

THE IMPACT OF CHILD MARRIAGES IN THE APOSTOLIC-SECT IN COWDRAY PARK SUBURB IN BULAWAYO; ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

This research probes and critically scrutinises the issue of child marriages in major apostolic sect in Cowdray Park, such as Johanne Marange. The major objective being to examine the impact of child marriages in Cowdray Park as well as to examine the nature and the causes of child marriages, the effects, and the possible resolutions. The researchers adopted qualitative research design for the study. The researchers discovered that the main causes of Child marriages are poverty, polygamous life, child sex, although there are other causes which influences and courage such as religion culture. At the heart of it all, it is the poverty and religious beliefs which are not even biblical. The researchers further interrogated quizzes the different actors and structures that are involved from the time a child is taken into this 'union' and analyses the role they play in perpetuating this system. The major findings which stemmed from the use of the women's law approach as the overarching framework are brought to light. Narrations of the rape that happens, the trauma, lack of security in the polygamous union are were discussed.

Key Words: Child Marriage, Apostolic Sect, Polygamy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of early child marriages has appeared as the topical issue of much heated debate as to the social economic and political effects on young girls hindering development in Africa and Zimbabwe as a nation. Early marriage, also referred to as child marriage, is defined as any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically and psychologically ready to accept the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing. According to the data collected by United Nations International Children's Education Funds (UNICEF) in 2014 worldwide, more than 700 million married women were married as children and about 250 million were married below the age of 15. This study specifically looked at the aspect of early child marriages impacts on the young girls as a barrier to national development of Zimbabwe. The research was an analysis of life experience of the young mothers who are in marriage in a bid to explain the problematic issue of child marriages. The study focused on the impact of child marriages amongst the apostolic sect in Cowdray Park (Ibid). The first chapter looked at the background of the study clearly articulating the problems and objectives of the study, the research questions, delimitation and limitations of the study in question as well as academic and societal justification to the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

The marriage of young teenagers remains prevalent in many parts of the world despite repeated efforts by national governments and international development agencies to eradicate the practice.

According to the State of World Population Report (2005), 48 per cent of women in Southern Asia and 42 per cent of women in Africa in the age group 15-24 years had married before reaching the age of 18, (UNFPA, 2005). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2004) also states that globally, 39 million girls aged 13–15 in developing countries do not reach secondary education due to several reasons that consist of early marriage. United Nation (UN,2000) states that in Asia marriage patterns are much more diverse and the extreme cases are Afghanistan and Bangladesh, where 54 per cent and 51 per cent of girls respectively are married by age 18 soon after puberty, partly to free their parents from an economic burden and partly to protect the girls' sexual purity. Rates of early and forced marriages are also high in Europe, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, where 2.2 million girls are married before their 18th birthday. The highest rates are in Georgia 17 per cent and Turkey 14 per cent, (Sibanda, 2011).

Trends have been exhaustively examined courtesy of World Fertility Survey and Demographic and Healthy Survey data. According to United Nation (UN, 2000), there are two groups of countries those where marriage age is rising, such as Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Senegal and those where there is little change, including Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Lesotho, Liberia and Mali. In several countries, over 40 per cent of young women have entered marriage before they reach the age of 18, and these trends are generally more prevalent in Central and West Africa affecting 40 per cent and 49 per cent respectively of girls under 19 due to cases where the stress of conflict or Human Immuno Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), or economic hardships and also religious practices.

As marriage of any younger person below eighteen years of age in line with the United Nations (1990), agreement on the rights of children. Other terms used to refer the marriage include “early marriage” and “child brides” (Nour, 2006). On the other hand, religion has shaped man's behaviour over time giving birth to the existence of norms and values in the society. Through religion, people agree on particular values that define their beliefs and customs. Religion has shaped social activities and behaviour among people who join to it such that some activists have managed to sprout all due to religion in the 21st century. People join religious sects of their choice due to a number of preferences and beliefs and some are even forced or oriented by their parents and guardians in joining the association. It is through this religious affiliation that people sometimes are subdued by the “evils” of the society and the current economic environments.

The problem of child marriage is quite common among the members of the apostolic sect as a religious affiliation. Girl child marriages are common in Zimbabwe and according to Zimbabwe Statistic Agency (ZimStat) (2011), an estimate of 21 per cent of children (mostly girls) are married before they have reached the age of eighteen. According to the Girl Child Network (2016), an estimate of 8000 girls have been forced into early marriages. It is rather sarcastic that religion has played massive influence in the perpetuation of “child marriages” in Zimbabwe. Early child marriage, in some cases maybe voluntary, but in most cases, early child marriage is forced. Therefore, it is the task of this research to unearth the nexus between religion or rather, religious affiliations with child marriages in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe, as one of the developing countries is experiencing similar cases of early child marriages. There is much concern over the involvement of girls who are married before the

national maturity age of 18 years, since they still have dreams of acquiring educational achievements and finding employment to end the cycle. This has, for several years, resulted in high deaths of young pregnant women and also high maternal mortality rates in parts of Zimbabwe. As Morna et al. (2015) assume teenage pregnancies have been cited as the leading aspect upon maternal mortality in Zimbabwe.

There is much concern over the participation of girls who are married before the national maturity age of 18 years since they still have dreams of acquiring educational attainments and finding employment to end the cycle of poverty in their families. According to the Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS, 2010), the country's current economic and political situations have forced many families to violate children's rights, especially those of the girl-child. Some teenagers are forced into marriage because of poverty, religious beliefs and cultural practices that encourage children to be married under the age of consent. Research findings have shown that in Zimbabwe the major drivers of child marriages are economic hardships in families and also religious and cultural practices.

