with superiority than girls and they prefer sending the male child to school while the girl child settles for an early marriage. This has however led to the under development of the girl child since she is deprived of her right to education which undermines her ability to make decision, her economic development and at the end making her a dependent factor on the males outcome exposing her to abuse and all other violations. The inferiority of girls is also seen through their getting overburdened with domestic chores thus training her to be more of a house wife than a thinker. The general poor performance of girls in rural districts has also led to drop outs, thus making the adolescent girl child exposed to early marriage.

In conclusion, adolescent girls in Seke are at risk of facing early marriages because of their patriarchy systems which give man dominance over woman and in a way man seek to make alliances with other tribes through marriage alliances. There are many causes of adolescent child marriages that range from cultural attributes such as “*chiramu and kuzvarira*,” religious attributes, peer pressure, poverty and lack of knowledge for both the girl child and the parents.

CHAPTER 2: THE EFFECTS OF CHILD MARRIAGES

2.1 Introduction

The negative effects of child marriages are mostly and obviously devastating to the welfare of the children. Adolescent girls who marry at an early age are determined to a trajectory life. Although child marriages stem from poverty and powerlessness, it further reinforces and supports the gendered point of view to poverty and powerlessness to the physical, mental and social development of the adolescent girl child. This will heighten personal social isolation of the girl child or the victim of child marriage. Child marriage is a tool of oppression which subordinates not just the woman but her family. According to Bruce (2005) child marriages doesn't perpetuate an inter-generational cycle of poverty and lack of opportunity only, it strengthen the subordinate and loyalty nature of households and communities which serves as the powerful classes by giving a hand in marriage of an adolescent girl child to an older male to gain favour and to prove loyalty.

Adolescent girls who are married at an early age are at risk of experiencing domestic violence in their homes than girls who marry at a later stage. Moreso adolescent girls are more likely to contract sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV due to inexperience. They cannot request for contraceptives due to lack of knowledge and also they lack decision making in their marriage. Girls in early marriages face higher risks of dying during pregnancy and childbirth due to complications from pregnancy and childbirth. According to Lauro and Green (2013) complications from pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death for girls between the ages of 15 and 19 years old in poor countries. In poor and developing countries stillbirths and deaths of new-born babies are 50% higher among mothers who are illiterate and under the age of 19 years. Adding more to this, child marriages prevent girls from continuing with their education, and disallow them from breaking out of poverty.

According to Giddens (2009) issues of poverty, cultural practices, and political instability and

gender inequalities have been noted as some of the major causes of girl-child marriages in developing countries.

Child marriages have life-threatening effects on adolescent girls were children will be exposed to harmful lifestyles and practices. Child marriages are recorded to be high in Africa considering wide and diverse aspects of culture, religion and high poverty rates in the continent. Child marriages put the African girl child at risk of losing her education, losing her life through stillbirths, loss of life at child birth due to complications, loss of freedom to play socialisation and freedom of association. Child marriages also put the adolescent girl child at a risk of sexual, physical and psychological abuse throughout their lives. The persistence of child marriage has hindered Africa's efforts to achieve SDG number 5 of the 8 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which seeks to eliminate extreme poverty, to achieve universal primary education, to promote gender equality, to reduce child mortality, to improve maternal health, and to combat HIV/AIDS. The analysis below will shed more light on the negative effects of child marriages mostly on the married adolescent child. In Africa and more developing countries child marriages are at their peak due to the reasons explained in the chapter above, however these reasons and causes have negative effect on the life of children. In Zimbabwe, like most developing countries child marriages are taking place and they carry adverse qualities on the adolescent girls. In Zimbabwe, in many districts especially in rural areas child marriages are being regarded as the order of marriage. In Seke District, many adolescent girls were married at an early stage and there are many problems that are associated with their marriages as shall be discussed by the consequences of child marriages below.

2.2 Deprivation of childhood and a future

Child marriage refers to the marriage of a minor before she reaches an age to mature.

According to UNICEF (2016) child marriage, is defined as a formal marriage or informal

union before the age 18, is a reality for both boys and girls, although girls are the most affected leading to a widespread lifetime disadvantage and deprivation. Child marriages can be described as a pool of deprivation basing on the fact that it takes away the freedom of the adolescent girl to socialize and play with age mates. Child marriages undermine the convention of the rights of children on the right to play and recreation, in a way that if a teenage girl gets married early the time she used to be out playing and socializing she should be at home doing house chores, playing the house wife role and raising children. In Seke District adolescent girls are being married to carry out house chores and taking care of old members of the family in the male's house.

