PERCEPTION OF EARLY MARRIAGE IN TORORO DISTRICT

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY, SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A BACHELOR OF ARTS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES OF MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

DECEMBER 2022

DECLARATION

I, Mary Immaculate Anyango, declare that the content of this dissertation *Perception of Early Marriage in Tororo District* is my own work that has never been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of a degree, either in part or on its entirety.

Signature .... Date .20th Dec 2022

Mary Immaculate Anyango

APPROVAL

This dissertation Perception of Early Marriage in Tororo District is submitted to the Department of Sociology and Anthropology for examination with my approval as an academic supervisor.

Signature .... Date ....

Prof. Peter Atekyereza

Supervisor

DEDICATION

I dedicate this undergraduate research to all my family members, friends, and relatives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS

ANOVA   Analysis of Variance

CDO   Community Development Officer

DHS   Demographic and Health Surveys

GBV   Gender Based Violence

HRAPF   Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum

SPSS   Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

TYOVANU   The Youth Voices and Action Network Uganda

UNICEF   United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

ABSTRACT

Early marriage is a serious threat to the lives and health of the young girls. This study aimed to explore the perceptions of people on early marriage in Merikit Sub County in Tororo District. A mixed study designed was employed where the researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS, while the qualitative data was analyzed manually. 5 focus group discussions, 20 key informant interviews, and 80 randomly selected respondents in different communities of Merikit were interviewed. Each focus group included 9 participants, both having and not having experience of early marriage. Different themes and subthemes regarding the ideal age of marriage, attitudes towards early marriage, reasons for early marriage, positive and negative effects of early marriage emerged from the respondents. Most respondents identified early marriage as inappropriate social behavior that should not be practiced. The reasons for early marriage include poverty, lack of education, peer influence, and orphan children, among others. Divorce, poverty, and death were the main disadvantages of early marriage.

Negative effects of early marriage include death, divorce, poverty, misunderstanding, much work, risk of HIV/AIDS, among others. In order to stop early marriage, the government should improve on education, law enforcement, guidance and counseling of children, providing welfare, and sensitization, among others. These people meet challenges like language barrier, difference in decisions of parents, ignorance, rigid cultures, lack of communication skills, lack of funds, disobedience, and many others while trying to solve the problem of early marriage.

In conclusion, there is generally a negative attitude towards early marriage, and its disadvantages are well recognized in Merikit Sub County. However, different religious, educational, economic, traditional, and social factors encourage early marriage in the community.

This study recommends for further research to validate that poverty is the major cause of early marriage, using the economic status of the community, further investigations on lasting solutions to end early marriage in Tororo, that is to say there should be an in-depth study to find the solutions so as to deal with early marriage.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the Study

Marriage is associated with increased fertility and population growth because it lengthens the time girls and women spend in childbearing years and shortens the time span between generations (Annabel, 2013). Early marriage can be defined as when one or both of the married couples are under the age of 18years old, or in high school (Hutchinson & MCNall, 1994, Lindsay, 1985, Walker-Moffat, 1995). In early marriages, consent cannot be free and full when one of the individuals involved is not sufficiently mature to make an informed decision about a life partner.

Globally, early marriage is affecting many young girls and boys. The problem of early marriage is considered a human rights violation because it deprives those who are involved in education and health services the chance to learn skills and develop their personalities thus leaving them vulnerable. Atayi (2008), explains that, in rural areas, girls' dropout rate became higher because parents consider girls' schooling as of low benefit when they leave their own families after marriage. Early marriage however has devastating impacts on the lives of many children, mostly girls. The impact of early marriage is physical, psychological and emotional, as well as social and economic in nature. Girls who are married as children are unlikely to be in school, often treated as adults, regardless of their age (Clegg & Jacqueline, 2012).

Szmigiera (2021), explains that Niger has the highest child marriage rate in the world. According to recent data, in this West African country 75 percent of girls aged under 18 were married, with 36 percent of them being younger than 15 years old. Chad, Bangladesh, and Guinea had rates ranging from 63 percent to 68 percent. This issue is globally spread, particularly in African countries. In many of these countries, the legal age to get married is lower for females than for males. In Niger and Chad, for instance, the legal age is 15 years for females and 18 for males. In Guinea, instead, the legal age for marriage is 17 for females and 18 for males. However, child marriage rates are considerably high.

According to Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), child or early marriage is most common in the poorest countries in the world. The highest rates of early marriages are in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, as well as other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean (ICRW 2006; NRC/IOM 2005). According to Malhotra (2010), the causes of early marriage

include poverty, limited education and economic options, insecurity in the face of conflicts, tradition and religion, among others. These come with effects like increased maternal and infant health risks, greater exposure to HIV/AIDS, greater exposure to domestic and sexual violence, deprivation of childhood and a future, and so on.

Uganda is one of the countries with the highest level of early marriages, that is to say, 10% of the girls are married off before the age of 15years, 40% of the girls are married off before the age of 18years (UNICEF 2011). Around 46 per cent of all women are married by the age of 18years, according to UNICEF 2011 figures despite the law setting 18years as the legal marriage age.

In Tororo, since the first coronavirus induced lockdown was imposed in March last year, about 7,449 girls between the ages of 10 and 19 have conceived, according to statistics obtained from public health facilities. The most affected sub-counties include Osukuru, Mukuju, Kwapa, Mulanda, Nabuyoga, Petta, Magola, Merikit, Iyolwa, Kisoko, Nagongera, and Kirewa. The district public relations officer, Mr. Jackson Osudo, said the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have been adverse on girls (Joseph, et al, 2021).

Coronavirus disease 2019(COVID 19) is defined as illness caused by a novel virus called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2), which was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan city, China. (David J Cennimo et al, 2020). COVID 19 resulted into lockdown which made children stay home for long, making them vulnerable to early sex and early marriage.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

Marriage is perceived as a happy moment of celebrating, throughout the world. However, early marriage does not bring about or cause celebration because it means the boy or girl's childhood is cut short and they are denied their rights. Young girls in most cases are robbed off their youth and required to start doing roles for which they are not physically or psychologically prepared for. Many youths have no choice or timing about marriage but they are forced to get married, while the others are too young to decide for themselves on who and when to marry. Many efforts have been put in place to stop the spread of early marriages. Olson (2014), for example, explains that to prevent child marriages, efforts like empowering adolescents, educating parents, mobilizing religious and community leaders, advocating for women as community leaders, and so on have been put in place.

Despite the efforts that have been put in place to prevent the problem of early or child marriages, the problem is still there and it's on an increase in many parts of Uganda. This study therefore seeks to find out what is making the problem to persist how different people in the society perceive early marriages.

1.3 Research objectives

1.3.1 Main Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study was to examine people's perception towards early marriage.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

  i.   To assess people's knowledge in early marriage.
 ii.   To determine people's attitudes towards early marriage.
iii.   To identify what is being done to address the problem of early marriage.
 iv.   Challenges met while addressing early marriage.

