

EARLY MARRIAGES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Amina Rukayat Olaniyi

Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14935813

Abstract

This study investigated the Influence of Early Marriages on Girl-Child Enrollment, Retention and Progression in Secondary Schools in Nigeria. Descriptive survey research was adopted for this study. The target population was the parents in Nigeria. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select five hundred and ninety-nine (599) respondents for the study. Instrument titled Girl-child Enrollment, Retention and Progression Questionnaire (GERP-Q) was used to collect data for the study. The instrument yielded a reliability index value of 0.81. Descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentages, mean score, and standard deviation were used to analyse the research questions while inferential statistical tools such as t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significant. The study revealed that religious beliefs, ignorance, poverty among others were the factors responsible for early marriage of the girl-child in secondary schools in Nigeria. The study further revealed that early marriage has negative influence on girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression. This study therefore recommended that there should be public enlightenment campaign and sensitization to Nigerian parents about the importance of girl - child education. These should include workshops, seminars, posters, handbills, radio and television jingles this effort should be irrespective of gender or location.

Keywords: Early Marriage, Girl-child, Enrollment, Retention and Progression.

INTRODUCTION

The girl-child, and indeed women all over the world especially in Nigeria have had their destiny sealed from birth by tradition and culture on account of their biological sex. They have been called the weaker sex in order to justify societal discrimination and oppression against them. Their natural rights of place in the scheme of things as human beings are not respected. They are short-changed, victimized, and stereotyped (Peters, 2017). The girl-child has become a victim of female trafficking across international borders, being denied education, and consigned to early marriage. They can be seen but not to be heard in both private and the public spaces of decision making. The girl-child by the natural status ascribed to her by male defined norms societal conduct and behaviour remains a property to be owned and commoditized. It is only education that can salvage women from this condition (Rury, 2012).

Education has indeed taken number one priority in our country Nigeria, which the country has to offer the citizens the opportunity at all level to behold such a bedrock in other to be part and parcel of our day-to-day development. This bedrock is what a girl-child is been deprived of due to early marriage (Ottah, 2014). A girl-child should be

seen and properly placed as a human being and indispensably ally and co-traveller in Nigeria and strive towards the actualization and attainment of development agenda. It is indubitable that no meaningful agenda setting and development objectives can be attained in a situation where a girl-child is sidelined and consigned to the kitchen closet without conscious consideration for empowerment through the acquisition of quality education that liberates her.

Education seems to be a pre-requisite for a sustainable development which could lead a country to achieve maximum profitability within and outside the country in Adedeji (2019) who opined that lack of education leads to so many unfortunate events in one's life. Education is an aspect of human endeavor that leads to socialization, Onyekwelu (2017) opined that education can also be seen as a pointer that directs, detects, leads someone in right directions, and equally opens an avenue for problem solving. Moreover, it makes one to acquire and develop high sense of esteem, being able to know his/her personality capacity.

Education is the main source of our democratic way of life, economic, political, social and otherwise. It is the utmost way of achievement in our society enveloping human existence, and at the same time, the most economic investment society can be quilt. Kennedy (2012) Marriage is found in all cultures as a process by which individual select their partners. It is an old institution which regulates the term upon which male and female reproduce according to well defined and acceptable social norms. Marriage also could be described as an institution that legally joins a man and a woman to be one in love, body and soul in other to fulfill an obligatory right.

In the word of Kendall (2017), who opined that marriage is an institution that binds people of different belief, and culture in a form of mutual dependence of each other for the purpose of building a home. UNICEF (2014) stated that marriage could be seen throughout the world as the period of joy and celebration. Marriage from the biblical concept "the union of two people" This is the bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh (Gen 2: 23-24). This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife and they become one flesh.

Education is one of the fundamental human rights which every citizen has a right to have. Although Nigeria has had a national policy on education since 1981, it has not been fully implemented effectively due to poor managerial function, gender disparity. Girl-child is mostly affected by these negative factors due to early marriage (UNICEF, 2014). Early marriage inevitably denies a girl-child the right of education, need for personal growth, development, preparation for adulthood and effective contribution to the future wellbeing of her family and society at large.