Child marriages also take away the future of the girl child in a way that when a child is married mandates change, besides her carrying out her desires and wishes to change her life she is forced to stick to house chores.

This is evidenced by an interview with some of the girls who were telling the same effects they are facing and here is one of the recorded interview of adolescent girls involved in child marriages. All the interviewed girls were talking of exploration discoveries demonstrated that their reactions were regular. According to an adolescent girl who has faced childhood and future deprivation said:

“I was married at 12 years old when I was doing grade seven. My better half was older than my father. He requests that I get firewood from a distant mountain in the perinatal periods and I do all the house-hold errands for the entire family and even the extended family rely on me.”

The interviewee confirmed that when she gets to rest she will be so tired. Also, one other young lady pitifully expressed that as she tells a story in tears. In Seke District, adolescent married girls move away from their parents' home to live with their husband and his family

which is in accordance to their culture. This move is inspired by the patriarchal nature of the African system. The outcome of this research shows that adolescent married girls are often isolated and are powerless because of fear of putting to shame where they come from and their subsequent lack of empowerment. The fact that they are still children makes it difficult for them to negotiate things in their own interest and in a way they wish things to happen.

In Seke District in wards like “*Dzandura, Dzumbunu, Besa and Marikopo*” child marriages are regarded to have crippled the ability of women and girls in that the women and married adolescent girls in the area are not allowed to engage in income generating programs even if the programs are NGO funded. There are a plethora of factors which hinder and cripple adolescents from engaging in economic development opportunities which are limited mobility, household responsibilities, pregnancy and raising children, according Marthur et al (2003).

2.3 Gender based violence

Child marriages result in gender based violence (GBV) due to the difference in age which makes the child to be exposed to harmful situations. Evidence indicates that child marriage makes young wives extremely vulnerable to physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse Levine et.al (2009), UNICEF (2005), ICRW (2007), and IPPF (2006). In most cases child marriages are characterised by a dependency syndrome where the dependent party will be the adolescent married girl. This is largely because she lacks adaptation skills since she is still young and uneducated to equip herself for survival as she will be depending more on the husband. GBV in most cases has an impact on the life of the weaker party. According to the UNICEF (2005) women who are married as children are more likely to have a final decision from the husband.

In Zimbabwe about 36% percent of the women who were married before the age of eighteen are exposed to GBV because they are dependent on their spouse findings. According to

Johnson and Thornton (2003) adolescent girls in child marriages lack economic empowerment since their main use is on domestic chores and also the lack of education exposes them to harm of violence. According to SRHBC (2014), economic dependency and lack of social support exposes child brides to marriage traumas and violence.

According to information drawn from case files from the Seke District Social Service and a local hospital in Seke District known as “*Kunaka*” Hospital, domestic violence has been fuelled by the issue of child marriage where many men are marrying young girls who are inexperienced to cater for the man’s request. According to the Seke DSS and Police reports GBV in Seke is escalating with large numbers due to economic dependences of adolescent girls and lack of power to make a solid decision for themselves.

2.4 Loss of sexual rights and exposure to STIs

Loss of sexual rights is another effect that results from child marriages. The marriage of a minor strips her the rights to her own desires since in most cases adolescent girls are often married to older men who tend to take control of the marriage in their own advantage and in the way the marriage should operate. In a child marriage setting, sexual rights are lost when the husband fails to understand his partner’s desire when they have sexual intercourse. In Seke District many adolescent girls in early marriages confirmed the claim saying; since most of our marriages are apostolic sect related,

“Varume vedu ava havatibvumidze kushandisa nzira dzekudzivirira pamuviri kana kushandisa dzimwewo nzira dzekudzivirira kutapurirana hutachiwana hweHIV. Ukataura zvekudzivirira pamuviri vanoti hatikwanise takanzi zvaranai muwande, uyewo tikati tidzivirire HIV zvinonzi unondipomera kupomba zvisinei kuti tinenge tiri pabarika.”

Translation:

“Our husbands don’t allow us to use contraceptives to prevent pregnancies or even HIV/AIDs. They don’t regard using contraceptive for they say, we were assigned to multiply and increase and for contraceptive advocacy they accuse you for accusing them for promiscuity even though they are polygamous.”