In some societies, according to Sachiti (2011), child marriages is seen as a taboo that is not widely understood or accepted e.g. in the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), but in the apostolic churches and some upcoming Pentecostal churches, child marriage is accepted and widely practiced. One of these societies is the apostolic sect in Zimbabwe, where polygamous marriages are common. The apostolic sect encourages men to have two or more wives if they can sufficiently support those wives. The apostolic sect is a diverse group, but they share the values of "authoritarianism, collectivism, and patriarchy. In polygamous families, the husband is the head of the household. One of the advantages of having a large polygamous family is the financial benefits that come from having multiple wives and children. However, according to Sachiti (2011), having many wives and children can create a great deal of conflict, particularly on issues to do with the payment of fees.

Culturally, child marriage is viewed as a reproductive strategy by which men maximise the number of their offspring, but minimise investment in each child. Since apostolic sect is a highly patriarchal religion, males have control over women and children and believe that a good wife will produce many children, especially male children. For polygamous men, the more wives they have, the more power and success they are believed to have. Polygamy can also be an indicator of high social power.

The apostolic sect in Zimbabwe is one of the largest religious groups with an estimated 33.9 per cent (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, ZIMSTAT, 2011) use the latest , of the total Zimbabwe population, though some studies have indicated that it is as high as 38 per cent therefore, showing that it is a very influential group in society with more than a third of the country's population. The research, which is qualitative in nature, looked specifically at the major apostolic groups, the Johanne Marange and the Johanne Masowe yeSabata sects.

'Child marriages' take place in these sects and are often veiled or hidden from society. Girls as young as 10 and sometimes new born babies are married off to older men under the pretext that it is God's will. There is gross indoctrination of this belief and girls who are born into this sect are at a higher risk of being married off at an early age. The first sexual experience in these 'marriages' is rape which sometimes goes on for years before a girl fully submits and gives in to the status

quo. From there onwards, what follows is a pattern of sexuality and reproduction from other cultures, probably influencing the rise of child marriages in within the apostolic sects in Zimbabwe.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research paper are to:

- investigate the impact of child marriages amongst the apostolic sect in Cowdray Park.
- examine the nature and causes of early child marriages.
- assess the impact of child marriages in Africa.
- examine the impact of child marriages among the young girls in Cowdray Park.

2. INTERIM LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Key concepts

A **child** is a young human being below the age of puberty, who is immature, irresponsible and below the legal age of majority. Article 2 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990), states that a child means a human being below the age of 18 years. The United Nations Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), defines a 'child' as a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger.

Marriage is the formally or legally recognised union of two people as partners in a personal relationship specifically a union between a woman and a man.

Child Marriage is a formal or informal marriage of two people with one or both parties below 18 years, but the practice is more common in young girls. Therefore, any marriage of a person or persons below 18 years is child marriage, because at the age of consent or when a person is considered to be responsible and mature is 18 years, so any form of marriage below 18 years.”

The minimum age of marriage was prescribed by the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) to be 18 years. This was as a result of the definition of child by Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Children (CRC), which came into force on 2 September 1990. Article 1 of CRC defines a child to mean every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. According to Schedule Section 78 (1) and 81 (1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe the minimum age of marriage is set at 18 years. This therefore, means that any child or any person under the age of 18 cannot be compelled to enter into marriage except given written permission by the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs.

Cowdray Park in Bulawayo is the area of research where child marriages are prevalent among the Johanne Marange apostolic sect. This church is commonly well known as ‘Vapostori’, that is believed to constitute approximately 1.2 million members in the country and Johanne Marange the church founder passed away in 1963, leaving 13 widows who were taken over by his son Abel (Hastings, 1994). Since the religion promote child marriages there are cases where the parents are marrying their children to elders from the church or to older men without the child’s consent as a

sign to appease the avenging spirits (Ibid). This issue of child marriages has reached an alarming level and the effects are just serious such that there is need to intervene in order to rescue the girl child from further abuse of early marriage.

Apostolic Sect in Zimbabwe

Religion is a powerful influence in the lives of southern Africans, affecting all aspects of daily life and health, particularly for rural women (Chitando, 2007). Rural churches are a centre for informal social interaction, as well as formal teaching and regulation, all of which shape attitudes about health-seeking behaviours, Collaborating Centre for Operational Research and Evaluation (CCORE, 2011; Mpfu et al., 2011). Although the influence of religious organizations has been recognized as important in the Human Immune Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic (Olivier et al., 2015), few studies have examined how religious affiliation might affect early marriage and reproductive health behaviour. This research examines the association between religious affiliation and reasons for marriage, perceived church attitudes, and reproductive health-seeking behaviour, including Human Immune Virus (HIV) testing, among young women in rural at Zimbabwe.

