

Early Marriage and Academic Performance of Divorcees and Widows of Women Centres in Bauchi State, Nigeria

Halima Sarkinfada Shehu Babayo

Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education and Extension Services Usmanu Danfodiyo
University Sokoto, Nigeria

E-mail of the corresponding author: halimafada@gmail.com

Abstract

The study investigated early marriage and academic performance of widows and divorced students of Women Centres in Bauchi State. Three research questions, objectives, and research hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. A sample of 256 students was drawn from the population of 802 with the aid of Krejcie and Morgan (1971) table for determining sample size. A research instrument titled Academic Performance Test (APT) was used for data collection which was adjudged to possess content validity by teachers in secondary schools that mark WAEC and NECO in Bauchi State with a reliability 'r' index of 0.68 for Mathematics and 0.76 for the English language. The null hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics. Findings revealed that: there is no significant difference between the academic performance of widow and married students of Women Centre Jama'are, Azare, Misau, and Ningi Bauchi State and also there is a significant difference between the academic performance of divorce and married students of Women Centre Jama'are, Azare, Misau and Ningi Bauchi State; It was recommended that parents and husbands should encourage their daughters and wives to go back to school while for Divorcees parents should encourage their daughters to acquire knowledge and skills for self-development in women continuing education

Keywords: Early marriage, widows, divorcees, and academic performance of students

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1. Introduction

Women education is a global priority for UNESCO and is inextricably linked to UNESCO's efforts to promote the right to education and support the achievement of education and literacy (2012) showed that almost two-thirds of the world's 792 million illiterate adults are women. This situation has not changed and the latest projection indicate that this ratio will remain at this level by 2017 (UNESCO Institute of Statistics).

That means the world would miss out on a critical gender disparity which has been highlighted by both the Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Among the obstacles of women education is the ability to access the right to participate in and complete their education, without hindrances from poverty, geographical isolation, minority status, disability, early pregnancy, male dominance, and traditional attitudes. UNESCO (2009) indicated that the discrimination against girls and women exist in all educational institutions. An estimated 35 million girls of primary school age and 37 million girls of lower secondary school age were not enrolled in school in 2009 worldwide. The extent to which girls are disproportionately excluded from education is higher at the secondary level than in primary education and increases further from secondary school levels to tertiary institutions.

Early marriage is a complicated issue that affects the human rights of women across the globe. This issue is considered a violation on a major scale by activists because of its harmful implications. Child marriage is a formal marriage or informal union entered into by an individual before reaching the age of 18 years (United Nations International Children Emergency Fund, 2011). This usually happens through arrangement of parental consent. Early marriages are still fairly widespread in some developing countries, such as parts of Africa, South Asia (United Nations International Children Emergency Fund, 2001), South East and East Asia, West Asia, Latin America, United States and Oceania. The incidence of child marriage has been falling in most parts of the world. The five countries with the highest observed rate of child marriages, below the age of 18, are Niger, Chad, Mali, Bangladesh and Guinea (Adedokun, 2015).

Child marriage is closely associated with no or low levels of schooling for girls. Girls with three or fewer years of schooling are five times more likely than girls with eight or more years of schooling to marry before the age of 18. Poverty leads many families to withdraw their daughters from school and arrange marriages for them at a young age. These girls are denied benefits of education, improved health, lower fertility, and increased economic productivity. A sense of social insecurity has been a cause of child marriages across the world. In Nepal, parents fear likely social stigma if grown-up adult girls (past 18 years) stay at home. Other fear of crime, such as rape, which not only would be traumatic but may lead less acceptance of the girl if she becomes victim of crime (Ahmad, 2011). In other cultures the fear is that an unmarried girl may engage in illicit relationships or elope causing a permanent social blemish to her siblings or that the impoverished family may be unable to find bachelors for

grown-up girls in economic social group. Such fears and social pressures have been proposed as causes that lead to child marriage. Child marriage has lasting consequences on girls, which last beyond adolescence (Human Rights Watch, 2013). Women married in their teens or earlier, struggle with the health effects of getting pregnant too young and too often. Early marriages followed by teen pregnancy also significantly increased birth complications and social isolations. In poor countries, early pregnancy limits or eliminates their education options. These affect their economic independence.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Early marriage contributes to a series of negative consequences both for young girls and the society in which they live. It is a violation of human rights in general and of girl's right in particular, early marriage has profound physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional impacts; cutting off educational and employment opportunities and chances of personal growth. Besides, having a negative impact on girls themselves, the practice of early marriage also has negative consequences on their children, families and society as a whole. United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (2001) argues that it is not only girls that pay for early marriage but also the society as a whole. Population pressure, health care costs and lost opportunities of human development are just a few of the growing burdens that society shoulders because of teenage pregnancies. Early marriage also undermines international efforts to fight against poverty in developing countries. Eze (2011) makes it clear that the widespread practice of child marriage makes it increasingly difficult for families to escape poverty in the developing world, thereby undermining critical international efforts to fight poverty