In many child marriages, child brides cannot address how they desire to have sex since they lack decision making and empowerment. Another factor is lack of knowledge on how to use contraceptives to prevent unplanned pregnancies while on the other hand some areas are too remote to find contraceptives and protection. Ward 8 (Dzandura) of Seke is located 40 km from the closest clinic and kiosk where they can get contraceptives.

In many cases early marriages comprise of an adult figure in form of a man and an underage girl who is at risk of exposure from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) due to the adventurous tendencies of man. In many relationships the husband is more likely to be an adventurous part because of exposure. Marriage can increase married girls’ exposure to the virus, especially as older husbands may engage in unprotected sexual relations with other partners Butler (1990). Child marriages expose adolescent girl children to STIs in a way that they cannot negotiate for having safer sex and the use of contraceptives. Furthermore, child brides suffer STIs if they are married to a man with many wives particularly man from the apostolic sects. In Seke District man from apostolic sects marry many wives and this gives precedent for a spread of diseases. If one among the family is having an affair outside the circle the consequences are likely to be felt by everyone. In the apostolic sects mostly they do not go to clinics which also give precedents for the spread of viruses and diseases. According to the ZDHS (2005-6), females constituted 54 percent of people living with HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe. HIV prevalence was higher among adolescent girls aged 15-49 years 21.1 percent compared to their male counterparts 14.5 percent.

i) Loss of self-Esteem

Child brides are most likely to face loss of self-esteem and loss of self-actualisation due to early marriages and this may even lead to her being abused by family members and even her husband. In most cases after an adolescent girl is formally or informally married she tends to feel lonely and loses self-confidence due to a feeling of embarrassment. Child brides lose their confidence due to isolation and harassment that she receives from her husband and extended family members. This abuse that they endure contributes to low self-esteem. Affected girls also suffer social exclusion as they fail to fit in with their unmarried peers while at the same time failing to identify with both married and unmarried adult women.

2.5 Lose of education

Child marriages have a negative impact on the education of children. Most married adolescent girls suffer from educational discontinuity, were when they get married they are forced out of school by their husbands. The findings of this research were in agreement with Haralambos and Holborn (2008) who stated that the physical effects of girl child marriage negatively impact their lives since these marriages are not done to the best interest of the child and in many cases loses of education cannot be regarded as the best interest of the child. In general terms female children are born on the disadvantaged side when it comes to attaining education were in many areas they concentrate in educating the male child due to the regards that the female child will be married and the education will not benefit us.

In Seke District educating a girl child is viewed as a liability, the only required education in girls mind is to have knowledge on how to take care of the extended families, fetching firewood and water and child bearing. In many rural districts of Zimbabwe many school dropouts are girls from poor household setting.

According to Mawere (2012) a girl child who is already at school is forced to terminate when they get married early. Furthermore, child bearing is also another factor that leads to dropouts

for many girls. Once married, girls are typically taken out of school as their lives become dominated by looking after children and domestic servitude. For every year a girl is married before adulthood, her literacy reduces by 5.6%. Daughters of young mothers are also more likely to drop out of school and be married young. In most cases children that are born by a teenager who has not been able to acquire education is more likely to experience educational failures. This is largely because he/ she will be lacking motivation from the parent since she has not been able to acquire education. In an interview held with the guardians and teachers on the academic impacts of the early adolescent girls marriage demonstrated that a few girls are definitely not permitted to go to class in light of the fact that the guardians expect that the girls will be taken by some different man. Moreover, one of the educators/ teachers expressed that:

The teacher

"In my class many adolescent girls perform inadequately at school and others are sent to school without the major components for one to acquire education with, for example, course books and exercise books. This practice hone expands lack of education levels on adolescent girls."

The references above pointed out that the young girls are ignored from accepting the coveted scholarly accomplishment. In Seke District, many wards have high statistics of girl child drop out from schools resulting from cultural and social effects. In this area for an adolescent girl to acquire education it is regarded as a taboo as a countable number attain education. In some cases adolescent girls drop out from schools before they are married but when this happens in some ways it means the girl child is more likely to marry early due to some push factor that surround her. Peer pressure is also considered to be an active push because after she drops she will be socializing mostly with other married adolescent girls.