Prior to the arrival of European colonial missionaries, the primary religious belief system in Zimbabwe was Shona. Catholic and Protestant missionaries were highly successful in setting up new church congregations, schools, and hospitals during the colonial era and recruited large numbers of members (Patterson, 2011). Christianity was readily accepted, in partially, because of its compatibility with Shona beliefs, although these beliefs held much greater emphasis on the involvement of generous and malevolent spirits in everyday affairs, and included the concept of ancestral spirits interceding to God for living people (Chitando, 2007). Starting in the 1940s, exclusion of non-European Zimbabwean men from senior mission church leadership positions and marginalisation of their religious heritage contributed to emergence of African-initiated 'Spirit-led' Christian churches in Zimbabwe (Patterson, 2011). One of the largest African-initiated churches, and among the largest denominations in Zimbabwe, is the African apostolic sect (Nenge, 2013). Marange renounced ritual practices and witchcraft, exhorted the keeping of biblical Old Testament laws, and emphasised the workings of the Holy Spirit in healing and leading the people (Anderson, 2011).

While the Johanne Marange Church is prominent, there are many other apostolic sects in Zimbabwe, often formed under the leadership of a charismatic healer and prophet (Anderson, 2011). The most recent population-based Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey identified apostolicism as the largest single religious denomination in the country with 38 per cent of women and 28 per cent of men aged 15 to 49 (Zimbabwe Central Statistical Office and Macro International Inc., 2011). Other religious affiliations reported among Zimbabwean women and men, respectively, were Pentecostal (21, 15 per cent), Protestant (17, 14 per cent), Roman Catholic (8, 10 per cent), Other Christian (8, 8 per cent), no religion (6, 22 per cent), traditional (1, 4 per cent), and Muslim (1, 1 per cent).

2.3 Factors that Contribute to Early Marriages in Apostolic Sect

Child marriages has emerged as the problem situation hindering development in Zimbabwe as it poses negative effect on children particularly within the apostolic sect in Zimbabwe. According to

Nenge (2013), the prevalence of child marriages in apostolic sect has resulted in various factors and these factors can be grouped into economic, social and cultural or religious. The factors include unemployment, lack of education, financial problems facing teenagers, security of the child, poverty and religion. Religion is the major causes of child marriages in Zimbabwe since the religious sect have gained prominence in throughout the country in Zimbabwe as most of the apostolic sect and their religion does not prohibit child marriages but rather they encourage them which has escalated the problem in the area.

2.3.1 Unemployment

Unemployment has emerged as one of the main economic causes of early marriages. This is because unemployment causes many girls and boys to engage in love affairs at an early age. Experiences show that girls get into relationships at an early stage because they have nothing to do in life so they tend to get a social life in relationships. This is more prevalent to girls than boys as young girls who would have finished their primary or high schooling engage in relationships with older boys or men who are employed and some who would have finished school earlier than those girls. The researcher observed that approximately more than 50 per cent of the young mothers who were married below the age of 18 are still unemployed and they are house wives. Some of the causes range from low education status to male prejudice among the employees who subordinate women's reproductive roles with interference in their work performance even if they have to perform the job, (UN, 2016).

2.3.2 Financial Problems facing teenagers

In the 21th Century we are living in teenagers seems to have many needs that require money. Young boys and girls are caught on the side where they will be facing financial constrains to fulfil their needs in life and these financial problems is one of the economic drivers to early marriage. According to WHO (2015), a young girl from Muponda village who is not married revealed that most young girls enters child marriage because of financial constraints are orphans and they will be facing difficulties financially to assist themselves. This is forcing young girls to engage in relationships with older boys who are employed and even older men. This is therefore, leading to child marriages as these young girls are being impregnated and the family of the girl will feel that they are having burden to keep their child and they are marrying the young girl to the person responsible for the pregnancy whether younger or older than the girl. This problem has emerged as the route of child marriages in Mutasa since the diamond mining in Chiyadzwa and the young girls were being impregnated by the miners (Makorokoza) so as to get income because they believe they have money.(WHO, 2015).

2.3.3 Poverty

Poverty is also one of the causes of child marriage. Families who are poverty stricken tend to marry their young girls so as to get income. According to UNFPA (2010), poverty and child marriage are connected, where poverty exists, child marriage is likely to also be present. The researchers observed that more than 25 per cent of the population in Cowdray Park community are poor judging from their way of living, activities and assets at their houses and also most of the population stricken by poverty are young mothers or women. The girl is often considered as an economic burden, where families are often eased when finding a spouse for the girl (UNFPA, 2006:18). This tends to take place when the child is still very young. This is because where poverty

is severe, families and the young girls believe that marriage is the solution to their problems. The families believe that marrying a daughter reduce the family expenses by ensuring they have one less person to feed, provide clothing and also education.

After birth, girls are viewed as a burden to the parental household, whereas boys are regarded as an asset (White, 1992). This is therefore, believed to be a relief because the parents will be left with no burden. In some cases, young girls are also being used as a solution to manage disputes amongst elders or to settle economic and social alliances and also for repayments of debts. In communities where a dowry or 'bride price' is paid, it is often welcome income for poor families in those where the bride's family pays the groom a dowry; they often have to pay less money if the bride is young and uneducated.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Philosophy

The researchers used the interpretivist research philosophy which is concerned with understanding of human action rather than the forces that act on it (Male, 2019). This philosophy was chosen, instead of the positivist or realist research philosophies because it is a subjective philosophy which gathers data based on experiences of participants, constructs and interpret understanding from the gathered data as well as explaining the consequences of human actions on the environment (Yoshida, 2014). The interpretivist research philosophy chosen focused on theory building and predominantly used qualitative approaches and case study research strategy adopted under this study, and these enabled the researcher to get in depth information on the area under study.

The study was based on a qualitative research. According to Ghauri (1995) qualitative research methods emphasise on understanding interpretation, observations in natural settings and closeness to data with a sort of inside view. The qualitative model was employed because it enables the researchers to collect in-depth information on what the community say or do in their natural settings.