1.4 Justification

This research will help students and lecturers for their study reference. It will also help law enforcers to get vital information about what has to be done so as to solve the problem. Lastly, it will help the human rights officers, government of Uganda to make more strict and effective laws against early marriage, and other researchers also for reference.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study focused on the perception of people as an independent variable and early marriage as a dependent variable, since the two factors are interlinked. The study was also interested on information concerning perception of people on early marriage in Tororo District, in the time scope of three months that is from September to November 2022.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study will be helpful to the local communities to understand the consequences that are brought about by early marriage, hence finding solutions to them. It will also help the government to plan on better solutions to minimize early marriage. Finally, this study will be important in awarding me a bachelor's degree in social sciences in Makerere University as the course requires.

1.7   Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual framework showing the relationship between people's perception and early marriage.

Independent Variable (IV)   **Dependent Variable (DV)**

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┌─────────────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│ People's Perception          │              │ Early Marriage               │
│                              │              │                              │
│ 1. Cultural                  │              │  ➤ Early pregnancy           │
│                              │    ──────▶   │  ➤ Poverty                   │
│    ➤ Education               │         ▲    │  ➤ Domestic Violence         │
│    ➤ Religion                │         │    │                              │
│    ➤ Customs                 │         │    └──────────────────────────────┘
│    ➤ Traditions              │         │
│                              │         │
│ 2. Economic status           │  Intervening Variables
│ 3. Age                       │         │
└─────────────────────────────┘         │
                    ┌───────────────────┴──────────────┐
                    │                                   │
                    │  ➤ Government Intervention         │
                    │  ➤ Education Awareness and         │
                    │    Sensitization                   │
                    │                                   │
                    └──────────────────────────────────┘
```
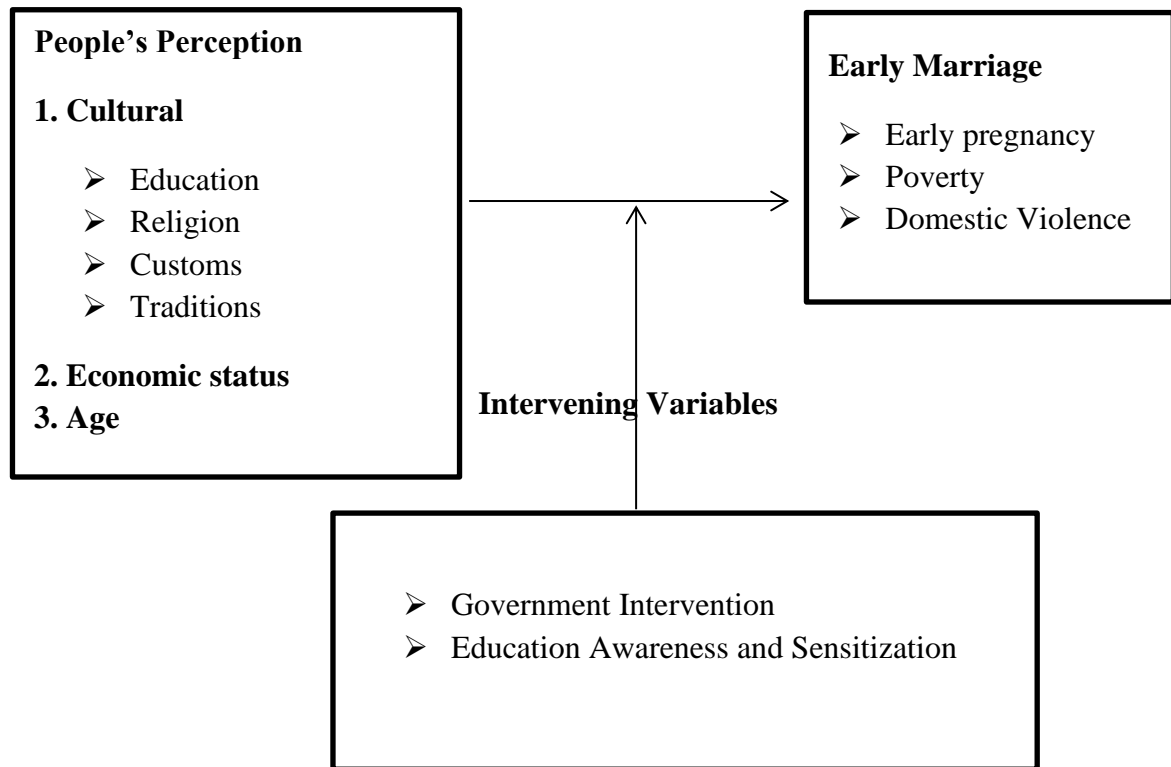
Source: Field data, 2022

Figure 1 above shows that people's perception like Customs, culture, and traditions and Economic status determine the level of early marriages. The dependent Variable which is early brings about early pregnancies, poverty and domestic violence.

1.8   Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter Four: Presentation and Discussion of Results

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Perceptions Towards Early Marriage.

Perception is the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the presented information or environment. Julien (2004), explains that their perceptions of people towards early marriage can be both favorable and unfavorable. The favorable perceptions towards early marriage are that in the context of a high mortality due to HIV infection, early marriages are recommended because they reduce the number of premarital non protected sexual encounters with different partners, since young women fear AIDS the most and recommend early marriage the most. This perception could probably lead to the earlier marriages in future. The unfavorable perceptions towards early marriage according to Julien, is that generally, early marriage is seen in a negative light because young men and women are forced into marrying by their families. Furthermore, Julien explains that perceptions on early marriage indicate a feeling of frustration, in that young newly-wed individuals have not had enough time to experiment sentimentally. This is therefore perceived to be a source of marriage failure, which in turn can jeopardize. Early marriage also considerably reduces the chance of young wedded couples of reaching matriculation levels and studying at university (Julien, 2004).

 According to 2018 data from the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), in Kyrgyzstan, 12.7% of women aged 20-49 got married through some form of coercion. The United Nations also estimates that around 12,000 girls and women are abducted for marriage each year (Doolbekova, 2018). He also added that parents and caregivers arrange early marriages for their girls due to religious views and honor, a desire for financial stability, and the influence of restrictive gen der roles (Bouman et al, 2017). Similarly, according to Mayoux, 2017, women have fewer employment opportunities than men due to the restrictive gender norms that uphold early marriage and encourage them to leave school and marry and start a family. In some rare cases, early pregnancy is a driver of marriage before 18 due to societal norms and expectations (National Statistical committee of the Kyrgyz Republic & UNICEF, 2019).

UNICEF, 2018 explains that despite the legal protection for adolescent girls from early and forced marriage, there are many barriers to its elimination. Since many early marriages are not registered, girls have few enforceable rights to financial support or property in the case of

divorce or abandonment. In addition, it can be challenging for girls to leave a marriage if they experience abuse because they will be left vulnerable and do not have sufficient Education or experience to find work. Early marriage can also be eliminated by "private matter" by society, making people unwilling to interfere or report suspected cases to law enforcement.

In order to end child marriage, Malhotra et al., 2011, proposed empowerment of girls through formal schooling, information, skills, and social support, mobilizing of parents and the community members, economic incentives for girls and their families, and enabling a legal framework that prevent early marriage.

2.2   Understanding of Early Marriage.

While the teenage women had a false sense of sexual development, early marriage resulted in death of dreams and threatened independence, and after marriage and sexual intercourse, early marriage has led to unpleasant or coercive sexual experiences for some of the people. Similarly, Allen et al. found that teenage women endured the health risks and social costs of early and forced marriage and coercive or non-consensual sex. A study in Nigeria showed that early marriage was considered a value, since marriage in local communities improves the social status and dignity of the women. The results of a survey in 14 countries with different religions showed that 13–47% of the girls under 15 years of age who experienced sexual intercourse before and after marriage were forced to have sex, and a similar study in India reported that a large group of young women (14–46%) experienced coercive sexual intercourse after marriage. Therefore, simply getting to puberty cannot be a measure of readiness for marriage and sexual intercourse. Marriage should be delayed until full intellectual and social maturity. The present study also showed that early marriage was a mirage for these girls' dreams. The same conceptions of happiness, respect, and love that were hoped for from the marriage were exactly what the marriage destroyed. These women mostly complained about the heavy burden of life, vague future, and no hope for finding a good job in the future.