It is disheartening to see students of school age hawking and playing on the streets while some are on their way to farm when their peers are in school. Studies, however, have shown poor enrollment and retention in secondary schools in Ebonyi State to support this observation.

This report shows a decreasing trend in students' enrollment and retention in secondary schools. Consequently, students' enrollment tend to reduce as they go higher academically. This depopulates the school and increases

the population of dropout (youths) who might pose a threat to the society due to idleness. In a bid to ascertain factors that may affect students' enrollment, retention and progression in Nigeria, Adeosun (2014) submitted that the social and economic condition in Ebonyi State is more likely to contribute to poor enrollment, retention as well as progression of students in Nigeria.

Poor enrollment and retention in Nigeria are a major educational challenge and it needs urgent attention. Economic, politics and parents are dominant factors considered by many scholars in explaining this educational issue. Parents are in the dilemma of sending or retaining their children in schools due to poor social-economic status among others. Akresh (2008) concluded that enrolling and keeping a child in school irrespective of gender or location involves decision making after considering many variables which include parental beliefs and expectations about the value of education. Parents' perceptions on the relevance of schooling to real life survival needs also influence their decisions on enrollment and retention in schools.

Cultural belief has also been reported as a contributing factor to the falling number of students' enrollment, retention and progression in schools. Some cultures already determine who can access education and who may not. Admassie (2003) admitted that many cultures give preference to the male child being educated over the female child. In some other culture, for example, in the northern part of Nigeria, girls at the age of 13 with the offshoot of breasts are withdrawn from schools and sent to their husband's house. This affects students' enrollment, retention and progression in schools. According to Amadi, Role, and Makewa (2013), there are differences in the perceptions of teachers and students on cultural beliefs, health and pregnancy, as factors contributing to enrollment and retention in schools among other factors.

The removal from school of a young girl to marry early limits her opportunities to develop her intellect. She also loses out on socializing, making friends outside her family circle, and many other useful skills. This reduces her chances of developing her own independent identity. The girl grows up with no sense of the right to assert to her own point of view and little experience in articulating one. Lack of self-esteem or of a sense of ownership of her own body expose a girl-child to unwanted pregnancy and make her vulnerable to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. Lack of schooling also means that girl-child who must work to earn a living has no qualifications or skills, which leads her to a commercialized version of work as cleaners, cooks, child minding and may also lead her to commercial sex trade. It is on the above notion that the researcher seeks to find out the influence of early marriage on girl-child enrollment, retention and progression among senior secondary school students in Nigeria: Implications for Guidance.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the influence of early marriage on girl child enrollment, retention and progression in secondary school in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. find out the factors responsible for early marriage among the girl-child in secondary school in Nigeria.

ii. examine the influence of early marriage on the girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the factors responsible for early marriage among the girl-child in secondary school students in Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of early marriage on the girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression among secondary schools in Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female parents on the influence of early marriage girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in Nigeria.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of urban and rural parents on the influence of early marriage girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

This session deals with the various concepts of the study:

Early Marriage

Child marriage otherwise referred to as early marriage is an ancient tradition and can therefore be defined as any marriage that occurs when the girl is not physically, mentally or physiologically ready to bear the pressures of marriage and child bearing. Scholars have emphasized that the human rights of the girl-child are being violated through early marriage as globally, international bodies recognize 18 years as the legal age of marriage. In furtherance to this, highlights that child marriages are most times carried out without the valid consent of one or two of the parties.

Nigeria, a country blessed with rich human and natural resources, is the most populated country in the sub-Saharan region with an estimated population of about 162.5 million. Of this, about 49% of the populations are females, accounting for roughly 80.2 million of the entire population. This population therefore signifies the economic and societal importance of the female to the country. The African society however places expectation on females to marry and become submissive to their husbands and in some cases drop the personal interest and ambitions. Early marriage impairs the realization and enjoyment of virtually every one of their rights. Early marriage is seen differently by different people. It is relative to people and place.