On selection of subjects in Cowdray Park in Bulawayo, snowball, purposive and random sampling were used. Cowdray Park was involved because it is the most easily accessible to the researcher. The target population of this study were the households of Johanne Marange. In this study, the researchers employed purposive sampling and snowball sampling.

The researchers used interviews, focus group discussion and questionnaires to collect information from different respondents managed to interview 40 respondents and the research was targeted at the females between the age of 13 and 20 who were not married and also those in marriages so as to get primary information on their system of life and the challenges they were facing in those marriages. The researcher interviewed one girl who was not married, 9 young mothers, 2 married men from the Marange apostolic sect, one policeman and also health worker. Interviews were conducted for 10 to 20 minutes and these were carried out privately so as to allow the interviewee to freely answer the researcher's questions, to safeguard confidentiality and to create a form of cooperation and understanding between both parties so as to gather sufficient information to answer the research questions. The researchers also interviewed the government workers from the Ministry of Women Affairs (Ward Development Coordinators), also NGOs agents in Cowdray Park about how child marriages were affecting the young girls.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This research investigated the impact of child marriages amongst the apostolic sects in Cowdray Park, Bulawayo.

4.1 Causes of Child Marriage in Apostolic Sects at Cowdray Park

There are several causes of polygamy in Johanne Marange apostolic sect in Zimbabwe. Twenty-seven percent of the male respondents argued that they marry many young wives because they want to maximize number of children for cheap labour. Another forty-eight percent of the respondents indicated that the issue of polygamy is deeply entrenched in the church dogma. They get into polygamy so as to get status in church and get social recognition. Twenty per cent of the male respondents indicated that polygamy is a way of avoiding extra marital affairs by men in church. Thirteen point three percent of the respondents have indicated that polygamy is the only way to accommodate excess women into marriage. The other reasons like keep men sexually satisfied always as women tire with age faster than men, crave for new and different sexual partner, following tradition of their fathers and so on.

The researchers also established that when a child is born he/she is encouraged to adjust to the polygamous expectations of the parents. The problem of submission to their husbands remains a permanent problem. Submission means the husband has the final say on whatever action the woman want to take even in deciding to get several other wives as well as number of children.

This completely reveals that many girl children in Johanne Marange apostolic sect see child marriage as of biblical as they are not even allowed to reads the bible by the church leadership. Furthermore, socio economic status of the men was cited as a cause of polygamy in church. Well to do polygamy, rich men do not fear to have many wives unlike the poor men who may struggle to provide the basics. Some mentioned the pull him down syndrome in most polygamy that when a man is economically progressing well, he becomes the target of gossip by other church members or spreading falsehoods about that man and can be pressured into polygamy so as to reverse his progress due to inescapable polygamous problems.

Various reasons for child marriage suggest that child marriages are viewed by different lances among the Johanne Marange apostolic sect members. This therefore, suggests that effects of polygamous family life style differ from one family to another. There are no prescribed solutions to the challenges, hence each case should be treated differently.

4.2 Problems faced by polygamous families in Johanne Marange Apostolic Sect

There are several problems indicated by the respondents faced in the polygamous households. Over sixty percent of the respondents that indicated that child marriages are often married in polygamous marriages and women in plural marriages generally have lower fertility rates than women within monogamy. It is found that each time a polygamous husband takes a new wife; as his prior wives all had experienced decreased fertility. In addition, the highest ranking wife (usually the newest wife) was most likely to have a child as soon as she gets married, given that she was probably most favoured by the husband. Thus by the time he gets back to the other wives mainly it may fail to link with the ovulation of the rarely visited wives meaning even the frequency

of giving children by then becomes reduced as compared to the newest wife who normally enjoys company of the husband always. This is what is regarded as decrease in fertility, which may not be the case as such. On reproductive and sexual health, fifty per cent of the respondents indicated that they strongly agree with the view that sexual and reproductive health is a problem in child marriage. Interview follow ups have revealed that child marriage has contributed to the spread of Human Immune Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) among young girls who are married, especially in Johanne Marange apostolic sect in Cowdry Park. Since Johanne Marange followers do not receive medication from hospitals, they suffer quietly and struggle to death with reproductive health problems. The women are deprived of family planning services that would enable them to fully care for their children before falling pregnant again.

On opposition among co-wives, seventy-three point seven percent of the respondents strongly agree with the fact that there is inherent rivalry among co-wives who always want to out class each other to please the husband. Interviews revealed that reveals in certain contexts, jealousy between co-wives can escalate to unbearable levels, resulting in fights and physical injuries sustained by women. With regards to collaboration and support among co-wives, over sixty-seven percent strongly agreed with the idea of unhealthy rivalry among co-wives. Women married to the same man commonly view one another with jealousy and perhaps even hostility. The study established that if co-wives need each other's support and assistance, they are likely to collaborate. However, if such interdependence does not exist and there is little incentive for co-wives to associate with one another, competition is more likely to personify the relationship among them. In this regard, sixty-three percent argued that the women in the Apostolic faith have very limited ability to make autonomous life choices in the marriages with regards to child birth, number of children and any other matter. All decision making were centralised in the husband who was all powerful individual who does superintends on these poor and weak w, vulnerable women. Interviews proved that the issue of choice in relation to marriage in a child marriages society is also linked quite closely to male hierarchies that commonly form in such communities which demonstrating economic inequalities and injustices among men. A nearly universal feature of polygamous communities is that only the most affluent and high ranking men take wives. In many cases in Johanne Marange apostolic sect, both the child marriages family will prefer marriage to a polygamist than marriage to an unmarried man of little means. This then means the focus of many of the school going age is to get a potential suitor and start a family when she gets married. The lack of role models in the church makes the girl child from a polygamous family focus greatly on the issue of being married young than to go on with school work. One form two girl dropouts expressed that she was constantly being ridiculed by her church members as to why she cannot be appreciated like other girls who got married younger than her. She further said:

My father forced me to get married as young as I am in order to get rid with the shame of having a child who cannot be married. Therefore, how do you expect me to put my education as a priority in such a situation? At that moment I thought of running away from home but where to...(the girl wept)''.