Similarly, Zahangir et al. argued that early marriage is a sudden stop to one's childhood, and imposes strict limitations to the choices about the future. The opportunities to play, dream, and acquire knowledge or skills are replaced by responsibilities as a mother, a spouse, and a daughter-in-law. Sing et al. stated that being married is a key obstacle to finding a better job, and Kalb et al. reported that teenage mothers usually have a narrow chance of finding a job and have poorer health and a lower income compared with women who do not have children.

In addition, Barto et al. maintained that challenges such as problems in studying, occupation and financial restrictions reduce the chances in life for teenage women. Since the teenage women do not have essential substructures to reach their goals and suffer from inadequate life skills, marriage should be delayed as long as possible. Another category was "threatened independence". Similarly, Sharma et al. argued that parents decide when the time is right for their girl to marry and after marriage, due to poor knowledge, low negotiating skills, and social prototype of the ideal women; the bride has no control over her life, desire, or sexual behaviors. Teenage women are legally under the custody of their husbands, which is a great limitation to their freedom and independence. Low literacy, unemployment, and financial dependence on the husband or husband's family keep most teenage women from decision making. Teenage women have a limited access to financial resources and less power, as compared with adult women, to participate in decisions about their lives. Accordingly, Mortimer et al. reported that having no job hinders the development of adulthood characteristics, self-esteem, and independence. Therefore, special attention should be paid to the education and empowerment of these women.

Although having high school education is recognized as a right in the Charter of Women's Rights and Responsibilities, teenage marriage was practically an end to education. In this regard, Safavi et al. reported that the majority of teenage women only had elementary education. Similarly, Zahangir et al. confirmed their findings, and concluded that early marriage was an obstacle in the path of public education. Given that the goal of the present study is to explore the perceptions of Merikit teenage women about marriage based on their real experiences, the study findings can be used in designing support, education, empowerment, and counseling programs. Regarding study limitation, a potential limitation is that a number of participants may feel embarrassment when talking about sensitive and private issues of their lives, but it is not very hard to win their trust. This study population is very vulnerable and more qualitative research is required to understand these women's health needs.

2.3 Attitudes Towards Early Marriage

Different people have different attitude about early marriage. Attitude refers to a set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviors towards a particular object, person, thing, or event. Albena, S, et al, explain that in in 2017, nearly 40% of the population of 20year old girls in Pakistan were married before turning 18. The research made from the three recent development programs in the Punjab and Sindh provinces explored why child marriage is so prevalent in

both provinces and what could be some of the solutions to address child marriage. They further explain that in the area studied by the three programs, girls are married when they are considered 'mature', rather than when they reach a certain age. Some indicators of maturity according to the people included the start of menstruation, being able to cook, do chores, and run their husband's household. Marriage in Pakistan is affected by social norms, and is in fact regarded as Sunnah, an obligation, and religious scripture exploring the right moments for marriage though in ways open to interpretation. In Sindh, child marriage is said to mitigate risks of harming the family particularly if the girl has experienced sexual assault, premature sex, and out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

Poverty is a key driver of child marriage in many countries, and on average, poor households marry off their daughters between 12 to 18 months earlier than stable households. In most of these countries, fathers and grandfathers typically arrange marriages, and mothers can influence the decision, and propose suitable husbands. This decision is often considered crucial for the family, difficult for a girl to make, and sometimes taken when the daughter is born.

Tuladhar (1998) mentions that in Nepal almost all births occur within marriage, and out of wedlock marriages are not endorsed by society. In various parts of the country, before 50 years, there was polyandry and extended families, Girls could go to the boy's house to beget children without marrying. Still the child would be illegitimate (Chalaune, 2009, Shreth, 1987). A matchmaker initiates the marriage proposal and the priest performs the ritual of marriage. Young age of marriage in Nepal is related to the practice of arranged marriages, where relationship and comprises between families prevail over individual wants (Coltabiano & Castiglioni, 2008). Family is the most important unit of the social structure and marriage is its foundation (Amatya, 2005).

Tuladhar (1998) also mentions that mean age of marriage has increased from 15.4 in 1961 to 18.1 in 1991 making a difference of 2.7 years. He continues to say that the mean age of marriage among literate women was 17.1 year while that among the illiterate women was 12.8 years. She also concluded that age at marriage increases with higher level of education attainment. Aryal (2017) has found out that the minimum age of marriage for females is 18 years. Medium age at marriage is about 16 years for uneducated females and 19 years for educated females. According to Yabiku (2004), topographic and social transformation of a place can engage young adulthoods in various activities and delay marriage. Occupational

factors are less effective to raise age at marriage than the educational factors. Factors such as matrilocal post marital residence, choice of spouse, less emphasis on a bride's virginity, equal rights to divorce for both spouses, village endogamy, and absence of dowry (Niraula & Morgan, 1996) would give higher status for women and it would up the age of marriage.

2.4   Strategies against Early Marriages

Many strategies have been set to try and stop early marriage. Joseph et al (2021), explain that Tororo District council passed a by-law to curb the rising cases of teenage pregnancies and child marriages in the district. The ordinance was passed on June 18th and took effect immediately. These laws included; Offenders are now to face up to six months in jail or a fine of twenty currency points. The law also criminalizes presiding over any child marriage and denying children access to education in Tororo district. It also has a provision of safe spaces for children to access sexual reproductive health services, among others.

According to Joseph et al (2021), the district chairperson, Mr. John Okeya, said the law was one of the priorities in his manifesto. He says during an interview that they want to secure the future of their girls, adding that they want their girls to complete their studies so that they can have a better future.

They further explain that Mr. Peter Ekiikina, the executive director of Foundation for Open Development, said Gender Based Violence (GBV), is one of the factors responsible for increasing teenage pregnancies, "But as an organization, we have trained anti-GBV agents, who are deployed in sub-counties to contain the vice," he said.

Also, the district education officer, Mr. Albert Odoi, applauded the organizations for pushing the district to come up with the ordinance, because some parents had relaxed and were not playing their roles, including buying scholastic materials for their children. Similarly, Mr. Odoi said they will embark on enforcing the by-law and use other multi-sectoral approaches in order to end child marriages and teenage pregnancies. "We want to see that the district is among the best performers in the national examinations in the long run," he said.

Mr. Eric Okello, the executive director of The Youth Voices and Action Network Uganda (TYOVANU), said the by-law, if effectively enforced, will help to improve school retention rate especially among the girls. He added that they had been calling for this ordinance because of the high rate of teenage pregnancies and child marriages, which inevitably result in high school dropouts. Mr. Okello said the district has been stepping up efforts to fight child

marriages but in vain due to weaker laws and policies. "There has been a need for clear and strict legislation to invalidate marriages which are below the legally prescribed minimum age, so that the defilers and irresponsible parents are held accountable," he said.

According to Anju, M. et al (2011), early marriage can be solved by; empowering girls with information, skills and support networks. Girls can become more knowledgeable and self-confident when they are brought together to learn basic skills like literacy and numeracy, to communicate and negotiate with others, how to stay healthy during their reproductive lives, how to work together to solve problems, and how to earn and manage their money. Additionally, meeting peers and mentors can help these girls alleviate the social and economic insolation that many girls in developing countries experience. These gains will therefore enable girls to advocate for themselves, make better decisions to inspire the alternatives of early marriage.

Providing economic support and incentives to girls and their families. By marrying off their daughters early, parents may benefit financially, either through gaining a bride price, lowering the price of required dowry, or simply having one less mouth to feed. Approaches that enhance the economic security of poor households can help in curbing child marriage. Providing a girl or her family with incentives such as loans, or opportunity to learn income generating skills like sewing clothes, making mats and so on, can yield immediate economic relief for struggling families. Daughters who learn skills that enable them to earn income in the future may be seen as adding more value to the family.

Educating and rallying parents, and community members. It is the responsibility of families and community elders traditionally to decide when and whom a girl marries. Therefore, educating them that is to say through meetings, information campaigns, or public announcements about how child marriage impacts a girl's health future, often sparks powerful change. With new knowledge, adults' attitudes and behaviors about child marriage can shift, that is to say they become more likely to challenge, rather than embrace traditional expectations of girls.

Enhancing girls' access to a high-quality education. It should be noted that non-school going or uneducated girls are three times more likely to marry before the age of eighteen years, as compared to those with secondary or higher education. Providing incentives like uniforms or scholarship, or the necessary skills and support for the girls to enroll and remain in school can help to delay marriage. When the girls are in school, they are less likely to be seen as ready

for marriage by their families and community members. Programs aimed at improving the safety and girl-friendliness of schools, strengthening school curricular, and making lessons relevant to girls' lives are also effective. Schools allow girls to develop supportive social networks as well as the skills and knowledge to better advocate for themselves and the future.

Encouraging supportive laws and policies. Many countries with high child marriage have passed legalization to prohibit the practice, or have established a legal minimum age for marriage. Advocating for the implementation of such laws and raising awareness among government officials and community leaders and members, help to strengthen and, or better enforce existing initiatives around girls' rights. Where legalization is not on the books, advocating for legal and policy reform is a critical first step.

2.5   Research Gaps

A study done by Joseph et al (2021) regarding strategies against early marriage in Tororo and the laws passed to curb the rising cases of teenage pregnancies and child marriage in the district, found that the law criminalizes presiding over any child marriage and denying children access to education in Tororo District. These laws are not mostly followed by the people in the district, since children themselves can refuse to go to school without anybody denying them the right, thus a gap will leave for this study to fill. To cover this gap therefore, this study aimed at finding the appropriate solutions to end early marriage in the district. These solutions include sensitization of the masses, guidance and counseling, providing welfare to people, law enforcement, and education, among others.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1   Research Design

Survey research design was used where guided questions were administered using questionnaires. 80 Respondents were randomly selected from two parishes, where 40 respondents were selected from each parish for interviews. 5 focus group discussions and 20 key informants were also selected to give out information during the interviews. Also, secondary data was obtained from literature to back or give the background of the study.

3.2   Study Population

This study focused on people from 15 years of age and above. This is because early marriage is dominant among people in that age group. Additionally, the researcher interviewed religious leaders, community development officers, teachers especially senior women teachers, councilor women affairs, youth councilors, civil society organizations, opportunity leaders, and clan leaders to give vital information, as key informants for the study. The researcher also carried out five focus group discussions among girls in school and out of school, boys in school and out of school, and parents.

3.3   Study Area

This study was carried out in Merikit Sub County, which is situated in Tororo district, in the Eastern part of Uganda. The study area was randomly selected because it has high cases of early marriage in the district. Tororo District is bordered by Republic of Kenya in the East, Bugiri District to the West, Butaleja District to the North, and Busia to the South, and Mbale to the North East. Merikit Sub County lies in the latitude of 0.8468000^0 and longitude of 34.114950^0. The Sub County has a population of 29,800 people according to the statistics of 2020, where 14,400 (48.3%) are males, and 15,400 (51.7%) females (Brinkhoff, 2020). Merikit Sub County has 4 parishes and 38 villages. The parishes in the Sub County include Apokor, Merikit, Maliri, and Kidoko/Amuruwo. This study was carried out in two parishes, that is to say Merikit parish and Amurwo parish.

**Figure 2: Map of Uganda showing location of Tororo district (Omara, 2020)**

Shows location of Tororo district.
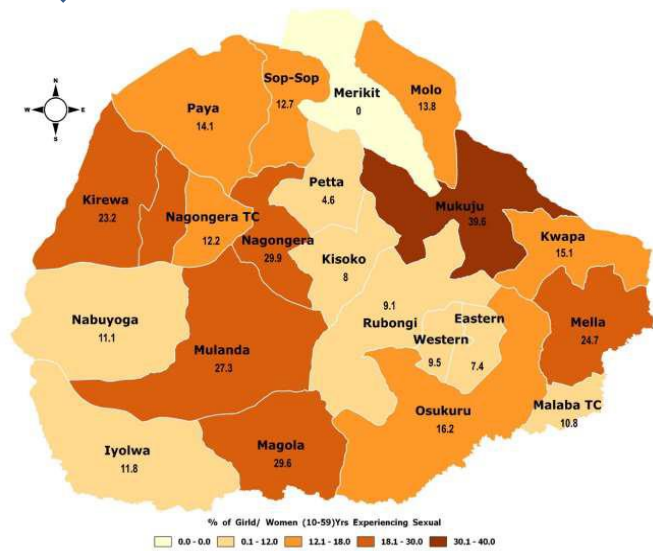
Figure 3: Map of Tororo district showing the location of Merikit Sub County (UBOS 2022).

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

Proportionate random sampling was employed to select both the primary respondents and key informants. Key informants were selected from government officials like community development officers, women councilors, opinion leaders, youth councilors, religious leaders, where guiding questions were administered to pick salient information to back up responses got from the questionnaire interviews. The primary respondents were randomly selected from the communities and guiding questionnaires were administered for them to answer. Respondents were grouped as children, youth, and elderly. The sample size used for the study was 80 respondents for individual interviews and 20 for key informant interview, and 5 focus group discussions.

3.5 Data Collection

The surveys were conducted in homes of the participants and in public places. The participants were given all the time they needed to complete the surveys and were told that their names were not needed for the records. Prior to starting the survey participants were reminded of confidentiality issues concerning the involvement of participants in the study. The researcher also asked the participants if they had any questions or comments before the survey started. The study employed questionnaires and interview guide to guide all the respondents on the questions they were supposed to answer. Both primary and secondary data was collected.

3.6 Data Processing and Analysis

Qualitative and quantitative data was analyzed to determine the perception of people about early marriage, knowledge, their attitude, strategies set against, and challenges met while addressing early marriage. Quantitative data were analyzed using ANOVA in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v16), while the qualitative data was analyzed manually. The type of statistical analysis used are ranking, means, correlations, t-tests, ad cross tabulations.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

The researcher sought permission from the people in charge of the area she intends to visit before collecting the data needed for her research. The researcher also showed impartiality when collecting data and recorded the information as objectively as possible. No respondent was at any time manipulated or coerced to give a response during the interview. The researcher upheld a high level of confidentiality with the information that was provided

taking into consideration discretion with the participant's identity and the researcher observed the principles of honesty and integrity in handling both primary and secondary data. The research also involved giving refreshments to the people during focus group discussions.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

The shortcoming of this research was that the study was that marriage is to some extent good for people, but it did not assess how currently, or in the changing times, the general attitudes towards marriage or early marriage might change, and the significance and benefits of early marriage among adolescents was challenged. The primary respondents were also in some way secretive and some of them could not speak out with ease. The researcher also got hard time explaining to the people in local language what was exactly needed in the questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1   Introduction

The results of this study obtained from the study area and research methods in Chapter three are presented and discussed below.

4.2   Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

By the end of this study period, data had been collected from eighty respondents (25 male and 55 female), 20 individuals who participated in the key informant interviews, these included religious leaders, community development officers, senior women teachers, opinion leaders, youth leaders, councilor women affairs, and civil society organizations. Also, the researcher carried out five focus group discussions with each group including nine members.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Primary Respondents

Participant's characteristics	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	25	31
	Female	55	69
	Total	80	100
Age	15-20	16	20
	21-30	39	49
	31-40	12	15
	41-50	6	7
	51-60	4	5
	61 above	3	4
	Total	80	100
Marital Status	Married	47	59
	Single	28	35
	Cohabiting	4	5
	Divorced	1	1
	Total	80	100
Education level	None	3	4
	Primary	35	44
	Secondary	25	31
	University	5	6
	Tertiary	12	15
	Total	80	100
Religion	Catholic	58	73
	Muslim	3	4
	Anglican	6	7
	Pentecostal	10	12
	SDA	3	4
	Total	80	100

Results show that most of the gender interviewed was female. This is because there were more female than male in the Sub County which made the respondent to randomly select more female to participate in the study, and also according to the respondents, female are more affected by early marriage in the community.

Most of the respondents in the study fell under the age group of 20-29years. This was because many youths were selected randomly for the study, because they are the ones mostly affected by peer pressure that led to early marriage. An issue paper HRAPF (2020) stated that early marriage is more prevalent within the refugee communities settled in various districts of Uganda.

The results showed that 59% of the respondents were married, higher than the percentage of single (23%). This suggests that the people got married early and therefore it was more obvious to randomly select a married youth for the interviews.

Most of the respondents stopped studying from primary school and engaged in early marriage. The respondents were mostly from the catholic religion, many being farmers and Japadhola who were born within Tororo District.

4.3   Knowledge and Understanding of Early Marriage
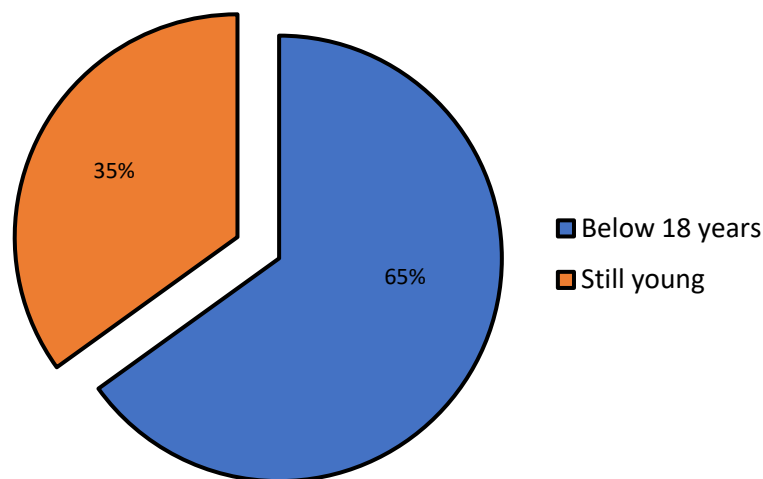
Figure 3: Definition of early marriage

People in the different communities in Merikit Sub County understand early marriage in different ways. Respondents were asked about how they understand early marriage. Most of

the respondents (65%) both male and female of all age groups and all the religions in the communities understood early marriage as marriage below 18 years whereby they considered somebody to be still naïve about marriage. However, 35% of the respondents understood it as marriage when a person is still young. These were mainly the elderly who stopped in primary school and those who did not go to school. This is presented in figure 4 below.

Table 2: Reasons for early marriage

Reasons for early marriage	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Peer influence	22	27
Poverty	14	19
Orphan children	11	13
Lack of education	10	12
Forced marriage	9	11
Early pregnancy	8	10
Individual's will	6	8
Total	80	100

Respondents were asked why people go in for early marriage. 27% of the respondents both female and male in Merikit Sub County said that people involve in early marriage because of peer influence, 19% said people marry early because of poverty, 13% due to orphan children, 12% due to lack of education, 11% forced marriage, 10% early pregnancy, and 8% at individual's will. This was dominant among all age groups and all the religions, as presented in table 1 above.

Later, the respondents were interviewed on the negative effects and impacts of early marriage. Most respondents (33%) said the effects of early marriage is death, 20% said divorce is the effect or impact of early marriage, 20% said it is poverty that is the effect of early marriage. Other effects of early marriage as said by the respondents included misunderstanding (14%), much work (7%), and risk of HIV (6%), as presented in figure 4 below.
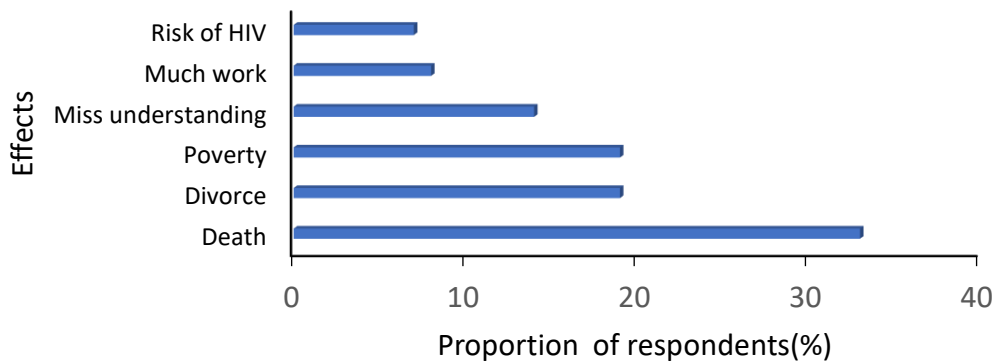
Figure 4: Effects of early marriage

According to the respondents, the girls were most affected by early marriage in the communities. However, others said boys are most affected, and a few said both girls and boys are affected. Early marriage does not have any positive effects as said by most of the respondents. However, a few of those among them said there are some positive effects of early marriage which include high rate of fertility, too much love, and many others.

People in Merikit Sub County are knowledgeable about early marriage. Most of the respondents (65%) understood early marriage as marriage below the age of 18years. This is because according to the law of Uganda, Under the Children Act (2016), 9(5) "A person shall be presumed to be a child if he or she claims or appears to be younger than 18years old pending a conclusive determination of age by court," Therefore, the minimum legal age of marriage in Uganda is 18years old with no exceptions, and requires parental consent for any person marrying under the age of 21 (Articles 16, 2. 2022).

The causes of early marriage were perceived to be peer influence, poverty, early pregnancy, lack of education, orphan children, forced marriage as well as a desire a girl or boy to get married or to marry. Many parents believe that they are securing their daughter's future by entrusting her to a husband who can protect her and provide financial support, and that's why arranging a marriage for their daughter or selling them off is seen as a way of reducing household expenses, protecting their daughter from premarital pregnancy and other hazards of sexual activity such as HIV infection, and conform to social expectations regarding the timing of marriage. Caretakers of the orphan children may be especially motivated to secure alternative means of support for their wards. Early marriage remains a visible and significant issue, with half of Ugandan women marrying before age 18-the legal age of marriage, and

also when they are still young. In addition, other researchers reported that insecurity, tradition and religion, also cause early marriage (Malhotra, 2010).

Marriage is when two people come together to make or form their own family. Thus, Odunze (2017), sees marriage as God's calculated and premeditated divine institution designed to form a permanent union between a man and a woman that they might be helpful to one another. However, other scholars like Westermarck (2017), explained that marriage is a relation of two or more men and women who are recognized by the custom or law and involving certain rights and duties both in the case of the parties entering the union and in case of the children born of it.

Nevertheless, the community-based officers, senior women teachers, opinion leaders, youth leaders, local leaders and so on who participated in interviews and focus group discussions in Merikit Sub County indicated that they are aware of the laws prohibiting marriage below 18years for girls and recognize the greater health risks associated with early childbearing. However, they believed that their daughters had few options in life other than marriage. For this reason, programs focused on advocacy against early marriage, combined with efforts to keep girls in school and to improve their economic circumstances, can contribute to the emerging trend toward later marriage.

Early marriage results into different effects of early marriage include death, divorce, poverty, misunderstandings, much work, and risk of HIV. This was confirmed by Malhotra, 2020. Also, other scholars like Okeke (2016) noted that among the effect of early marriage are school dropouts and poor performances. He further noted that most of the married girls and boys do not do well in class because of their divided interests. He was in support of Dike (2016) who stated that many students of secondary schools perform poorly academically due to lack of interest in pursuit of education and serious focus on marriage and is related fantasies.

For the case of death as an effect of early marriage, the respondents explained that death comes about when children conceive and when time to give birth comes, because their pelvis is not yet large enough, they find it hard to deliver the baby hence making most of them die while giving birth. Also, people experience poverty after early marriage because most people engage in subsistence farming for their income and other low income earning activities since they are not educated and so can't do professional work. Furthermore, there is risk of HIV/AIDS because many girls go for marriage without knowing the status of their partners.

Early marriage however has some positive effects and some participants agreed that it should be encouraged. These include high rate of fertility, increased population, increased labour, and increased security. Aditi, (2013) explains that early marriages are associated with many advantages in that it gives more time for the couples to pursue their careers comfortably and plan a child soon, early marriage is safe for women in terms of pregnancy, and a young mind is easier to adaptability and sustenance. This study is also in line with Bernard (2014), who stated in his study that some young girls enter into early marriage without understanding the full implications or hazards of the married life and as things begin to unfold, the sweet turns sour and the desired joy turns into mirage.

4.4   Attitude Towards Early Marriage

People have different attitude towards early marriage in Merikit Sub County. A lion-share of the study respondents (81.25%) were of a view that early marriage is bad, hence feeling bad having their sons or daughters in early marriage. This was dominant among the women or girls aged 20-30 years, in the catholic religion. A few respondents (18.75%) mostly the elderly aged 40-80 years said early marriage is good because it is to more extent a gain than a loss. The men were mostly of a view that early marriage is good, of which most were from the Muslim religion, hence feeling good to have their sons and daughters in early marriage. This is presented in figure 5 below.
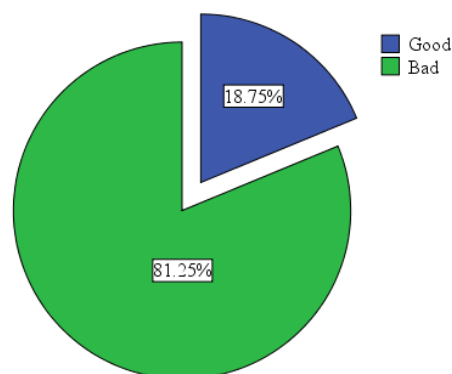
Figure 5: Respondents' attitudes to early marriage

Most of the participants mentioned that early marriage is bad. This is because it leads to separation, failure to manage children, leads to irresponsible parenthood, poor upbringing of children, and denies children rights to education, leads to population increase.

However, some of the participants narrated that early marriage is good, and so they would marry off their daughters before the age of 18years, if the man is rich and is able to provide for her and take care of her family. Religions like Islam teach that a parent has a duty of marrying off their daughter once she reaches puberty. The participants also mentioned that there is greater success if women get married below 18years than any other age (Muazzam, et al. 2014).

4.5   Strategies Set Against Early Marriage
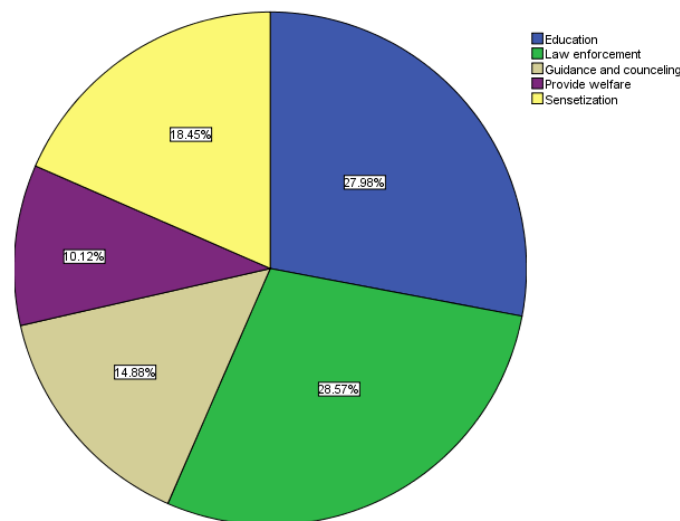
Figure 6: Proposed remedies to early marriages

The different strategies against early marriage in the community were said by the different respondents in all age groups, levels of education and religions. It was also dominant among all sexes as, 27.98% of the respondents said education is being provided to the children to stop early marriage, 28.57% said there is law enforcement, 14.88% said early marriage is being stopped through guidance and counseling, 10.12% of the people said people are being provided with welfare to stop early marriage, 18.45% said sensitization is being done to stop early marriage. This is presented in figure 7 below.

Table 3: The state of the early marriage remedies and implementation strategies

Effectiveness	Ineffectiveness	How to make more effective
Many children study	Disobedience	Continuous sensitization
Children are obedient	Early marriage is continuing	Arresting parents
Reduced early marriage	No follow ups	Involving parents and stakeholders
Fear to get married	Corruption	Strict law enforcement
		Improving education
		More guidance and counseling

Also, respondents were asked about the state of the early marriage remedies and implementation strategies. Close to 70% of the respondents said early marriage strategies are effective, and these were mainly the females, aged 20-50years, of the catholic religion. However, some respondents said the strategies are ineffective, and these were mostly the young aged 15-20years. To make them more effective, they came up with more strategies that they thought could help best. This is presented in table 2 above.

The remedies to early marriage include education, law enforcement, guidance and counselling, provision of welfare, and sensitization. Malhotra et al, 2011 explain that early marriage can be stopped by empowering young girls with skills, educating and mobilizing parents and community members, enhancing accessibility and quality of formal schooling for girls. An issue paper HRAPF (2020) also stated that in order to reduce child marriage among the refugees in Uganda, concerted efforts to raise refugee populations out of extreme poverty would go a long way in preventing child marriages, it also states that it is important to raise awareness about the health risks associated with early pregnancy.