Marriage which is considered early here might be an ideal age in other part of the world. Onuoha (2019) opined that early marriage is a situation where female children are given away in an unripe age by their parents to enable

their bride price to be used for the education or training of the male children. According to Mavis (2019), early marriage is the type of marriage between two people who are below marriageable age, usually agreed for them by their parents. It is a marriage between young girls and older men. Early marriage is the marriage between spouses when both or the lady spouse is not mature enough to appreciate the essence of marriage. The mostly fundamental right of a girl child to survive, to develop are undermined. She is left out with little or no opportunity to influence her own life (Sadik, 2015).

Factors Responsible for Early Marriages in Nigeria

The following are some of the factors responsible for early marriages:

(i) Religious Belief

Religious beliefs have played a key role in girl-child marriage, as some religious beliefs do not condemn marriage to under aged girls and this has thereby encouraged the perpetuation of such acts. In addition, as a result of religious expectations, parents force their daughters to marry whomever they get pregnant for.

(ii) Traditional Practice

A number of traditional practices contribute to early girl-child marriage for instance, practices such as female genital circumcision (FGC) where part of all of the female genital is removed for cultural reasons. It is believed that the process improves the health of the girl child, hygiene, prospects of marriage and fertility. It is estimated that about 140 million women have gone through the process of FGC.

(iii) Limited Educational Attainment of Parents

Africa is continent that is still developing and as such most countries have a significant population that lack educational qualification and form of training. This therefore exposes them to a lot societal superstitions and misinterpretations of marriage. As a result, this makes them gullible to any superstition or misconceptions that have been passed down from generation to generation regarding early-child marriage. According to 30 the education of parents greatly affects the timing and type of union.

(iv) Ignorance

One of the significant causes of early girl-child marriage is ignorance on the part of the parents. Ignorance in the sense that some parents have the opinion that their daughters are safer when they are married off early so as to prevent sexual attacks and violence.

(v) Financial Uncertainty

Financial uncertainty is a critical contributing factor to early girl-child marriage. In the sense that, where the parents of the child are faced with acute uncertainty of finances, their young girls may be seen as expensive and a burden. This can lead to the parents marrying her off to an older man at a very young age. In traditional African societies, the bride's family may receive cattle from the family of the groom. Furthermore, poor families tend to marry off their girls at the same time with a view to reducing the expenses of marriage ceremonies.

(vi) Family Alliances

Marriage is a union between two families and some parents lure their girl-child's into marriage in order to consolidate family alliances. Some marriages in Africa and Asia are seen as a means of strengthening the relationships between families or settling disputes. According to a report by 25 in some cases the children are betrothed even before birth.

(vii) Cultural Expectation

As a result of cultural expectation, where young girls are lured into early marriages in order to fit into the expectations of their community. Societal expectation pressure parents to allow their girls under the age of 18 years because of prestige. As failure to confirm with these expectations can lead to ridicule and disapproval.

(viii) Kidnapping

The rising case of insecurity in Africa, particularly Nigeria has seen the rise of kidnapping and other criminal vices. This has seen young girls kidnapped on their way to school or at school premises and thereafter forced into marriage by their captives. The case of abduction and eventual forceful marriage and impregnation of some of the Chibok girls in the northern part of Nigeria is a typical example of this.

(ix) Limited or no Access to Health Information Services

This is a serious contributory factor to the continuous practice of early girl-child marriage. This is because parents who engage in this practice are not fully abreast with the consequences of early girl-child marriage on their daughter. These include confinement to household roles, sexual abuse, discontinuation of education, exposure to maternal death, Vesico-Virginal Fistulae and sexually transmitted diseases. According a report by WHO in 2018, adolescent mothers aged between 10 to 19 have a higher likelihood of experiencing eclampsia, systematic infections as well as puerperal endometritis when compared to older mothers.

(x) Fear of Unwanted Pregnancy

Most societies in Africa and Asia frown upon pregnancy prior to marriage. As such, most families seek to marry off their girl child before they get pregnant outside marriage. A report by UNICEF (2014) established that unmarried girls are seen as liability to the honor of the family and in order to guarantee chastity and virginity of the bride they are married off early to avoid dishonoring the family.

(xi) Community Pressure

The pressure girls face as a result of their status in the society contributes in early marriage. A study carried out by the United Nation (2004), established that women are regarded as inferior in African and Asian societies posits that girls are seen as burdens because of the fact that they will eventually get married into another family as such they prefer to educate their boys and marry off their girl child at an early age.