It is from this background that young girls end up getting married to very old men as they are able to support and provide their means and obviously causing them to drop out of school. On Potential for abuse as shown in table 2 above: 16(53.3 per cent) respondents strongly agreed, 10(33.3 per cent) indicated that they agree with the fact that there is abuse potential in polygamy for the young girls, 2(6.7 per cent) indicated neutrality while only 2(6.7 per cent) disagreed with the abuse notion.

Interviews however showed that Polygamous issues indicated that abuse within the community of Johanne Marange apostolic sect is taking place on a widespread scale, particularly against women and children. Nevertheless, this has been subject to minimal public oversight and reaction. The system linked this directly to the blinkeredness of the community. Allegations of sexual, physical and psychological abuse were also made known with nothing done to redress the irregularity. On Strained relationships among the children in family as shown in table 2 above: 24(80 per cent) indicated that they strongly agree with widespread and inescapable strained relationships among the children in the polygamy setup. 5(16.7 per cent) indicated that they agree and 1(3.3 per cent) indicated their neutrality. Women in polygamy also shed light on the circumstances of children growing up in plural marriage families' boys and girls are treated differently. One disgruntled girl says:

I have been told that the father is no longer going to pay for my fees because he saw a certain boy coming to borrow my notebook and he said that I am now misbehaving.

I am not even allowed to go anywhere to ask for help on my school work but my brothers can go even out of the village to seek academic assistance from their friends. I had no choice but to drop out of school last week. I am not even allowed to leave this village alone otherwise my mother will be 'beaten'.

In particular, while young girls are commended to remain within their communities to become wives during their adolescence and not to continue with school, community leaders drive out many teenagers aged boys, to reduce the "competition" for young wives. On restricted knowledgeable development as shown in table 2 above, 10(33.3 per cent) indicated that they strongly agree with the notion that polygamy affect intellectual development, 8(26.7 per cent) showed they agree, 5(16.7 per cent) indicated that they are neutral while 4(13.3 per cent) disagree and 3(10 per cent) strongly disagreeing with the exemption that polygamy affects intellectual development. Interviews revealed that polygamous family structures would prompt lower levels of intelligence and scholastic achievement among youth from polygamous families. This notion is based on polygamy association with higher risks of psychological disorder in children, and with families having lower socio-economic status. Both of these factors impact academic achievement. Interviews confirmed that children from polygamous families are at a greater risk of psychological and physical abuse. While not entirely conclusive, research indicates that children can be adversely affected by rivalry between co-wives, and by the fact that more children in the family may mean less time with, and attention supervision from parents, especially their fathers. On Support burden by household head as shown table 2 above, 28(93.3 per cent) of the respondents strongly agreed with the fact that polygamy have obvious support burden of both children and wives, 1(3.3 per cent) of the respondents agree while 1(3.3 per cent) respondents indicated neutrality. Interview follow up revealed that the vast majority of polygamous households in Johanne Marange apostolic sect consists of families headed by one husband having multiple wives, one might question what consequences this social structure has for gender equality. In particular, one might ask whether there is a union in which two or more women must "share" a husband who in turn enjoys plural sexual and domestic partners, is inherently discriminatory. This question might be met with the claim that women are actually the primary beneficiaries of polygamy. One untidily dressed learner from one of the apostolic sect also had this to say:

We are all in all 23 children, and all my brothers never finished form four neither did any of my sisters, so the chances of me continuing with school does not exist. I am in grade seven and when I finish the examinations, I will go to my uncle as a head boy and

I will raise money to get married. My father has 5 wives and too many children and cannot manage with the school fees. I am happy I am now able to read and write now.

Given the structure of plural marriage families, men bear the singular responsibility of providing for their multiple wives and many children; whereas women might benefit from this economic support. This notion makes the household heads live mainly on manual labour weeding in other people's fields, cutting firewood for payment, digging contour ridges for payment, etc. As blue collar jobs-building brigades, carpentry, plumping, agriculture, a barber, and driving are into while very few join the white collar employments.

Other problems faced in polygamy are that it relates to its potential ability to undermine women's reproductive autonomy. Given the frequent competition among co-wives and because women's worth in polygamous societies is often linked to the number of children they have, women lose the ability to control decisions related to reproduction. Moreover, polygamous cultures are characterized by patriarchal family structures, within which women have a marginalised ability to question a husband's authority and express individual wishes, even in regard to private issues like childbearing.