Young girls are robbed of their youth and required to take on roles for which they are not psychologically or physically prepared for. Many have no choice about the timing of marriage or their partner. Some are coerced into marriage, while others are too young to make an informed decision. In Bauchi State, Premature marriage deprives them of the opportunity for personal development as well as their rights to full reproductive health and wellbeing, education and participation in civil life. Literature identifies many interrelated factors almost similar worldwide with small variations between societies that interact to place a girl child at risk of early marriage. Those factors include among others, search for economic survival, protection of young girls, peer group and family pressure, controlling female behavior and sexuality, wars and civil conflicts, maximization of fertility where infant mortality is very high (The Working Group, 2000).

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To find out the differences in academic performance between widows and married students of Women Centres Jama'are, Azare, Misau and Ningi, Bauchi State.
2. To find out the difference in academic performance between divorcees and married students of Women Centres Jama'are, Jama'are, Azare, Misau and Ningi, Bauchi State.

1.3 Research Questions

The following are the research questions for the study:

1. Is there any difference in academic performance of widows and married students of Women Centres in Jama'are, Azare, Misau and Ningi, Bauchi State?
2. Is there any difference in academic performance of divorcees and married students of Women Centres in Jama'are, Aza,re, Misau and Ningi, Bauchi State?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in academic performance of widows and married students of Women Centres in Jama'are, Azare, Misau, and Ningi, Bauchi State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the academic performance of divorcees and married students of Women Centres in Jama'are, Azare, Misau, and Ningi, Bauchi State.

2.1 Methodology

For the purpose of this study, a descriptive research design of survey type was used. A survey research design is appropriate in the study of heterogeneous or homogenous population using structured instruments. The population for this study comprises of women secondary schools of Jama'are, Azare, Misau and Ningi Emirate Councils, Bauchi State. The justification for using Jama'are, Azare, Misau and Ningi in the study is because there is one women secondary school each in the emirate council of Bauchi State with a total population of 802.

The technique used in selecting four schools out of six women secondary schools in the state was purposive sampling, because of their characteristics that satisfied the interest of the research such as socio-cultural attitude of the students. Krejcie and Morgan table for determining sample size from a given population was used to arrive at 265 as a subject from the total number of 802 for the four women secondary schools across the emirate councils.

Proportionate sampling technique was used in selection of students from each school based on strata because the total population of the sampling size of each school are not the same, therefore, proportionate sampling was used to have equal representative of the population. In order to determine the number of students to represent each of the four selected schools, the total number of students from each school selected divided by the 802 of the total population of four selected schools and then multiply by the sample size (265) which gave 10%. Therefore, 10% of the students from each of the selected schools were drawn to represent schools using proportionate sampling as showing in Table 3 below.

The researcher makes use of simple random sampling technique by writing “Yes” and “No” on folded pieces of papers. All those students that picked “Yes” will be selected to represent students sample of the population, while those that picked “No” will not be selected which indicated that all students sample from each schools will be given equal chance of being selected. This was confirmed by Ayodele, and Adebisi, (2013) that the more restricted part of that group or individuals the better that have one or more characteristics common that are of interest to the researcher to generalize the results appropriately to the entire population.

Table 3: Distribution of sample of the students

S/N	Name of School	N	S
1	Women Secondary School, Jama'are	210	69
2.	Women Secondary School, Azare	230	76
3.	Women Secondary School, Misau	202	67
4.	Women Secondary School, Ningi	160	53
Total		802	265

The instrument used to collect the relevant information from the respondents is Academic Performance Test (APT): A researcher test on academic performance for in English language and mathematics was used in obtaining relevant information. These tests are meant to measure students' academic performance. The subjects (English and Mathematics) were chosen because they are compulsory for each secondary student. The instrument was design based on syllabus of SS I students to enable SS II and SS III students to participate effectively in the study. The results of the test in English and Mathematics were used as their measure of academic performance.

Validity was ascertained through scrutiny of items by teachers in secondary schools that mark WAEC and NECO in Bauchi State for content validation. out of twenty five (25) items given, some items were removed because they are similar to other items in the instrument. Experts were unanimously in agreement that the items possess content validity The reliability of the instrument was obtained by using test re-test measure of reliability method. Twenty (20) items tests in English and Mathematics were administered by the researcher to a set of forty (40) students from Women Secondary School, Bauchi. The students were made to sit for the two tests concurrently. After three (3) weeks, the same group of students sat for a re-test of the same test items in order to ascertain the reliability of the items or otherwise. At the end, the two sets of scores were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and reliability co-efficient of 0.68 was obtained from Mathematics and 0.76 for English Language.

2.2 Procedure for Data Analysis

The collection of data was done in the four selected schools through the use of questionnaire. Before the administration of the instrument, the researcher went through the instruction on the instrument with the respondents and they were encouraged to ask questions before and during the administration.

Paired Sample t-test was used to test hypothesis 1 and 2. Paired t-test is a type of inferential statistics used to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of two groups, which may be related in certain features.

3.1 Result

Hypotheses Testing

This hypothesis was tested by subjecting the students' academic performance scores to a t-test analysis as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Difference in the Academic Performance of Widows and Married Students of the Women Centers.

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Widows	100	45.42	14.415	-.203	.839	H ₀ Accepted
Married	100	45.82	12.617			

(p-value .839 > t-cal value -.203)

This indicates that there was no difference in the academic performance of the widows and the married students in the women centers because the p-value is more than the .05 level of significance. Therefore, H₀ which states that there is no significant difference between academic performance of widows and married students of the women centers was accepted.

H0₂: There is no significant difference between the academic performance of married and divorced students of women centres in Jama'are, Azare, Misau and Ningi, Bauchi State

This hypothesis was tested by subjecting the students' academic performance scores to a t-test analysis as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Difference in the Academic Performance of Married and Divorced Students of the Women Centers.

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Married	98	46.76	10.876	2.508	.014	H ₀ Rejected
Divorced	98	41.21	18.957			

(p-value .014 < t-cal value 2.508)

This indicates that there was difference in the academic performance of the married and the divorced students in the women centers because the *p*-value is less than the .05 level of significance. Therefore, H_{0₂} which states that there is no significant difference between academic performance of married and divorced students of the women centers was rejected.

4.1 Discussion of Finding

This study aimed to examine early marriage and academic performance of female secondary school students of women centres in Bauchi State.

In hypothesis one, the study discovered that there are no significant differences in academic performance between widow and married students in Jama'are, Azare, Misau and ,Ningi, Bauchi State. This is similar with the work of Adamu (2011) where he examined the early marriage and women education in Bauchi State. It was concluded that there is no significant differences in academic performance between married widow students. The result confirmed the finding of Yenagi (2009) that achievement and attainment of better grades have never been ascribed to one singular factor or variable. This is because students' academic performance is a reflection and interplay of various factors which could range from intelligence, age, lack of basic facility, shortage of qualified and good teaching staff, professional guidance and counseling officer, lack of motivation, study habits, parents educational attainment, among others.

Hypothesis two which states that, there is no significant differences in academic performance between married and divorced students of Women Centres Jama'are, Azare, Misau and Ningi Bauchi State was also accepted. This finding is contrary with the work of Mus'ab (2016) that examine the effect of early marriage and academic performance of female students in the North-East Geo-Political Zone, and hence was found that there is significant difference in academic performance between divorced and married students.

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings reported in chapter four as well as the discussions, the conclusion drawn was that, despite the conditions students have been going through, if appropriate measures, that is motivation with conducive learning environment, the students will perform better in their academic achievements. It has also been shown that there is no significant differences in academic performance between widows and married students of women centres in Jama'are, Azare, Misau and Ningi, Bauchi State. There is no significant difference between academic performance of widows and married students of Women Centre Jama'are, Azare, Misau and Ningi Bauchi State and also there is significant difference between academic performance of married and divorce students of Women Centre Jama'are, Azare, Misau and Ningi Bauchi.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

1. Widow and married students attending Women Centres in Jama'are, Azare, Misau and Ningi, Bauchi State do not differ significantly in their academic performance (p-value .839 > t-cal -203).
2. Divorced students and married attending Women Centres in Jama'are, Azare, Misau and Ningi, Bauchi State differ significantly in their academic performance (p-value .014 < t-cal 2.508).

5.3 Recommendations

Considering the study on early marriage and academic performance of students of Women Centres in Jama'are, Azare, Misau and Ningi Bauchi State, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents and husbands should support their girl-child and wives to seek for knowledge. Ar all cost in order to be productive in their families and to promote self-development and self-reliance
2. Parents should encourage their daughters and who are divorced to go back for continuing education centre for their education. This will give them leverage to be more productive that what they were before the divorced. And if a woman is contributing to socio-economic development she might not be divorced.

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