Adding more to this, there are high numbers of girl child drop outs in Seke District due to distant schools whereby the distances are not favourable to girls. According to information which was given by girls from Seke Districts, many primary and secondary schools are located faraway from people so girls tend to go to school at an older age when she can travel and walk for long. In most cases due to the long distances some of the adolescent girls will start absconding lessons with boys on the way. In Seke District, in ward (6) known as “*Dzandura*” the nearest secondary school, “*Dzumbunu*” secondary is located in a travelling distance so pupils from “*Dzandura*” have to walk to school. The schools being located faraway exposes the adolescent girls to rape and abuse from older man and even age mates whilst they are on their way to schools. In some instances where nightfall befalls on the adolescent girl, it becomes an issue to deal with at home especially when there is a curfew. By this, it then means the girl child is given no option but to go back to where she was since no room is given for explanations from the parents. Thus it becomes a tendency for parents to force the child to move out to a man’s house. Hence the child is married off forcefully.

Chapter 3: WAYS IN WHICH SEKE DISTRICT IS DEALING WITH CHILD MARRIAGES.

3.1 Introduction

Seke District has crafted many ways in which they can counter and deal with child marriages in their societies and wards. Many organisations have joined in the plea to deal with adolescent marriages. There are many ways the district has crafted in order to reduce child bride situations. Some of the ways that communities, wards and villages are using involve educating young adolescent girls, empowering girls through projects and workshops, educating parents on the effects of child marriages, mobilising religious and local leaders to help in addressing effects of child marriages and also giving support to those girls who are already involved in child marriages.

3.2 Educating young adolescent girls

According to UNICEF, one in three girls in low- to middle-income countries will marry before her 18th birthday. In many cases girls who are married at a young age come from communities where education for girls is not valued and also educating girls is viewed on a liability point where a family would benefit on the expense of another. In Seke District many adolescent girls are illiterate and they have little understanding of their human rights and even their child rights.

In Seke District, communities and wards have engaged on programmes to deal with child marriages. One of the adapted ways in dealing with child marriages is educating adolescent girls. In Seke District girls are being encouraged to acquire education. Due to education programs within communities adolescent girls are having access to both primary and secondary education which is aimed at improving their chances of accessing employment and as a means of supporting themselves and their families.

Many organisations have channelled aid to help communities challenge traditional and discriminatory views on girl's access to education. The programme of enhancing girl child

education is aimed at improving communities to be girl friendly and it is also aimed at allowing the girl child to develop skills and have better knowledge so they could be better advocates for themselves. In Seke District functions like 16 days of activism, Day of the African child are being commemorated under the banner of civil societies like Seke rural home based care (SRHBC), “*Shamwari yemwanasikana*”, ROOTs. These commemorations are aimed at educating the girl child and the programs are also aimed at community sensitisation.

3.3 Empower Girls

In many developing and middle income classed countries where child marriages are prevalent, girls are often viewed as economic burdens thus making them a commodity which is easily sold off. In a way of dealing with child marriages in “*Seke District*”, communities have engaged into girl child empowerment through informing adolescent girls about their basic human rights, their consent in a forced marriage, education programmes on health and sex education. After a research, many married adolescent girls are said to have low self-esteem and confidence in themselves due to abuse and negligence. The community agreed on empowering adolescent mothers economically through ISALs/” *Mikando*” (internal savings and lending’s) to boost their incomes to reduce dependence and loss of self-esteem. In an interview with one of the beneficiaries from the ISAL program that is being held at SRHBC;

Interviewer:

“Mungandiudzewo here kuti kuburikidza nechirongwa chemukando makwanisa kuwana pundutso yei muhupenyu hwenyu?”

Translation:

How have the ISALs programmes managed to sustain your lives?

Respondent

“Ini semudzimai wechidiki chironywa chemukando chaandibatsira mukusagara ndakarindira homwe yemurume zvinoderedza mukana wekunetsana mumba. Nekudawo kwechironywa chemukando ndinokwanisa kuwana chekubikira mwana sezvo tichiita chironywa chehuku saka patino slaughter tinowanawo zvemukati nezvimwewo.”

Translation:

“The programme of ISALs, has managed to free me from being dependent on my husband and I have also managed to prevent grievances within my family. Due to this program I’m now able to cater for food stuffs were we benefit from our projects, for example, I can now manage relishes’ when we slaughter chickens from our project.”

According to the respondent internal savings programmes have strengthened the welfare of adolescent girls economically and it has managed to reduce the dependency syndrome.

Empowerment programmes for young girls is key to preventing child or early marriage by improving both their sense of self and self-efficacy through informing girls of their basic human rights, their legal right to refuse a marriage and education programmes on health and sex education. In addition adolescent girl empowerment also help adolescent mothers to be experienced and self-confident.