Influence of Early Marriage on Girl Child Education

The school is the most important institution outside the family involved in socializing young people into all dimensions of adult roles and responsibilities. Many years of schooling has been associated with many positive outcomes, including later ages of marriage, lower fertility and healthier and better educated children. (Otoo-Oyotey, 2003). Marriage often means the end of educational development for women. In the case of early marriage, girls may be deprived for vital education needed for their preparation into adulthood, their effective contribution to the future well-being of their family and society, and their capacity to earn and make a living.

The education a girl receives is the strongest predictor of the age she will marry. The most important documented implication of its loss is that girl grows up with hindered sense or no sense at all, of the right to assert her won point of view and little experience, as women are barred from participation in political, economic and cultural decisions making processes. Early marriage has disrupted the chances of a girl child to inherit the goal of equality in education for girls and boys for the universal right to education by the Development goals (MDGs) adopted by the 191 members states of the united Nation in 2000.

Challenges Facing Girl-Child Education in Nigeria.

Girl-child education has for a long time been influenced by a pedagogy of disparities, by way of education that emphasizes on the differences and not the similarities between boys and girls. This style of education places the boys on greater advantage than the girls. The complications of the girl-child education start at home. It is at this level in the community that girls are educated differently from boys. The parents, siblings, relatives and even the neighbours see girls to be completely different from boys. They erroneously believe that, boys are more capable, more responsible and more significant to the society than girls.

Although both girls and boys are brought up together at home and in the community but the girls are forced to grow up differently through this oppressive socialization. They are not given equal opportunities as boys to prove their capabilities. As a result, the girls grow up believing that they are completely inferior to boys just because they are girls. The prevalence of gender bias society will continue to bring set back on girl-child education, as well as social discrimination between girls and boys. The previous studies have provided evident that girl child education suffers from a lot of shortcomings. Some of the constraints facing girl- child education include stereotyped images, negative attitudes of teachers and parents' perception of the value of investing in girl education in African countries and Nigeria in specific, poverty, coupled with traditions beliefs have also adversely affected girl education (Garba, 2014). Poverty at house hold level forces the parents to make choices as to which child to enroll in school. Social, and cultural attitudes of the parents lead to boys getting favored while the girls are discriminated against (Grace, 2010).

The girls are compelled by high poverty level to abandon school because of lack of school fees, in favor of their brothers. Cultural practices such as early marriages and initiation rites practiced by some communities in some

parts of Nigeria expose the girl-child to life styles not conducive to education. The initiation rites and female circumcision make girls to have attitudinal changes, perceiving themselves as adults ready for marriage. They view school as a place for children and therefore they drop out of school immediately after initiation rite. With early and sometimes forced marriage, the girl is compelled to abandon school to take up wifely and parental responsibilities at the expense of her Education.

Another challenge to girl-child education is teenage pregnancy. This has forced many girls to drop out of schools to go and give birth and look after the young one. Unfortunately, there is no clear policy on readmission of the girl back to school after delivery. Only a small number of girls return to school, about 10% in Nigeria. School environment is another hindrance to the girl-child education. The teachers' attitudes and their teaching styles in class situation are sometimes hostile to the girl-child. Most teachers, probably due to their early childhood socialization, pay more attention to the boy students, leaving the girl to feel neglected and unwanted. This has negatively impacted on the girls academic progression (Oke, 2000). The girls are made to believe that they cannot perform as well as the boys, in school and especially in the science subjects. The girls have continued to perform poorly in these subjects because of this belief, some have even dropped out from school. The transition rate for girls from primary to secondary schools in Nigeria is still below that of boys.

Factors Influencing School Enrollment, Retention and Progression

Factors affecting enrollment and retention of students in schools can be studied in the context of the people's livelihoods and survival strategies (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2014). Burgett's (2001) study explained that when school programmes fail to meet students' needs, they might lose interest in the school and in turn, drop out of school. Poverty also, can contribute to fall in enrollment as well as retention in schools. Sirin (2005) reported family economic status as a strong predictor of students' academic outcome and retention in schools. The term poverty has great effect on students' academics as parents lack the required resources to fund their children's education. In his own contribution, Mba (2001) admitted that education and learning may be frustrating for students from poor socio-economic status homes which may lead to them dropping out or not even enrolling in school. He further stressed that good parenting support with strong economic background could enhance students' performance, enrollment and retention in school.