4.3 Effects of Child Marriage in Apostolic Sects

Teenage sex

Teenage pregnancy can be defined as a teenaged or underage girl, who usually between ages 13 to 19 years becomes pregnant. Most young girls nowadays are willing to engage in sex for various reasons such as the economic benefit or just plain promiscuity and experimenting. In Zimbabwe, Cowdray park in particular families' value marriage such that when a young girl falls pregnant she is married off if the father of the child accepts responsibility. The researcher interviewed a young mother aged 20 from Mpompini Segment 11 at Cowdray Park, who refused to disclose her identity and she revealed that she was married off by her father after he heard that she had sex with her boyfriend and the father went with her to the boy's parents and left her there and now she is married to that person with one child. Teenage pregnancies therefore, cause early marriages.

Death during pregnancy

The researcher interviewed one participant from Sigodweni Segment 12 at Cowdray Park, and she revealed that 75 per cent of the young girls who die expecting and while delivering are from the Marange apostolic sect and this is because these young girls bodies are not yet strong to carry and deliver a child and also that they do not get proper health care because their religion does not allow them to go to the hospital.

4.4 Effort Prepared to Reduce Child Marriages in Apostolic Sects at Cowdray Park

Protection of Children from Injury of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence

Child marriages are highly associated with child sexual abuse and high levels of domestic violence because in most cases the husband will be many more years older than the wife. According to Pan International Policy Report of (2016), at Cowdray Park has launched awareness campaigns against the child marriages and also addressed the issue of domestic violence from the child marriages. Efforts from the government has also been made pertaining the issue of abuse of children who are in child marriages through revision of the 2004 Gender Policy strengths and weaknesses and

formulated a second National Gender Policy 2013 to 2017, in which its main targets included the reduction of domestic and gender based violence. In Cowdray Park, there has been a coordination of services to survivors of sexual violence through the revised Protocol on the Multi-sectorial Management of Sexual Violence in a process led by the Judicial Services Commission.

In addition, the government and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like Legal Resource Foundation (LRF) are handling the cases of sexual and domestic violence in an attempt to reduce children harm or abuse in child marriages at Cowdray Park. The government through the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development are receiving cases of domestic violence in child marriages and reporting them to the NGOs like Legal Resource Foundation (LRF) and relevant authorities at Cowdray Park police station.

Helping Children to acquire Education

Efforts over the issue of child marriages have been made by the government through the new revised National Gender Policy of 2013-2017 which advocate for legal rights of the girl child, gender education and training. Through desk research, the researcher observed that the government has tried to eradicate the aspect of gender inequality which suppress the girl child and also contribute as a factor causing child marriages at Cowdray Park in Johanne Marange apostolic sect. This effort has been in coordination with NGOs like Plan International operating at Cowdray Park as well. According to Plan International report of 2016 at Cowdray Park, the NGO is helping children acquire education through providing early childhood services, health professionals and also training volunteers on certain education perspectives.

Sustainable Livelihoods through Income Security

One of the major causes of child marriages as pointed out in the chapter one of the researches is financial problem facing teenagers or children. Efforts are being made at Cowdray by Plan International to reduce child marriages through improving income security for the children through training on livelihoods skills like entrepreneurship so as to eradicate the financial problem facing many children who dropped out of school and also those who have finished school. According to the Plan International report of 2016, there are workshops and trainings being carried out in Cowdray Park district like the value addition, entrepreneurship skills and also capacity building on ideas of agriculture as a way to provide income security. The researcher came to an understanding that this is helping some of the girls after an interview with an orphan staying with her grandmother Sharon Magwi aged 17, who was selling tomatoes at Mpompini Shopping center and Cowdray Park growth point and she said she is paying her school fees through selling of tomatoes.

Increased Sensitisation on Issues of Child Marriages

The paper highlighted earlier on the factors driving children into early marriages in Cowdray Park. Efforts are therefore, being made to reduce the problem of child marriages through increased sensitisations on issues of child marriages by NGOs like Plan International. Plan International in conjunction with the community leaders, the police and government through the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development and are advocating for reduction of child marriages by launching of “I Am a Girl Campaign” as part of the 18 + program of ending child marriages in Cowdray Park. According to Plan International report the 18+ program emphasises

the need to ensure that the girl child takes time to pursue education, achieves personal and professional growth awaiting to turn at least 18 years or beyond before getting married. Plan International with the help of the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development are sensitising the community of Cowdray Park on the issue of child marriages.

Learners in Johanne Marange apostolic Sect have accepted the hegemony of their church doctrine and stance on academic education, and remain in it knowingly but with no other better choice to disengage themselves from the pangs of academic dilemma. This then means that the learners from the Johanne Marange apostolic sect, and within polygamous families should be well understood by the educators in as far as their interest in school is concerned, and need to be given a lot of encouragement to do well in school and be exposed to role models with better life culminating from the educational progression of the members. Firstly, looking at the views that were given by different participants on child marriage the study showed that most parents especially women are against this practice though the majority of them had early marriages also. Poverty was pointed out as the major reason why they were married early but they wish that their girls should finish school and work so as to change the parents' life.

Religious beliefs and practices also came out to be another main cause of the practice though one church leader denied it and defended it in a very serious mood by saying "*kuyabe kuvunyelwene phakathi kwe ndoda endala lonkazana lo omncane, ngakho akula cala lapha*" (it is done after agreement between the two parties even if the man is older than the girl so there is no crime there). Some of these people seemed not to have any problem with child marriage and even its reparations. One reason highlighted by a form four boy was that:

These young girls have no curiosity in their school work, but getting married to the 'rich' elders of the churches so as to wear expensive material and eating good food during their church assemblies. Most of these girls at school do not want to be in relationships with us boys of their age because we do not have money.

Although most of the girl were just quiet during discussions one girl confirmed the above by saying:

these boys are lying it is because old people have respect for us and after all it is up to an individual to fall in love with someone older, though I am not saying girls should be married to old men.

Interesting to note in these findings was that girls were taught how to be good wives and mothers at a very early stage of their growth by older ladies in the church. Once a girl was look at for a man in the church she was not given the chance to refuse or give any reason, and they were not allowed to marry outside their church otherwise the girl would be disowned by the parents. Also during their early socialisation girls were taught how to be good future mothers, and on the other hand children had no professional models to imitate within their families hence they tended to follow their parents' footsteps and thus maintaining their social class within the community.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

The study has been mainly focused on girls below the age of 18, who are entering marriage due to the high number of occurrence and also the terrible consequences that often follow them in those marriages. Different studies show that the global humanitarian organisations have been implementing programs concerning the subject of child marriages in a bid to end the problem. An example is that several of the eight goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are trying to deal with the matter of child marriages, but to no adequate result have drawn from the attempts.

This study is focused on the issue of child marriages in the area of Cowdray Park in Bulawayo. It looks at the causes, and its effect to the young girls in the community suggesting solutions to this problem. The study depicts that the major causes of child marriages in this area are poverty, the religious practices of the Johanne Marange apostolic sect members that constitute more than 25 per cent of the population in Cowdray Park, unemployment rates and also lack of education to mention just a few. Through data generated from focus group, observation and interviews carried out with key informants from the Cowdray Park in Bulawayo community, the researchers noticed that some of the major horrific consequences of child marriages are domestic violence, high fatality rate, and high rate of school dropouts and also continued cycle of poverty. However, the researcher evaluated the outcomes of the research and came out with some suggestions that they may be more valid on the issue of child marriages in Cowdray Park. These suggestions include alignment of customary laws with the constitution is of vital importance. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which are active in the area should also take part working in combination with other relevant stakeholders and community leaders in combating the problem through financial support towards the anti- child marriages programs to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of the programs.

It had been noted that the bulky of the Johanne Marange church members are generally young school going age girls who are within their active ages of between 06 and 17 years. It was also noted that the learners do not generally fully participate in the Johanne Marange apostolic sect business due to several factors. Mainly, among them it is their church dogma that does not encourage the children to continue with school but to pride more in being married and start a family. Almost about 50 per cent of the members have little knowledge about the church's attitude on polygamy in church. On the participation in church, it was noted that women are mainly expected to teach other women to adorn themselves with good works, to be active learners and not to be too inquisitive, and are prohibited from exercising authoritative leadership.

On the main problems faced by families in polygamy in Johanne Marange apostolic sect, it was noted that traditional hegemony of supporting the status quo of male leadership dominates. Also the submission of the women to husbands and being household head also is an impediment as the women seeks permission from the husband before they go to participate in church, otherwise she may risks her family social unity. There were a myriad of polygamy problems that include: reproductive and sexual health, rivalry among co wives, collaboration and support among co wives, limited ability to make autonomous life choices, potential for abuse, strained relationships among the children in family, restricted intellectual development and support burden by household head. Marriage means a woman adjust more to the demands of her husband meaning if the husband does not approve of active participation of the wife then she remains passive to save her marriage.

There was nothing more complicated than the religion's influence on views of young girls on education. This means that the complexity of the polygamy as far as its effects on academic performance needs not only to be left to the concerned members as the negativity of the effects that affects all community members regardless of their religious affiliations. Learners in Johanne Marange apostolic sect have accepted the hegemony of their church doctrine and stance on academic education of their members and remained in it knowingly but with no other better choice to extricate themselves from the pangs of academic quagmire. This then means that the learners from the Johanne Marange apostolic sect, and within polygamous families should be well understood by the educators in as far as their interest in school is concerned and need to be given a lot of encouragement to do well in school and be exposed to the role models with better life culminating from the educational progression of the members.

The researchers interviewed two young mothers who refused to disclose their identities and to be recorded, they revealed that young girls and boys are deprived of their right to education because of their religious leaders that view education as something that is not imperative especially for the girls when the central point is being a spouse and mother in the future, not focusing on attaining more knowledge. This therefore, depicts the religious effect of the Marange apostolic sect towards depriving the children education.

The researchers observed that more than 25 per cent of the young girls and boys population in Cowdray Park were not going to school as at January 2020. Therefore, Sibanda (2011), suggests that this trend has affected the girl child ending up being idle and at times vulnerable to be married off (by their parents) to the elderly men especially in Vapostori sect. This trend has continued through generations and is maintaining the legitimatisation of child marriage, (UNFPA, 2006:19). Education, economic solvency and age help to develop a woman's personality through marrying off their daughters at an early age by stopping them from developing their personality. This therefore, undermines the girl child's capacity to see the fortunes of the world, but rather depend on being married at younger age because she would have been blinded by the lack of education.

5.2 Recommendations

Arrangement of customary laws with the constitution: The legislature should speed up the rearrangement of the existing customary laws within the constitution. Proceedings and the constitutional making process can be used to ensure that there is harmonisation of laws, and that the Customary Law Marriages Act specifies marriage age in line with other statutes such as the marriage act and the constitution of Zimbabwe. Introducing laws to rise the legal age of marriage to 18 years, as agreed in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child would be another useful legislative stage.

Certainly, raising the awareness of all stakeholders, including parents, on the negative impacts of child marriages can have a positive impact and approval legal reform with help from community leaders, school teachers and other relevant parties. The government adopt a clear and unambiguous position on child and forced marriages and rectify the legislative loopholes between religious, customary and civil marriages.

The non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should write reports on the country's compliance or commitment with its International treaty body obligations like Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Committee on the Right of a Child (CRC), showing how the government is doing when it comes to reducing child marriages for assessment of the efforts being made in eradicating the practice. Furthermore, they should assess the role of customary and religious laws that condone child marriage and promote dialogue with traditional and religious leaders to identify practical ways to reduce child marriages.

It is recommended that sensitivity on the issue of child marriages be increased. Government through the Ministry of health and social welfare, the ministry of Community development gender and children affairs, as well as the different organisations working on children rights, and the police may conduct programs concerning early marriage, and Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) infections especially by addressing the factors which contribute to early marriage and also involving teenagers in decision making that can change community mind set to abandon that practice.

The main aim of the campaigns will be to end child marriages in Zimbabwe in general and in Cowdray Park in particular by showing that it is detrimental to the health, and wellbeing of a girl child. This maybe a better approach rather than litigation as it attempts to change the attitudes and mind set of the community.

The various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Zimbabwe should be encouraged to coalesce into a strong, coordinated structure to unite to run the campaign to end child marriages. Non-Governmental Organizations can influence the adoption of alternative perspectives on the issue of child marriages in the apostolic sect in Cowdray Park through internal discourse. They may be viewed as outsiders, but they can still influence culture by engaging in their own internal discourse thereby enabling participation in one culture to point to similar processes elsewhere in other cultures. NGOs can also support the rights of children and women who are involved in child marriages by encouraging them to challenge the prevailing status quo or perceptions whilst at the same time avoiding overt interference because this will undermine the credibility of internal actors. This is a strategy that can be used to deal with the case of Johanne Marange apostolic sect in Cowdray Park because they are a much closed group that does not take kindly to external interference especially when these challenge their beliefs.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) can also initiate cross cultural dialogue to exchange insights and strategies of internal discourse. Cross cultural dialogue can seek to promote universality by highlighting moral and philosophical commonalities of human cultures and experiences. Sharing insights and ideas, or experiences will over time help to mediate cultural and contextual differences and thereby produce common standards on the principle of the best interests of the child. The best way to combat the norms of cultural relativity is to challenge its basis in the consciousness of the relevant people and in this case those in child marriages.

Support Anti- Child Marriage Programs. Studies have shown that there are many programs or charities that are advocating for the end to child marriages but they seem to be a bit less effective and the reason being lack of financial support. These programs need financial support to keep

going and so as to make an effective impact on the communities. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) like Development Aid from People to People (DAPP) has been working in Cowdray Park launching child marriages campaigns but this has not been of much positive impact to reduce the child marriage in the community. This is because they are selecting the segments to be visited because there are no financial resources to launch the campaigns in all the segments. Therefore, the government and other stakeholders should assist financially such programs that are advocating for an end to child marriages so as to combat the problem.

Parliament should be reminded of its progressive stance on the definition of domestic violence and encouraged to form a working group on child marriage at the parliamentary level to indicate the seriousness with which it views the legal vacuum currently prevailing. There should be a working board which focus strongly on the issues of child marriages across the nation so that the issue deal within all parts of the country and also it will show the country's effort in combating the problem.

The government should also put in place measures that motivates and encourage the young girls to go to school. According to Plan International Policy Brief on ending child marriages, the government should attempt to extend the reach of the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) programme of educational support to target more girls at risk on dropping out of education and who are therefore, at risk of early marriage, particularly in the most affected areas. The BEAM program must be implemented at Cowdray Park to motivate the poverty stricken families to send the young girls to school rather than marrying them off to older people, in order to avoid child marriages that results from poverty. The government should also consider taking action towards the aspect of free education for both primary and secondary education. This therefore, requires the absorption of more resources in the education sector and also works in conjunction with or seeks assistance from other development partners in the area like NGOs.

Provision of more economic opportunities: Poverty has emerged as one of the major factors underpinning early marriages, therefore, the measures to reduce child marriages in apostolic sect should be mainly focused on eradicating poverty as the problem. The government and other development agencies in Zimbabwe and Cowdray Park in particular, should equip the young girls with employable skills that allow them to embark on income generating activities. Efforts to improve access of young girls to economic resources should focus on expanding employment creation and also entrepreneurship opportunities for young girls. Access to information and social support should be of much importance in these programs. Young girls should be allowed to attend workshops that educate them to diversify their opportunities in life even when education cannot be attained, there should be another gap for an economic opportunity to eradicate poverty, hence reducing the chances of child marriage resulting from poverty.

Sponsoring a girl child in the areas that are affected by child marriages can be a long standing way of supporting the unprivileged to break the cycle of poverty that makes most of the population vulnerable to early marriages. Donating a small amount of money each month to girls in Cowdray Park community with charities like Plan International can help combat poverty and make them less vulnerable to child marriages. Through this research, the researcher came to understanding that poverty is also another factor hindering the girl child's education in Cowdray Park. Therefore, this study also suggests that sponsorship can also be a way of paying the school fees for the children

who are not able to pay their school fees. This will therefore, reduce the illiteracy rate of the community and also the girls will have guidance on the bright future of their lives and avoid child marriage and to map their own path in life.

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