3.4 Educate Parents

In order to deal with early marriages in Seke District the communities are being involved in parent education, were parents are being taught the bad implications of child marriages on the girl child. Many parents from communities with a strong hold on traditions and culture believe that marrying off children is a way of protecting their daughter. Many parents in under developed communities think that when a child is married she will be economically provided for thus she will be taken care of.

In Seke District child marriages are a way of preventing premarital sex which is still a taboo in many communities and wards. Unfortunately, families and parents do not know the negative and harmful effects of early child marriage, including pregnancy at young ages which has led to many complications to girls as her body will not be ready for childbirth. Organisations such as SRHBC and ROOTs have partnered in trying to educate parents on the negative effects of child marriages. In ward 4, 5 workshops are being held to educate parents. In Seke District ward 1, 2, 4, 6 they have adopted a programme called changing the River Flow (CTRF) which helps people to discuss major child marriage issues and offering education. Many parents are benefiting from being educated on the serious harmful effects of forced early childhood marriage on adolescent girls. The programmes of parent education have attracted even youths, young parents and even local religious and traditional elders who are seen participating and spreading the message in their wards and villages.

3.5 Mobilise religious leaders and community elders

In order to deal with the issue of child and forced marriages “*Seke District*” has earned influence of religious elders and community leaders. In “*Seke District*” this way of dealing with child marriages has been buttressed by the local chief, “*chief Dema*” and his herdsman from all wards of “*Seke*”. Due to the practised tendencies of patriarchy within our culture in Zimbabwe, mobilising religious leaders and communities leaders is one way of dealing with child marriages, since these leaders have influence and can attract the attention of the popular masses.

Religious leaders and community leaders are to be consulted and mobilised because they are the decision makers in communities where early or child marriage is prevalent. Engaging and educating these powerful men is vital to changing the attitude of a community on childhood marriage. Community Empowerment Programmes are being used to focus on engaging local elders and religious leaders on enlightening them on the harmful effects of traditions such as

child marriage on communities as a whole. Once they are knowledgeable, they will disseminate information and might even hold educational sessions with the whole village including the parents with adolescent girls who have fallen on the same predicament. As a result of these sessions, throughout Seke District, villages and wards have declared an end to some detrimental practices such as child marriages though they are having problems with the apostolic sects which are continuing with the practise.

3.6 Support adolescent girls who are already married

According to a research baseline research carried out in Seke District from ward 3 to 5 the communities have been involved in giving young girls support to help them. Even though the focus is on communities preventing child marriage, young girls who are already in child marriages are being given psycho social support by many groups including the SRHBC, District Social Services, “Zichire” and many other organisations. According to some desk research carried out by the researcher it shows that many adolescent girls have been given support to finish school for those who are willing, and technical empowerment to those who wish. Organisations such as World Education International (WEI) have recorded quiet a number of enrolled adolescent mothers. Moreso, the Seke community has engaged in support groups to support young girls and adolescent mothers, the researcher was lucky to attend one meeting to carry out an observation research and to record cases. Ward 2 of “Seke Svinurai” is the meeting point of the support group were caregivers meet with the girls to discuss typical cases of marriages and what the girls are facing within their marriages. Considering child marriages to be putting young girls at a higher risk of violence in the homes- sexual, physical and psychological abuse, the support group is aiming to empower the girls so that they could move from exploitation. These support groups are also being used as platforms to teach adolescent girls on how to use contraceptives and they are also provided with some.

In conclusion much has been recorded and done to deal with child marriages in “*Seke District*” communities and wards in order to deal with child marriages. Ways and methods have been implemented in order to reduce child marriage prevalence. Some of the ways implored include educating girls, mobilising religious and cultural leaders, educating parents on matters of child marriages, economic strengthening skills for girls and giving psychosocial support to adolescent girls who are already victims of child marriages.

In conclusion the chapter is mainly looking at what people and the other communities are doing in a bid to fight the growing adolescent girl’s marriages in Seke district in Zimbabwe. In order to deal with issues of child marriages in Seke district they have implored a few measures such as, educating the girl child in as much as knowledge is concerned many NGOs and CSOs have been involved in advocating for girl child enrolment. They have also engaged in economic strengthening for girl child economic strengthening to avoid dependency and the prevalence of GBV. These are some of the features of what has been done to deal with child marriages in Seke District.