Education has been documented as one of the effective tools in ending early marriages. Oyedepo (1994) explains that one highly fruitful but not yet fully tapped strategy is to use girls' education as a mechanism for reducing child marriage. Enabling all girls to have primary education would reduce early marriage rates. He further explains that for each additional year that a girl delays marriage, her likelihood of being literate should increase and the prospect of her secondary school completion is to be raised. Indeed, there is a newly emerged global consensus on the importance of girls' education as a strategy to combat child marriages; but it has yet to be translated into action in West Africa. On the other end,

adherence to religious beliefs was lowest ranked (18.6%), which implies that its role in stopping early marriage is very minimal (UNICEF, 2009).

In this study, the community development officer (CDO) reported that there were efforts to stop early marriage among children in the sub county. One of the efforts was sensitization by holding dialogues in the community. Other remedies included legal aspects, counselling families, and giving girl children activities to engage in.

The respondents explained that the remedies are effective in the ways that many children go to school, children are now becoming more obedient, the rate of early marriage is evidently reducing among the people, and people fear to get married.

However, some of the participants also said the challenges are ineffective. This is because some children are still disobedient, early marriage is still continuing as some cases are evident, no follow ups are made to evaluate the behavior of the children, and there is still corruption among the implementers of the law.

These remedies can be made more effective in many ways, that is to say, by carrying out continuous sensitization of the communities, arresting parents who allow their children get married early, involving parents and other stakeholders in stopping early marriage, strict law enforcement, improving education to enable children study, and more guidance and counseling among the different communities.

According to the respondents, many people and organizations are involved in stopping early marriage. The organizations include plan international, world vision, the government. Also, parents, the police, local leaders, religious leaders, and many others work to stop early marriage among children in Uganda.

4.6 Challenges Met While Addressing Early Marriage

Respondents were then asked to give the challenges in addressing early marriage and how the challenges can be overcome, or remedies to the challenges. Both the young and elderly people said there are many challenges faced in addressing early marriage. However, some said there are no challenges met in the process, and these were mainly respondents of age group 15-29years. Those who saw challenges came up with solutions to overcome these challenges. These are presented in table 4 below.

Table 4: Challenges to addressing early marriages and implemented remedies

Challenges in addressing early marriage	Remedies to the challenges
Disobedience	Strict law enforcement
Lack of funds	Sensitization
Lack of communication skills	Educating children
Rigid cultures	Mobilizing more funds
Ignorance	Engaging community
Differences in decisions of parents	
Language barrier	

There are many challenges faced in the process of trying to stop early marriage. The challenges include disobedience, lack of funds, lack of communication skills, rigid cultures, ignorance, differences in decisions of the parents, and language barrier. Also, Joy for Children Uganda explains that it is a common phenomenon that in Uganda, the policies, bylaws and the programs made by local government remains on paper, making them not known by the local communities hence escalating the problem. For example, most people do not know the laws in the constitution of Uganda because it was not translated in the local languages for those who can read. Parents encourage marriage of their daughters while they are still children in a hope that the marriage will benefit them both financially and socially, while also relieving financial burdens on the family, making it hard for policy implementers to convince these young girls to stay home.

These challenges can be overcome by strict law enforcement, sensitization, educating children, mobilizing more funds, and engaging the community.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Research Findings

The study was focused on the perceptions of people on early marriage in Tororo District. At the time of the survey, 47 respondents were married, 28 respondents were single, 4 of them were cohabiting, and only one was divorced. Most of the respondents fall under the age group of 20 to 30 years. The respondents were mainly from the catholic religion and most of them were farmers in the rural areas within Tororo.

The survey found out that it was the female who were mainly affected by early marriage, and this is because most of them are forced into marriage so that the parents can gain bride wealth out of them. Most respondents however said that early marriage is bad because it leads to death, divorce, deprives people of their childhood, leads to high risks of HIV/AIDS, and so on. On the other hand, early marriage was good to a few of the respondents because it leads to high rate of fertility and the couples get much love from their partner when they are still young.

In order to stop early marriage, strategies like education, sensitization, law enforcement, providing welfare and many others were recommended by the respondents. These strategies are both ineffective and effective in one way or the other. The people or organizations responsible to stop early marriage include the government, police, plan international, world vision, parents, and many other bodies.

In an attempt to stop early marriage, these people meet many challenges. These include language barrier, lack of funds, lack of communication skills, rigid cultures, ignorance, and differences in decisions of parents.

5.2 Conclusions

The study aimed at finding out the perception of early marriage among people in Merikit Sub County. The findings of the study showed that many people perceived early marriage as bad because it leads to death among the girls during giving birth, though some few see it as good because it increases fertility rate, and so encourage it. Majority of the participants were aware of the negative impacts of early marriage. Most women supported early marriage and intended to marry off their daughters below 18years of age. Poverty, peer influence, lack of

education, among others, are some of the factors that may cause a continuation in early marriage in Merikit Sub County. However, sensitizing the community about the dangers of early marriage, strict law enforcement, provision of welfare to extremely poor families, and improving education can help eliminate early marriage practice in Merikit.

5.3   Recommendations

The following recommendations were made;

Guidance and counseling should be done in schools most especially by senior women teachers to enable children make the right choices for their future. Take corrective action against those who marry or engage in sexual activity with under aged girls and boys. Run programs to empower girls and educate them about their right to consent to marriage and to control their own fertility. Strengthen efforts to support children to undertake income generating activities in order to relieve on the reliance on bride price as a source of wealth.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide for primary respondents