This suggests that students from low social economic backgrounds are likely not to enroll in schools or even drop out of school. Other studies also indicated that parents' level of education has a significant influence on their children's enrollment and retention in schools. Furthermore, drop in students' enrollment to instability of educational policies which has led to decline in educational standards. This was possible through frequent change of ministers, commissioners and political parties with each coming up with different strategies and policies causing disparities in the country's educational practices.

Theoretical Framework

This study will make use of Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1977).

Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1977)

Social learning theory was propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977, emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Social learning theory considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behaviour. In social learning theory, Albert Bandura (1977) agrees with the behaviourist learning theories of classical conditioning and operant conditioning. However, he adds two important ideas: Mediating processes occur between stimuli and responses. Behaviour is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning.

Social Learning Theory is often described as the 'bridge' between traditional learning theory (that is, behaviorism) and the cognitive approach. This is because it focuses on how mental (cognitive) factors are involved in learning. Unlike Skinner, Bandura (1977) believes that humans are active information processors and think about the relationship between their behaviour and its consequences. Observational learning could not occur unless cognitive processes were at work. These mental factors mediate (i.e., intervene) in the learning process to determine whether a new response is acquired. Therefore, individuals do not automatically observe the behaviour of a model and imitate it. There is some thought prior to imitation, and this consideration is called mediational processes. This occurs between observing the behaviour (stimulus) and imitating it or not (response).

This theory provides an intellectual lens in which to view the problem of early marriage of the girl-child highlighted in this study. Social Learning Theory will help teachers understand how marriage affects its victims and how the victims create and modify meaning and the theory will also help teachers understand how parents perceive school and education of the girl-child on the various influence of early marriage on school enrollment, retention and progression.

Research Design

The design adopted for this study is descriptive survey research design. This is a research method that describes a given state of affairs at a particular time (Afu, Oguiche, Usman and Gimba, 2023). This research design permits the gathering of information through the use of questionnaire from a population based on appropriate sampling techniques. Also, descriptive survey research was considered suitable since it would solicit for information or responses from the respondents on the problem under investigation. It was on this basis that the researcher decided to use descriptive survey design.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised of all parents in Nigeria. Not able ascertain the exact population of parents in Nigeria, the population was put at infinity because the population is unknown.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The sample size of five hundred and ninety-nine (599) parents were randomly stratified and selected from the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria that constituted the study area to ensure even spread. The sample technique for this research was stratified random sampling where the respondents were selected principally because of the status as parents. They were stratified and randomly selected based on gender and location as they were available during the period of the administration of the instrument for this research.

Instrumentation

The instrument used during the study was researchers structured instrument titled: Girl - Child Enrollment, Retention and Progression Questionnaire (GERP-Q). The (GERP-Q) was a 17 - items questionnaire designed along a modified 4-point Likert scale to elicit the opinion of respondents with respect to the topic under study.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to validations to ascertain the content and face and constructive validity by two experts from the Department of Guidance and Counselling and Department of Educational Foundations in the Faculty of Education, University of Abuja. Where wrong sentence constructions, spellings, omissions, arrangements of materials and so on, were done to ensure the instrument was valid for the study.

To ensure the reliability of the instrument, the researchers conducted a pilot test using ten (10) parents in FCT, Abuja. Who were not part the main sample for the research. The test-retest method of reliability was conducted where responses from two separate administrations (after an interval of two weeks) were correlated. Using the method of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) and came up with an index of 0.81 which indicated that the instrument was reliable for the study.

Data Collection Procedure

The researchers used thirty research assistants who were adequately briefed on their expected roles and especially to the parents who could not read, the research assistants explained each of the statements and indicate by filing their responses accordingly. Those who could read were given the instrument and collected back after filling and tabulated ready for statistical analyses.

Method of Data Analysis

In order to facilitate the organization, analysis and interpretation of the data, the researcher employed the use of frequency counts, percentages, mean scores and standard deviation for analysis of demographics data and research questions. The mean rating of the response was that response with a mean of 2.50 or above was considered agreed and response that had a mean score of less than 2.50 was considered disagreed. Meanwhile strongly agreed and agreed responses were considered as agreed while disagree and strongly disagreed responses were considered disagreed. t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Demographic Data

In this section, data on gender and location were analysed.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents based on Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	294	49.08
Female	305	50.92
Total	599	100.00

Table 1 showed the distribution of respondents based on gender. The number of male respondents were 294 representing (49.08 %) while the female counterparts were 305 representing (50.92%). This means that there were more female than male participants in the study.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents based on Location

Location	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Rural	311	51.92
Urban	288	48.08
Total	599	100.00

Table 2 showed the distribution of respondents based on location. The number of rural respondents were 311 representing (51.92 %) while the urban counterparts were 288 representing (48.08%). This means that there were more rural participants than urban participants in the study.

Data Analyses and Results

This section contains data on the research questions answered in this study.

Research Question One: What are factors responsible for early marriage of the girlchild in secondary school in Nigeria?

Table 3: Factors Responsible for Early Marriage of the Girl-child.

N=599

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
3	Religious belief causes early marriages	2.75	0.66	Agreed
4	Traditional practices contribute to early girl-child marriage for instance, practices such as female genital circumcision	2.68	0.54	Agreed
5	Limited educational attainment of parents causes early marriages	2.81	0.70	Agreed

Journal of Human Resource and Organizational Behavior

Research Article

6	Poverty causes early marriages	2.99	0.54	Agreed
7	Ignorance causes early marriages	3.82	0.39	Agreed
	Sectional Mean	3.01	0.57	Agreed

Table 3 showed the factors responsible for early marriage of the girl-child in secondary school in Nigeria. The respondents agreed in all items. The sectional mean score of respondents of 3.01 showed that all the above mentioned in table 3 are the major factors responsible for early marriage of the girl-child in secondary school in Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What is the influence of early marriage on the girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in secondary schools in Nigeria?

Table 4: Influence of early marriage on the girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression among secondary schools in Nigeria. N=599

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
8	Early marriage truncates the girl-child education	4.47	0.55	Agreed
9	Early marriage can lead to preproduction of poverty from one generation to another	2.74	0.67	Agreed
10	Early marriage leads to school dropout	2.58	0.63	Agreed
11	Early marriage leads to illegal abortions	4.45	0.56	Agreed
12	Early marriage leads to child abandonment	4.47	0.69	Agreed
13	Early marriage leads to increasing number of adolescent prostitutions	2.59	0.45	Agreed
14	Early marriage leads to early breakages of marriages	2.56	0.67	Agreed
	Sectional Mean	3.41	0.60	Agreed

Table 4 showed influence of early marriage on the girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in secondary schools in Nigeria. The respondents agreed in all items. The sectional mean score of respondents which is 3.41 showed that parents agreed that early marriage has negative influence on girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Test of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 significant level.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between male and female parents on the influence of early marriage on girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Table 5: t-test on the difference between male and female parents on the influence of early marriage on girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Variables	Number	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig(2tailed)	Decision
Male	294	3.39	0.62	.241	597	.004	Significant
Female	305	3.43	0.58				

The analysis in Table 5 was carried out to test the difference between male and female parents on the influence of early marriage on girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in secondary schools in Nigeria. With a significant value of 0.005 (less than the 0.05 level of significance), the hypothesis that says there is no significant difference between male and female parents on the influence of early marriage on girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in secondary schools in Nigeria was rejected and concluded that male and female respondents differ significantly on the influence of early marriage on girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in secondary schools in Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between parents on the influence of early marriage on girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Table 6: t-test on the difference between male and female parents on the influence of early marriage on girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Variables	Number	Mean	SD	t-value	df	Sig(2tailed)	Decision
Rural	311	3.42	.63	.442	597	.002	Significant
Urban	288	3.40	.57				

The analysis in Table 6 was carried out to test the difference between parents from rural and urban areas on the influence of early marriage on girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in secondary schools in Nigeria. With a significant value of 0.002 (less than the 0.05 level of significance), the hypothesis that says there is no significant difference between parents on the influence of early marriage on girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in secondary schools in Nigeria based on location was rejected and concluded that rural and urban parents differ significantly on the influence of early marriage on girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Summary of Findings

The following findings have been made in this study.

1. The study discovered that poverty, ignorance, religious belief among others were some of the factors responsible for early marriages among secondary school student's girl-child to be precise.
2. The study revealed that early marriage has negative influence on girl-child school enrollment, retention and progression in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this work, the researcher hereby recommends that;

1. The study recommended that there should be public enlightenment campaign and sensitization to the factors responsible for early marriages among secondary school students in order to bring the occurrence to the barest minimum. These should include workshops, seminars, posters, handbills, radio and television jingles this effort should be irrespective of gender or location.
2. The study also recommended that government at the three tiers should intensify and continue to campaign for enrolment, retention and progression of the girl - child in school.

REFERENCES

- Adedeji (2017). Early school leaving in Africa (ESLA) from Social Exclusion To Active Citizenship. African Journal of Business and Economic Development | ISSN: 2782-7658 Vol. 3, Issue 1 (January, 2023) | www.ijaar.org/ajbed
- Ajako, S. (2015). parents' attitude towards teenage marriage in Okene Kogi state, Nigeria. A research work in Kogi State University. African Journal of Business and Economic Development | ISSN: 2782-7658 Vol. 3, Issue 1 (January, 2023) | www.ijaar.org/ajbed.
- Adeosun, A. F. (2015). Factors affecting school enrolment in Kwara State. Journal of Educational Discipline, 3(4), 34-42.
- Afu, O.M., Oguche, T.E., Sammani, Z.U. & Baba, G. (2023). Relationship Between Insecurity, Depression and Students Academic Achievement in Nigeria: Implication for Guidance. International Journal of Education and National Development, 1(3), 54-74
- Akresh, R. (2008). School Enrolment Impacts of Non-traditional Household Structure, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.

- Admassie, A. (2003). Child labour and schooling in the context of a subsistence rural economy: Can they be compatible? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 23 (2), 167- 185.
- Amadi, M.A., Role, E., & Makewa, L. N. (2013). Girl Child Dropout: Experiential Teacher and Student Perceptions. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(5), 124-131.
- Burgett, A.W (2001). *The Schools Have Failed Us*: New York: Voltage Press.
- Garba, J. A. (2014). Factors Militating Against the Enrolment and Retention of Girl- Child Students in Junior Secondary Schools in Kaduna State. Thesis Submitted to Department of Educational Foundation and Curriculum, Ahmadu Bello University, 93 Zaria in Partial Fulfillment of the requirement for the Award of the master's degree in education.
- Grace, E.T. (2010). Girls Child Education: Rising to challenge. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 14(3): 107.
- Kendall, J. (2016). Education-based interventions delay and prevent on Girl-child. *The Educational Psychologist* Vol. 12 No.1
- Mavis, L. (2019). *African Marriage and Social Change*. Enugu: Acena Publishers.
- Oke, M. (2000). Gender gap and access to secondary school science education: The way forward. *WAEC Monthly Seminar Paper*, 2:103-113.
- Onuoha, D.N. (2012). *Early Marriage and Female Education* Nsukka: Cape Publishers International Ltd.
- Onyekwelu, M. (2015). *Youth Empowerment: Solutions to the problems of youth*. Enugu: MacMena & Rose International Ltd. Fred Publisher.
- Otoo-oyortey, N. Pobi, S. (2013). *Early Marriage and Poverty: Exploring Links for Policy and Program Development*. International Planned Parenthood Federation.
- Ottah, E. (2014). Problem of Early Marriage on the Education of Girl Child in Ebonyi State. *International Journal of Educational Psychologist* Vol. 6 No.1.

Peters, R. (2017). Ethics and Foundation of Education. London: Rutledge and Kegan Paul.

Rury, J. L. (2012). Education and Social Change. Themes in the History of American Schooling. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associate. Publishers.

UNICEF (2014). Early Marriage: A Harmful Traditional Practice. United Kingdom: London Publishers. United Nation. The Millennium Development Goals Report. New York Retrieved.