CONCLUSION

Summary, Conclusions and recommendations

Summary

This research focused on the effects of child marriages on adolescent girls. The study was carried out in Seke District in Mashonaland East province of Zimbabwe. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- What are the main causes of child marriages in Seke District?
- What are the effects of child marriages on adolescent girls?
- In what ways has Seke District managed to deal with child marriages?

In developing countries, child marriages have become the worst nightmare for many adolescent girls, where young girls are forced to marry by many push factors. In the world child marriages are mostly centralized in underdeveloped countries where they fail to uphold human rights and acknowledge the principle of serving the best interest of child basing on the convention of child rights. This following chapter was made to show conclusions that were drawn from this study.

In Seke District, early girl child marriages are prevalent mostly in societies which are failing to do away with exploitative cultural beliefs and attitudes. Early girl child marriages are a cultural gender practice that is done to discriminate equal opportunities among women and men. Child marriages make the girl child and other women second class citizen in the society. The research study revealed that early girl child marriages are a cultural gender practice that is prevalent in many wards of Seke District.

The research also managed to unearth another major cause of child marriage being religion, the apostolic sects in specification. In Seke District religion has married off a countable number of adolescent girls in the apostolic sects of “*Johanne Masowe and Johanne Marange.*” . Many Civil society Organisations and international organisation have been in

the fight against child marriages with the apostolic sect over the issue of child marriages which they date back since the state systems. According to research findings from local participant, church followers and caregivers from the areas, child marriages are done to attain power and control of the church, basing on the principle of women being submissive to men. According to respondents the apostolic sects seek dominance of patriarchal attitudes and behaviours that are characterised by autocracy within the family systems making the girl child and women inferior subsystems.

The prevalence of early girl-child marriage has been greatly perpetuated by the society's attitudes that have discriminated the girl child in her efforts for self-empowerment and self-emancipation through education. In Seke District many adolescent girls have been deprived the right to education as a tool to acquire knowledge and life skills. Lack of education among adolescent girls has been noted as one of the major causes of child marriages in Seke District. Many adolescent girls in Seke District are failing to attain education because educating the girl child in the area is viewed as a liability. They suggest that the only education needed by the girl child is to have knowledge on taking care of the family and have child bearing skills which are acquired at home. Loss of self-empowerment and self-emancipation has exposed the adolescent girls to all forms of abuse.

The second chapter of the research document is characterised by some effects that result from child marriages. Adolescent girl child marriages bear many effects on adolescent girls and some of these effects include loss of education, exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, loss of economic freedom, deprivation of childhood and a future and exposure to GBV. In Seke District many reported cases of GBV reported to the DSS and the police are cases of an older man and a teenage adolescent mother. Mostly GBV cases result from grievances that result from age differences. Due to the huge age gap between the two married individuals, the adolescent girl is mostly exposed to harassments and abuse. The researcher found out that

social inequality is present due to dependences that lay on one party. In many adolescent girl child marriages, the lack of experience in many things also exposes the girl child to GBV.

Child marriages expose the girl child to sexual abuse and it exposes her to the spread of diseases. In Seke District many child marriages mostly occur in the apostolic sect due to some doctrines that regard polygamous behaviours. Adolescent girls are married off to polygamous men who increase their exposure in contracting sexually transmitted diseases because mostly they don't use contraceptives or any form of prevention. These practises expose adolescent girls to unplanned pregnancies.

Girl child marriages also expose children to deprivation of freedom and future where child marriages deprive the girl child the right to play and the right to associate with other age mates. Early marriages deprives the right of association were objectives and duties change as she will be concentrating more on household issues. According to respondents from a carried out interview, child marriages have robbed them off their childhood's right to play and association. In Seke District when a young girl is married her main duties will be fetching firewood and water since the area has scarcity in these resources and this will change the way of living for young married adolescent girl. Child marriages deprive the future for girls in that they are time demanding and this mostly leads her to drop out of school. In addition child marriages deprive the future when they undermined the economic capacities of the girl child.

However the last chapter of this research shows ways in which Seke District is using in dealing with child marriages on district levels and even on community level. People in Seke District have engaged in community strengthening for adolescent girls, through empowering girls, providing economic support, educating parent community leaders and parents and enhancing girl child access to education. Educating parents and community member and leaders is one of the steps taken in dealing with child marriages. Educating them through

meetings, information campaigns about child marriage impacts on adolescent girl's health and future. These programs were done by local operating CSO's and NGO's in order to influence new behaviours and attitudes about the dangers of child marriages. This helped in challenging traditional expectations of the girl child.