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Anyango Mary Immaculate. I am a student of Makerere University, conducting a study as part of the requirement for the award of a degree in Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences of Makerere University. The topic of the research is *Perception on early marriage among in Tororo District*. You have been chosen because of the importance of the information you will provide, which will only be used for study purposes. This information will be treated with utmost confidentiality. I do not need your name for the records.

A. LOCATION

County ………………………….

Sub-County …………………….

Parish …………………………...

Village ………………………….

Category   Rural   Urban

B. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Sex   (i) Male

                 (ii) Female

2. Marital status

     (i)   Single

     (ii)   Married

     (iii)   Cohabiting

     (iv)   Widowed or Separated

     (v)   Other (specify) ………………………..

3. Age of respondent (in years) ……………………………..

     (i)   Age of spouse (in years) ………………………….

     (ii)   Age when you married/ got married ……………………

4. Highest Level of formal Education

     (i)   None   (iv) University

     (ii)   Primary   (v) Tertiary institution

     (iii)   Secondary

Others (Specify) …………………………..

5. Religion

    (i)   Catholic   (iv) Pentecostal

    (ii)   Muslim   (v) SDA

    (iii)   Anglican

    Others (Specify) ……………………………………

6. Occupation (e.g. Teacher, Farmer, etc) ………………………………….

7. Ethnicity (e.g. Kiga, Itesot, etc)   ……………………………

8. Ethnicity of your spouse (e.g. Kiga, Itesot, etc)………………………

9. Place of birth

    (i)   Outside Tororo district

    (ii)   Within Tororo district

C. *Understanding of early marriage*

10. What do you understand by marriage?

    ………………………………………………………………………………

    ………………………………………………………………………………

    ……………………………………………………………………………….

11. According to you, what comes to your mind when somebody talks about early marriage?

    ………………………………………………………………………………

    ………………………………………………………………………………

    ……………………………………………………………………………….

12. Do you know anybody who is involved in early marriage?

    Yes   No

13. If yes, why do you think such people get involved in such a practice?

    (i)   ………………………………………………………………………

             ………………………………………..

    (ii)   ………………………………………………………………………

             ………………………………………

    (iii)   ………………………………………………………………………

             ……………………………………….

    (iv)   ………………………………………………………………………

             ……………………………………….

(v) …………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………

14. What are the main negative effects or impacts of early marriage?

(i) …………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………

(ii) …………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………….

(iii) …………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………..

(iv) …………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………..

15. Who is affected most by early marriage?

16. Are there positive effects of early marriage?

    A) Yes   B) No

17. If Yes, please state them.

(i) ………………………………………………………….......
(ii) ………………………………………………………….....
(iii) ………………………………………………………….....
(iv) ………………………………………………………….....

Attitudes towards early marriage

18. What is your view about early marriage: Is it a good or bad?

    (a)Good   (b) Bad

19. Explain your answer

(i) …………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………

(ii) …………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………

(iii) …………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………

20. How would you feel having your son in early marriage?

(i) …………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………

(ii) …………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………...

21. How would you feel having your daughter in early marriage?

(iii) …………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………

(iv) …………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………

Behavior and Practices of early marriage

22. Is there anything being done to stop early marriage?

(a)Yes   (b) No

23. Who or what organization is involved in stopping early marriages?

24. If yes, what is being done to stop early marriage?

(i) …………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………

(ii) …………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………

(iii) …………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………

(iv) …………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………

25. Are the strategies effective?

(a)Yes   (b) No

26. How are they effective?

(i) …………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………

(ii) …………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………

(iii) …………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………

27. In what ways aren't they effective?

(i) …………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………

(ii)   …………………………………………………………………………
         …………………………………………………

(iii)   …………………………………………………………………………
         …………………………………………………

28. What do you think could be done to make these strategies more effective?

(i)   …………………………………………………………………………
         …………………………………………………...

(ii)   …………………………………………………………………………
         …………………………………………………

(iii)   …………………………………………………………………………
         …………………………………………………

(iv)   …………………………………………………………………………
         …………………………………………………

Challenges in addressing early marriage

29. Are there any challenges met while addressing early marriage?

(a)Yes   (b) No

30. What are these challenges?

(i)   …………………………………………………………………………
         …………………………………………………

(ii)   …………………………………………………………………………
         ………………………………………………….

(iii)   …………………………………………………………………………
         …………………………………………………..

(iv)   …………………………………………………………………………
         …………………………………………………..

31. How can we overcome these challenges so as to address early marriage effectively?

(i)   …………………………………………………………………………
         …………………………………………………..

(ii)   …………………………………………………………………………
         …………………………………………………..

(iii)   …………………………………………………………………………
         …………………………………………………..

(iv)   ……………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………..

Thank you for participating

Appendix 2: Consent Forms

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your child has been chosen to participate in this study about the perception of adolescents on early marriage. This is strictly voluntary and he or she may discontinue their participation at any time with or without any prejudice. All information collected during this study will be kept confidential.

Before completing the questionnaire, I would like you to read and fill in this form if you agree to have your child participate in the research. If you have any questions about the study, please call me at +256 759052140, or my supervisor Prof. Peter Atekyereza at +256 756309276

Signature of the parent/guardian: …………….

Date: ………………….

Appendix 3: Key Informant interview guide

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Anyango Mary Immaculate. I am a student of Makerere University, conducting a study as part of the requirement for the award of a degree in Bachelors of Arts in Social Sciences of Makerere University. The topic of the research is *Perception of early marriage in Tororo District*. You have been chosen because of the importance of the information you will provide, and this information will be used for only study purposes. This information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

1.   What do you understand by early marriage?

2.   Why do you think adolescents get involved in early marriage?

3.   What is your view about early marriage: Is it good or bad and why?

4.   What are the existing strategies to stop early marriages among adolescents?

    (a)   Are they effective?

    (b)   In what ways have they been successful or unsuccessful?

    (c)   What are the challenges they face?

5.   What can be done to improve on the effectiveness of the strategies of early marriages that are available?

6.   What else do you think Uganda should do to stop early marriages?

Thanks for your participation