Enhancing girl child access to education is another way that has been implored in trying to deal with child marriages in Seke District. Local businesses, CSO's and other influential individuals have engaged on a program of school fees payment for girls in order to equip them with necessary skills. The program is aimed at improving the safety of the girl child and trying to build girl friendly environments. Access to education also enable the girl child to be knowledgeable and to become better advocates for their rights.

Girl child empowerment is another way adopted in dealing with child marriages in Seke District. CSO's in Seke District have engaged in girl child empowerment programs were they bring young adolescents together so that they could be taught basic literacy skills and to allow them to socialize and familiarise with their age mates. CSO's such as the SRHBC, have engaged in empowerment programs with the idea of spreading knowledge to adolescent girls and women. Girl child empowerment helps in emancipating the girl child so that she can stand for her rights.

Conclusions

The major conclusions that has been drawn from this research shows that there are many effects entrenched around child marriages. Many effects of child marriages result from a number of listed causes that ranges from culture, religion, poverty, and lack of education on both the parents and the children. According to the researcher, culture, poverty and religion are the main aspects and major component causes of child marriages in Seke District. The research concluded that, due to high poverty rates in Seke District many parents are majoring on dowry as a sign of redemption from their poverty bondage which has forced many

adolescent girls to be victims of early marriages. Furthermore, culture, religion have been playing a role in motivating child marriages were conclusions drawn from this research shows that culture has been encouraging child marriages were it encourages patriarchy and polygamy causing male dominance and an autocratic system that makes the girl child and women inferior in decision making and in the society. Another conclusion drawn shows that religion seeks to gratify the interest of individuals as mostly observed and evidenced in the apostolic sects “*Johanne Marange*” for instance.

Another conclusion that has been drawn from this research shows many effects that results from child marriages. According to the findings of this research, child marriage effects may include exposure of child mothers to spread of STD, exposure to GBV, drop outs from schools and deprivation of freedom and future. The researcher concluded that many of these effects of child marriages mostly affect the lives of adolescent girls due to lack of life experiences and even marriage experiences. Another conclusion made by the researcher is that if a young girl is married early probabilities of her living in abject poverty are high due to lack of educational skills since mostly they drop off from school. Lack of economic empowerment is also another factor that exposes child mother’s poverty.

In a carried out research about how Seke District is dealing with child marriages in its communities, the researcher concluded that justice has been done in as far as educating parents and community leaders in challenging harmful social practises from cultural and religious spheres. Moreso the researcher can acknowledge the efforts of Seke district in curbing child marriages as noticed from high girl child enrolment resulting from local programs of school fees payment and girl child empowerment projects that are being funded by different organisations.

Lastly, conclusions drawn from this research shows many effects that results from adolescent girl's marriages and some of these effects include exposure to STD, exposure to GBV, deprivation of freedom and future. However the research shows that the district has done much in dealing with child marriages all around its communities. The district, through many governmental and non-governmental organisations has done much, where the researcher recorded and participated in programs that are being carried out to deal with child marriages. The District has also been involved in law enforcement were various kings guards have assumed the role of child protection.

Recommendations

The research recommended that:

- There is a great need to make it compulsory for every girl-child to attend and attain education which will make her focus on school work, socialise and increases life abilities for economic growth and sustainable development.
- Traditional leaders and religious assemblies should be empowered with knowledge that enables them to enforce tools that eliminate the practice of girl-child marriage.
 - Expanded training for care givers and community social workers on the dangers of early marriage and engaging them as advocates.
- Challenge the traditional and religious beliefs that surrounds early marriage, empower parents, community members, and youths about the effects of early marriages.
- Develop strong support groups to keep girls in school and also promote scholarships for funding girl child education.

Conclusion

The above section of this research gave an overview of the whole research, summary of the study which is aimed at explaining the research discussed above. Many conclusions were drawn from the field of research through mentioned research methodology tools.

Recommendations were given basing on the research findings and these will serve as a blue print on which communities can follow in dealing with adolescent girl's marriages.

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Appendix

Structured Interview Questions

I am Vincent Chapananga, studying at Midlands State University doing Development Studies. I am undertaking a research on the effects of child marriages on adolescent girls in Seke District. During the session of this interview I will be writing and recording some aspects that are useful for this research. I assure you privacy and confidentiality to whatever is going to be discussed in this conversation, no names are to be used throughout this interview.

Questions: Conceptualising child marriages a questionnaire for parents.

1. Who is a child?

Respondent:

2. How should a child behave?

Respondent:

3. Who determines how a child should behave?

Respondent:

4. When do you consider that a child has matured into an adult?

Respondent:

5. Are there any circumstances under which a child can no longer be considered as a child but as an adult?

Respondent:

6. What is marriage to you?

Respondent:

7. At what age do you think people should marry?

Respondent:

8. Why that age?

Respondent:

9. Should that age be the same for boys and girls?

Respondent:

Appendix 2

I am Vincent Chapananga, studying at Midlands State University doing Development Studies. I am undertaking a research on the effects of child marriages on adolescent girls in Seke District. During the session of this interview I will be writing and recording some aspects that are useful for this research. I assure you privacy and confidentiality to whatever is going to be discussed in this conversation, no names are to be used throughout this interview.

Structured questionnaire for child brides

1. How old are you now?

Respondent:

2. Did you go to school?

Respondent:

3. How far in school did you go?

Respondent:

4. Did you want to go further than you did?

Respondent:

5. Why did you end there?

Respondent:

6. Where did you attend school?

Respondent:

7. Is it in a rural/peri-urban?

Respondent:

8. Are you religious?

Respondent:

9. Which religion do you belong to?

Respondent:

10. What sub-sect of that religion do you follow?

Respondent:

11. Is it your choice to follow that sect?

Respondent:

12. If so, what about it do you like?

Respondent:

13. If not, whose choice was it for you to go there?

Respondent:

14. Do you like it? Give reasons for either like/dislike?

Respondent:

15. How would you describe your community, is it rural, urban, farming, mining community?

Respondent:

16. What do you do for a living within your community?

Respondent:

17. Do you consider yourself to be poor, comfortable or rich?

Respondent:

18. Was it the same when you were growing up?

Respondent:

19. Please explain.

Respondent:

20. Are you married?

Respondent:

21. When did you get married?

Respondent:

22. How old were you when you got married?

Respondent:

23. Why?

Respondent:

24. How has your experience as a married woman been in terms of?

-relationship with in laws

-relationship with your husband

-raising children

-taking care of household chores

-expectations from the society on how you should behave as a married woman?

Respondent:

25. At what age would you want your daughters to marry?

Respondent:

Appendix 3

I am Vincent Chapananga, studying at Midlands State University doing Development Studies. I am undertaking a research on the effects of child marriages on adolescent girls in Seke District. During the session of this interview I will be writing and recording some aspects that are useful for this research. I assure you privacy and confidentiality to whatever is going to be discussed in this conversation, no names are to be used throughout this interview.

A structured questionnaire for Traditional leaders and Religious leaders.

1. Who is a child in your culture?

Respondent:

2. How should a child behave in terms of your culture?

Respondent:

3. When do you consider that a child has matured into an adult?

Respondent:

4. Are there any circumstances under which a child can no longer be considered as a child but as an adult?

Respondent:

5. Does a child's behaviour change how you look at them within your cultural beliefs?

Respondent:

6. Do you know what the law says about who is a child?

Respondent:

7. If you do, how is that different from your understanding of who you consider as a child and why?

Respondent:

8. What is marriage to you?

Respondent:

9. In your culture, is it important for a woman to be a virgin when she gets married?

Respondent:

10. How is it important/ not important?

Respondent:

11. In your culture, is it important for a man to be a virgin when he gets married?

Respondent:

12. How is it important/not important?

Respondent:

13. Do you think age is important in determining when someone should marry?

Respondent:

14. How is it important?

Respondent:

15. At what age does your culture allow people to get married?

Respondent:

16. Is this different for young men and young women?

Respondent:

17. Why that age?

Respondent:

18. Is there any circumstance in which one would say someone was married too soon?

Respondent:

19. Can you explain why?

Respondent:

20. Is there any circumstance in which one would say someone was married too late?

Respondent:

21. Can you explain why?

Respondent:

22. Do you understand what the law says about who is a child?

Respondent:

23. Is the law's definition different from your understanding?

Respondent:

24. Do you agree/disagree with the law and why?

Respondent:

25. What would you change, if anything, about the existing law and why?

Respondent:

26. How do you as a traditional leader deal with cases of rape of minors?

Respondent: