

DETERMINANTS OF CHILD MARRIAGES IN CHAMILALA WARD OF NYIMBA
DISTRICT, ZAMBIA.

By

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A Dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia in Partial Fulfilment for the Requirements
for the Award of the Master Degree of Public Health

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DECLARATIONS

I **Ireen Nomalanga Nyambe** do hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work, and that it has been gathered and utilized specifically for the purposes and objectives of this study and has not been previously submitted to any other university in the world for similar purposes. All the sources of previously published work referred to in this work have been acknowledged.

Signature: Date:

APPROVAL

This dissertation by Ireen Nomalanga Nyambe is approved as a partial fulfillment of the requirement of the award of the Degree of Master of Public Health by the University of Zambia.

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ABSTRACT

Child marriages are increasingly becoming high and it seems that the strategies used to end child marriages are ineffective yet resources are increasingly being spent. Child marriages affect the improvement of livelihoods among the people especially those in the rural communities. Furthermore it compromises the effectiveness of the foreign aid on which ending child marriages promotions and campaigns depend on. Ultimately, initiatives such as ending child marriages will not bring about improved sustainable livelihoods and standards of living, and reduction in poverty at large. Thus this study sought to identify and investigate the determinants that lead to child marriages and options for reducing child marriages in Chamilala ward of Nyimba district.

A mixed-method research design was used in this study to collect the needed data. The study targeted a population of 796 households of Chamilala ward of Nyimba district from which a sample size of 77 was drawn from the population using random sampling procedure. Further the study used purposive sampling to select key informants and focus group discussants. Descriptive statistics using percentages was used to analyze quantitative data and thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. The study found that the most affected families with child marriages are the poor families, single/widowed, orphaned homes, grand parented homes and those whose household heads were illiterate. The respondents' perception on child marriages was that it was wide spread and worrying to the community members. The study showed that initiation ceremonies such as *kulanga ndola*, *cinamwali* and *cisungu* are the most influencing cultures to child marriages and the most affected age cohort in child marriages was the 15-17 years old. Research results further showed that immorality (29 percent), education challenges (17 percent), forced marriages (12 percent), poverty (21 percent), peer pressure (14 percent) and child mistreatment (7 percent) were the main determinants of child marriages in the study area. Lack of decision making (14 percent), marital violence (18 percent), health complications (44 percent) and financial challenges (24 percent) were some of the risks or dangers of child marriages that were identified in this study.

It was identified that the community react to child marriages by reporting to the police (victim support unit), traditional leaders and the one stop center (Gender Based Violence Unit) while others did nothing about it for fear of being bewitched by the involved families. Some of the identified opportunities as preventive measures to child marriages were law enforcement (36 percent), community awareness (22 percent) and girls' education (42 percent). The study therefore concluded that child marriages were really a challenge in the study area and that it was imperative that all stakeholders be involved to help in reducing child marriages in the rural areas.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late mother Margret Ozia Moyo; who was my inspiration for my hard work, my loving and caring husband Wiseman Nakaale and my daughter Lutangalo Nakaale for their patience and endless support during my period of study. And finally to my family and to the Mighty God above.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

UN.....	United Nations
UNICEF.....	United Nations Children’s Fund
UK.....	United Kingdom
USAID.....	United States Agency for International Development
CSO.....	Central Statistical Office
HIV.....	Human Immune deficiency Virus
AIDS.....	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
UNFP.....	United Nations Population Funds
WHO.....	World Health Organization
ICRW.....	International Centre for Research on Women
ACRWC.....	African Charter on the rights and Welfare of Children
ZDHS.....	Zambia Demographic and Health Survey
IDP.....	Integrated Development Plan

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Marriage is a social institution that unites people in a special form of mutual dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family. As a social practice entered into through a public act, religious or traditional ceremony, it reflects the purposes, character and customs of the society in which it is found. According to Article 266 of the Zambian a child is a person who has attained, or is below, the age of 18 years. Child marriage is the marriage of children and adolescents below the age of 18 years (Ruth, 2014). On the other hand UNICEF (2021) defined child marriage as any legal or customary union involving a girl, boy, young woman or young man below the age of 18, while teenage pregnancy is defined as pregnancy before the age of 20. The two issues are complexly interrelated and have common causes and consequences. Many societies have norms that limit the age of young girls to enter marriage, but in some cases the age limit does not take into consideration their physiological readiness for childbearing which has led to many deaths of young girls when giving birth. Child marriage often takes place at ages much earlier than the legally ratified minimum age.

Zambia has a population of 19,665,764 people, of which approximately 46% live in urban areas and nearly 88% live below the poverty line (CSO, 2022). Poverty, gender inequality, cultural customs and traditions; lack of education and economic opportunities; and lack of access to sexual reproductive health (SRH) information and services have been identified as contributing factors to the prevalence of child marriage and teenage pregnancy (CSO, 2014). Kohno et al., (2020) indicated that, child marriage put teenagers at risk because they are not fully physically developed to care for pregnancy and that child marriage also denies girls the right to enjoy their childhood, the right to education as most of them drop out of school and the right to a husband of their own choice and of her age. Basically, child marriages not only pose greater health risks for the young mother and the baby, but it also violates the girls right to make her own choice as some customs do not allow the women to make decisions in a home. The determinants of child marriage vary greatly depending on socioeconomic status, region and culture (Kohno et al., 2020). UNICEF (2018) reported a reduction in the global prevalence of child marriage in the last decade that was

largely driven by prevention and care interventions in South Asia despite the highest levels of child marriage being found in Sub-Saharan Africa (38%), with Niger reporting a prevalence as high as 76%, followed by South Asia (30%) and Latin America (25%). However, 12 million girls per year still get married before the age of 18 worldwide and approximately 650 million women were married as children (Nakayama, 2020).

The Zambian Government (2015) through the Ministry of Gender came up with the National Strategy which aimed at accelerating national efforts to end child marriage by 2030 by providing an operational framework that reflects the current national and global trends. According to GRZ (2015) the increase in child marriage reports negatively affect the overall campaign of the National Strategy which was well aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals that seek to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriages. Child marriage is a recurring problem which needs to be addressed to ensure that all children can grow up in a safe environment and have access to health care and develop themselves to their full potential and the country cannot fulfill its commitment towards the reduction of poverty unless it also tackles child marriage (Gillian, 2015). It is therefore imperative that determinants of child marriage in Chamilala area in Nyimba district be assessed.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing interest, advocacy, enactment of laws and funding by Government and different Non-Governmental Organizations to ending child marriages, there is existence of child marriages in Nyimba's Chamilala ward. Child marriages are increasingly becoming high and it seems that the strategies used to end child marriages are ineffective yet resources are increasingly being spent. The prevalence rate of child marriages in Chamilala ward stands at (55.4%) which is the highest as compared to other wards in the same district such as Chinambi (42.9%), Chinsimbwe (34.1%) and Chiweza which records (45%) (Zamstarts, 2019). Child marriages affect the improvement of livelihoods among the people especially those in the rural communities. Furthermore it compromises the effectiveness of the foreign aid on which ending child marriages promotions and campaigns depend on. Ultimately, initiatives such as ending child marriages will not bring about improved sustainable livelihoods and standards of living, and reduction in poverty at large. It is thus important to identify and investigate the factors that lead to child marriages and options for reducing child marriages in Chamilala ward of Nyimba district. A number of studies

have been undertaken to assess child marriages but few have been done on the determinants that lead child marriages. Thus this study adds to the few studies investigating child marriages among the rural communities.

1.3 Aim

To establish determinants of child marriages in Chamilala ward of Nyimba District.

1.4 Research Objectives and Questions

1.4.1 Research objectives

1. To identify the determinants of child marriages.
2. To explore the opportunities for addressing the challenges faced by the rural community members that lead to child marriages in the study area.

1.4.2 Research questions

- (i) What are the prevalence rates of child marriages in the study area?
- (ii) What socio-economic determinants contribute to child marriages?
- (iii) What are the effects of child marriages to the young brides?
- (iv) What are the options for reducing child marriages in the study area?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to provide stakeholders and government with a wider evidence base with which to develop more effective prevention and response interventions, targeted towards ending child marriage in Zambia by 2030. The results of the study are also aimed at contributing information for decision makers to assure a healthy and productive nation for future development. Further, the findings of this study will contribute to the knowledge gap and establish ways that may help to reduce child marriage.

1.6 Scope of the Study

1.6.1 Limitations

- Time was limited coupled with the Corona Virus pandemic which restricted movements hence only a small sample was considered; and

- Financial resources were limited to cover a wider area or extend the research to all the ten (10) Provinces of Zambia.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

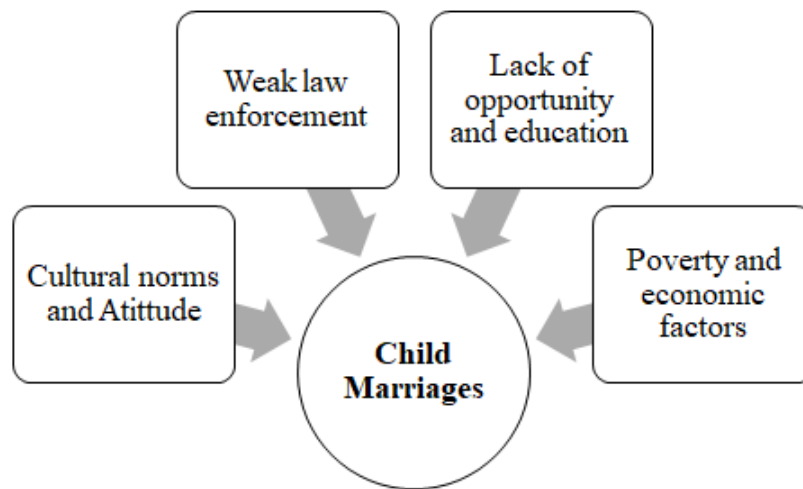


Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework for the study

Source: Field data, 2022

The conceptual framework presents a simplified set of four factors associated with child marriage. Each individual circle represents a core underlying factor causing child marriage, with cultural norms and attitude, relaxed law, lack of opportunity as well as poverty and economic factors as briefly explained below.

1.7.1 Poverty and economic factors

Numerous studies have found an association between household socioeconomic status and child marriage with poverty closely linked to lower age at marriage. Although this relationship is fairly consistent, the poorest girls are at the highest risk of child marriage in almost every country where the practice is prevalent (Faroque, 2017). Child marriage might be an economic strategy to reduce the financial burden on families of caring for or educating daughters, especially in communities with limited opportunities for female labour force participation. Girls may choose to marry when their parents are unable to provide for them at home, or to support them in continuing in school (Bajracharya, 2012).

1.7.2 Lack of opportunity and Education

Some girls and their families may see marriage as the only viable pathway in settings where opportunities for continued schooling, labour force participation, or other valued roles are limited. In most cases as shown in the studies done in sub-Saharan Africa (Kenya, Senegal, Uganda and Zambia) if parents to the children lack quality education the same shall be to the daughter because evidence shows that access to schooling has the potential to delay marriage for girls (Petroni et al., 2017). Lack of job opportunities for the girls especially for those acquiring academic skills during and after school reinforces marriage as the only viable pathway even when the cost of education is minimal (Jones et al., 2014).

1.7.3 Social Norms and Attitudes

A fair amount of attention has been paid in the theoretical and empirical literature to the effects of social norms, especially gender norms, as drivers of child marriage. As Greene and Stiefvater (2019) point out, social norms connected with child marriage cover a range of domains, including the transition to adulthood, sexuality, age hierarchies, religious beliefs, gender inequality, and women's and men's economic roles. Social norms may create pressure to marry despite household preferences, or they may be aligned with parents' or girls' attitudes in support of child marriage and may also be closely connected to other drivers of child marriage, such as lack of opportunity or agency and fear of pregnancy (Petroni et al., 2017).

1.7.4 Weak Law Enforcement

Even where strong legal frameworks exist, implementation and enforcement are often weak, and the reasons vary from one context to another (Malhotra et al., 2016). Programme and advocacy initiatives, such as the Global Programme, Girls Not Brides, and the SADC Model Law also recognize the challenges of implementing laws, as such, they emphasize that law enforcement and the severity of the punishment should complement and support, rather than undermine, community-based efforts to promote changes in ending child marriages (Girls Not Brides, 2017).

1.8 Operational Definitions

Child marriage: is the legal marriage or informal union before the age of 18. In this study child marriage was categorized into (1) Married and (2) Not married

Cultural norms: defined as shared beliefs, or values and human behaviours that support these values within a given society, such as the standard of conduct that are met with social approval or disapproval. In this study cultural norms were categorized into (1) initiation ceremonies /cultural training and (2) No initiation ceremonies /cultural training

Weak law Enforcement: defined as reduction in the strictness of the rules. In this study relaxed law was defined as any action taken after child marriage (1) Yeas (2) No

Poverty: limited access to quality healthcare and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, lack of income, inadequate physical security, lack of voice and opportunity to better one's life.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Global Trends

Niger has the highest rate of child marriages in the world where 3 in 4 girls marry before their 18th birthday with the region of Diffa having the highest rates of 89 percent of girls marrying as children (UNICEF / UNFPA, 2017). The prevalence of child marriages in Niger has been linked to poverty, an increase in social status for both girls and their parents after marriage and the fear of dishonour from pregnancy outside of marriage (Canter for Reproductive Rights, 2016; UNICEF / UNFPA, 2017). The United Nations and other international agencies declared that child marriage violates human rights and children's rights (Groot et al., 2018). According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) individuals must enter marriage freely with full consent and must be at full age. In 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women stated that child marriage is illegal.

Many countries passed laws changing the legal age of marriage to 18 years, but enforcement of these laws, and of laws requiring marriages to be registered, is weak (Nour, 2006). For example, although the legal age of marriage is 18 years, in Mali 65 percent of girls are married at a younger age; in Mozambique, it is 57 percent; and in India, it is 50 percent (Bruce, 2003). Bruce (2003) further revealed that in some parts of Ethiopia, although the legal age of marriage is 15 years, 50 percent of younger girls are married, and in Mali, 39 percent of young girls are married while, in some regions, an arranged marriage occurs at birth (Bruce, 2003). Child marriage threatens children's well-being and constitutes multiple violations of their rights. In numerous contexts around the world, the practice has been shown to have profound physical, intellectual, psychological, and emotional impacts, especially for girls. Globally according to UNICEF (2018) children most affected by child marriage are those who are poor, live in rural areas, and are out of school and without opportunities for labour force participation. Girls are significantly more likely than boys to be married off before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2018).

According to David and Hotchkiss (2016) the practice of child marriage among the Roma settlement dwellers was found to be most common among girls who lived in poorer households,

had less education, and lived in rural locations. Further, David and Hotchkiss (2016) showed that among girls in the general population, decisions about child marriage and school attendance are inter-dependent in that common unobserved factors were found to influence both decisions. However, among girls living in Roma settlements, there is only weak evidence of simultaneous decision making. A study by Kohno et al., (2020) revealed that human insecurity and conflict, legal issues, family values and circumstances, religious beliefs, individual circumstances, beliefs, and knowledge, and social norms were among the main themes for contributing to child marriages in most communities. The findings by Kohno et al., (2020) further highlighted the impact of human insecurity and conflict, as well as legal issues as major factors in spite of global progress scaling up legislation against child marriages; the legal framework is insufficiently enforced in many settings.

An analysis of both quantitative and qualitative study in Bangladesh by Hoque and Rashid (2020) revealed that the practice of child marriage is extensive and common among the households having financial difficulties. Male stokers' underhand manner, likelihood of daughters' involvement in illegitimate relationship and eloping and premarital pregnancy compel parents to encourage child marriages (Hoque and Rashid, 2020; Kohno et al., 2020). Further, Hoque and Rashid (2020) highlighted that poverty and ignorance of the parents/ guardians about the consequence of child marriage, less access to sexual and reproductive health services and prevailing social norms of marriage were the main reasons for child marriage.

2.2 Regional/Sub-Sahara

Africa, home to 15 of the 20 countries with the highest rates of child marriage, has the second highest rates of child marriage in the world after South Asia (UNFPA, 2017). On the other hand UNICEF (2017) showed that West and Central Africa in particular follow closely on the heels of South Asia with two out of five (41 percent) girls marrying before the age of 18. In an effort to reverse these global and regional trends, a number of countries around the world have embarked on programmes and strategies to address child marriage. The United Kingdom is prominent in supporting global efforts to end child marriage, as demonstrated by the hosting of the first ever Global Girls Summit which took place in London in 2014 (Girls Not Brides, 2017). The African Union is leading the Continental Campaign on ending child marriage, having launched the

campaign in 2014; and co-hosting with Zambia, the first African Girls Summit which was held in Lusaka in November 2015. Furthermore, a global commitment to ending harmful practices including child marriage was made at the United Nations in September 2015 with the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (Canter for Reproductive Rights, 2016; UNICEF / UNFPA, 2017).

Despite the increasing global attention and commitments by countries to end the harmful practice of child marriage, each year some 15 million girls marry before the age of 18 (Steinhaus et al., 2016). Far less attention has been paid to child marriage in sub-Saharan Africa, where prevalence rates remain high (Petroni 2017). A research by Steinhaus et al., (2016) in Kenya and Zambia echoes the existing literature base in affirming that child marriage is rooted in inequitable gender norms that prioritize women's roles as wives, mothers, and household caretakers, resulting in inadequate investments by families in girls' education. These discriminatory norms interact closely with poverty and a lack of employment opportunities for girls and young women to perpetuate marriage as a seemingly a viable alternative for girls (Steinhaus et al., 2016). UNICEF (2021) showed that in Africa sexual relations, unplanned pregnancy, and school dropout often precede child marriage, which differs from much of the existing evidence on child marriage from South Asia. Unlike in South Asia, where family members typically determine the spouse a girl will marry, most girls in the Africa study settings have greater autonomy in partner choice selection (Steinhaus et al., 2016; UNICEF, 2021).

In Senegal, increasing educational attainment and labour migration, particularly by young women, has contributed to reduced rates of child marriage for girls (Petroni et al., 2017). The by Petroni et al., (2017) suggested that improving gender equitable norms and providing more and more equitable opportunities for girls, particularly with regard to education and employment, were likely to improve child marriage outcomes. Providing comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly reproductive health services can reduce rates of early pregnancy that contribute to child marriage (UNICEF, 2018). Identifying ways in which to improve communication between parents and adolescent daughters could go far in ensuring that girls feel valued and that parents feel heard as they make decisions together regarding the lives and opportunities of these adolescent girls. (Petroni et al., 2017; UNICEF, 2018)

The three main identified forces that drive child marriages are poverty, the need to reinforce social ties, and the belief that it offers protection (UNICEF, 2021). Child marriage is predominantly seen in areas of poverty. Bruce and Clark (2003) noted that child marriages are increasing because parents are faced with two economic incentives which are to ensure their daughter's financial security and to reduce the economic burden daughters place on the family. Child marriage is first and foremost a product of sheer economic need as noted by Nour (2006). Workineh et al., (2015) revealed that parents argued that girls were costly to feed, clothe, and educate, and they eventually leave the household. Marriage brings a dowry to the bride's family and the younger the girl, the higher the dowry, and the sooner the economic burden of raising the girl is lifted (Nour, 2006; Workineh et al., 2015). By marrying their daughter to a "good" family, parents also establish social ties between tribes or clans and improve their social status (Bruce and Clark, 2003). Parents also believe that marrying their daughters' young protects them from rape, premarital sexual activity, unintended pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections, especially human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and AIDS (Nour, 2006).

2.3 Trends in Zambia

Although child marriage in Zambia has declined from 41.6 percent to 31.4 percent among women aged 20–24 who reported being married before they were 18 years old, it is still among the highest in the world (UNFPA, 2017). The rates of child marriage vary from one region to another, and are as high as 60 percent in the country's Eastern Region, and as low as 28 percent in the capital of Lusaka (UNFPA, 2017). With these figures, Zambia is among the top twenty countries with the highest prevalence rate of child marriage in the world. The 2013-2014 Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS) (2014) found that child marriage was more common among girls than boys: 17 percent of girls aged 15-19 are married compared to only 1 percent of boys of the same age group. The practice disproportionately affects, and has affected Zambian females, as 42 percent of women aged 20-49 report having married before age 18, compared to 4.2 percent of men (ZDHS, 2014). The practice however, seems to be on the decline, as older generations are more likely to report a younger age of first marriage: 13.2 percent of women aged 45-49 were married before age 15 (and 53.7 percent before age 18) compared to 5.9 percent (and 31.4 percent) of women aged 20-24 (Imbuwa, 2015). Overall, there has been a 25 percent decline in the percentage of women

20-24 who report being married before the age of 18 since 2007, highlighting significant progress nationally in changing the prevailing practice (Kauseni, 2018).

On 1st October 2018, the Zambian Republican First Lady Mrs. Esther Lungu, also stressed that child marriage in Zambia was at 31 percent which meant that the girl who got married was confined to the four walls of the household. Girls Not Brides (2017) strongly argue that a lack of attention to child marriage undermined the achievement of six of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) between 2000 and 2015. It is also argued that child marriage is a core development and human rights issue, which hinders the achievement of many other development goals (UNICEF, 2021). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which define global development priorities between now and 2030 include targets to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations (Imbuwa, 2015). Kauseni (2018) argued that half of the SDGs will not be achieved without significant progress on child marriage, including those related to poverty, health, education, nutrition, food security, economic growth and reduction of inequality, and other manifestations of gender inequality.

According to CSO (2012) there has been little to no change in the national prevalence rate since 2002 and that the practice is most common in Eastern Province (60 percent), followed by Luapula (50 percent), Northern (48 percent), North-Western (47 percent), Central (46 percent), Southern (38 percent), Western (34 percent), Copperbelt (32 percent) and Lusaka (28 percent). These marked differences in prevalence by area of residence suggest that more information is needed on how the social, historic and economic reality in which children and families they live influences or mitigates decisions related to child marriage.

The consequences of child marriage and teenage pregnancy are interrelated. In Zambia, it is estimated that 38 mothers die each month due to pregnancy and/or childbirth complications, which are more common among teenage mothers (CSO, 2014). In addition, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS are prevalent among young women who married under the age of 18, as some of them are married to older men who can enter the marriage already infected. Moreover, young brides are expected to have children soon after marriage, which interrupts efforts to reduce STI transmission through the use of condoms (Vu, 2009). According to Mutati (2008)'s research in Zambia children and families were aware of negative aspects of child marriage and

teenage pregnancy. Despite that awareness, studies show that decisions on marriage and family planning are made, based on potential positive outcomes and knowing about potential negative outcomes (CSO, 2014). These decisions are influenced by the family and community leaders. Perceived benefits of child marriage include economic gains, improvement of the living conditions and enhanced social status. Child marriage is seen as a rural phenomenon where often the customary law is followed, under which the age for marriage is after puberty, what is called the tender age.

Timing of conception, age at first sex, region of residence, education level of respondent and their partners, and family size were significant predictors of child marriages in urban areas (Mulenga, 2018). On the other hand Mulenga (2018) showed that in rural areas, region of residence, age at first sex, education level of respondent and their partners, and family size had significant influence on child marriages and that women who got married below the age of 18 preferred a higher number of children. Zambia however does not have a law that has two separate marriage ages for girls and boys even though the practice is to have an older man marry a younger girl or woman. Poverty and girls' inadequate access to education are identified as a contributing factor to child marriage in Zambia. A multitude of issues created by early marriage are increasingly associated with poverty and illiteracy. UNICEF (2019) showed that poverty and illiteracy are the main causes for early marriage and its continuance. Globally, early marriage and early childbearing have been more or less abandoned by the wealthiest section of society, even in poor and highly traditional countries (UNICEF, 2017). Virtually, everywhere, poor women in rural areas tend to marry younger than those in urban areas and educational levels also play a critical role.

Another factor attributed to child marriage in Zambia is inadequate legal provisions that prohibit child marriages. The various laws relating to children and/or marriage in Zambia do not expressly prohibit the practice of child marriage in Zambia. This is more so that most child marriages are contracted under customary practices and law whereas the Marriage Act which invalidates any marriage between persons either of whom is below the age of 16 years only applies to statutory marriages. Where a law would apply to a customary marriage, there is lack of enforcement which triggers the practice to alarming levels (Mulenga, 2018).

Young Women Christian Association World (YWCA) (2013) submits, in their Child Early and Forced Marriages fact sheet that child marriage has serious consequences for the health of girls, such as poorer pregnancy prognosis, higher risk of HIV infection, obstetric fistula, unsafe abortions, and a higher risk of suffering from domestic and sexual abuse than non-married girls or older married women. Walker (2012), states that child marriage has negative consequences in the life of boys and especially girls as the practice of child marriage has a harmful effect because girls who married before the age of 18 experience 'early sexual debut,' give birth to more children and loose more children to Neo-natal and childhood diseases. Therefore, the overall campaign in the national strategy on ending child marriage in Zambia (2016–2021) are well aligned to the SDGs, which under goal 5 seeks to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriages and the campaign to end child marriage in Zambia was started following a cabinet directive and subsequently launched in 2013 to address the human rights violations as well as development challenges associated with child marriage. Coupled with the cabinet directive, the reviewed literature did not examine the determinants of child marriages in the study area which leaves a knowledge gap. This therefore shows the need to assess the determinants of child marriages among the rural communities of Chamilala ward of Nyimba district.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

This research was conducted in Chamilala ward of Nyimba district in Eastern province of Zambia. Nyimba district is located in the southern part of Eastern Province of Zambia. The district has an appropriate area of 125,000 square kilometers (i.e. 1,250,000 hectares). It is the gateway to the Eastern Province about 340 Km from Lusaka along the Great East Road. It shares boundaries with six districts and one country. Serenje to the north, Petauke to the east, Mozambique to the south, Luangwa district to the south-west, Chongwe to the west and Mkushi to the North West. The district has one constituency namely Nyimba constituency fifteen subdivisions of political areas namely, Chinsimbwe, Katipa, Vizimumba, Ngozi, Luezi, Nyimba, Kaliwe, Chiweza, Mombe, Chamilala, Chinambi, Luangwa, Mpundwe, Mnsima and Mtilizi wards. According to CSO (2012) Nyimba has a total population of 102,835 (Rural 86,559 and urban 16,276) and 16,040 number of households. The study site were the communities in Chamilala ward of Nyimba district, Eastern Province of Zambia.

3.2 Sample size and sampling procedure

Chamilala ward is one of the 15 wards in Nyimba district found in the rural areas of the district of about 110 km South-West away from the Central Business District (CBD) The population for this study is scheduled to include female children in the age of 11 to 18 years of age whether married or not who dwell in Chamilala ward. Further, all wards in Nyimba district of Eastern province are eligible to participate in this research but the researcher opt to select Chamilala ward for the study basing on the Zamstarts (2019) report that the prevalence rate of child marriages in the said ward stands at (55.4 percent) which was the highest as compared to other wards in the same district.

According to the Nyimba Integrated Development plan (IDP) (2020) Chamilala ward is divided into six Zones and the population for the females between the age of 11 and 18 years in the ward stands at 1,542, with the total number of 796 households. Bless and Achola's (1990) rule of thumb suggests that to obtain a good sample that can be generalized in any study one can target 5 percent of the total population. In this study a sample of 77 females were used which was 5 percent of the

total target population. This was done by simply counting without numbering the respondents first from the register using an equal interval starting with a randomly selected respondent on the register.

Purposive sampling was used in the selection of six key informants and respondents for focus group discussions (FGD) so as to have participants who are known to have opinions and experiences on the topics for discussion. Key informants included Community/Traditional Leaders, Teachers, Nurses, Faith Leaders, Zambia Police/Gender Based Violence (GBV) wing leader and *Alangizi* (women who train girl children in readiness for marriage). Key informants were selected on the basis of their intimate knowledge on the determinants of child marriages in the rural communities of Nyimba district.

3.3 Study design

A mixed methods approach, involving the use of both quantitative and qualitative research tools was used in the collection of data. Quantitative research is an inquiry into an identified problem, based on testing a theory, measured with numbers, and analyzed using statistical techniques (Mason, 1996). According to Creswell (1994) the goal of quantitative methods is to determine whether the predictive generalizations of a theory hold true. It can be used to generalize research findings when it has been replicated on many different populations and sub-populations. The limitations of quantitative methods are that study might miss out on phenomena occurring because of the focus on theory or hypothesis testing rather than context and detail (Creswell, 2009). Knowledge produced might be too abstract and general for direct application to specific local situations, contexts, and individuals. Quantitative methods are useful for obtaining data that allow generalizations. By contrast, a study based upon a qualitative process of inquiry has the goal of understanding a social or human problem from multiple perspectives. Qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting and involves a process of building a complex and holistic picture of the phenomenon of interest (Mason, 1996). Qualitative methods are useful for describing complex phenomena. They provide understanding and description of people's personal experiences of phenomena. With the use of qualitative methods, the researcher can describe in rich detail phenomena as they are situated and embedded in local contexts. The researcher almost always identifies contextual and setting factors as they relate to the phenomenon of interest.

The challenge with qualitative method is that the knowledge produced might not generalize to other people or other settings (findings might be unique to the relatively few people included in the research study) and it is difficult to make quantitative predictions. In the same vein the results of qualitative methods are more easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies (Creswell, 1994). The mixed methods approach offers an opportunity to draw from the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches by complementing each other (Creswell et al., 2004; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Integrating quantitative and qualitative research methods lends depth and clarity of the problem under study (Kothari, 2004; Creswell et al., 2004). Creswell et al., (2004) conclude that integration occurs at the data analysis stage, when the researchers analyze the qualitative data and use this information to develop an instrument for data collection. These different ways of gathering information supplemented each other and hence boosted the validity and dependability of the data

In this study, the quantitative data was collected using questionnaires (see Appendix I) while the qualitative ones were the focus group discussions (see Appendix III), personal interviews (Appendix II), informal discussions and observations. The mixed method approach helped to collect data that aided in having a clear understanding of determinants of child marriages among the community of the study area. Information which was not coming out clearly using a questionnaire freely came out during the FGDs where the respondents were expressing themselves freely and share ideas with others.

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection for this study started with quantitative data using the questionnaires to the 77 randomly selected respondents. Afterwards, qualitative data was collected from FGDs, interviews with key informants, observations and informal discussions. Qualitative data was collected after quantitative data for it helped to validate and triangulate the data that was collected from quantitative data hence mixed methods. Further, this was done so as to avoid missing out the relevant data which could not come out clearly from either of the data collection methods. The following sub-sections explain the data collection instruments that were used for this study;

3.4.1 Open-Closed Ended Questionnaire

Quantitative data was collected through self-administered questionnaires (Appendix I) which were categorized with both open and closed ended questions that were administered to respondents in order to validate the themes that emerged from the conceptual framework and to generalize the findings to a larger population followed by data analysis. The questionnaire was translated to Nsenga language for better clarity and understanding.

3.4.2 Interview Guide

This was developed in an open-ended format and was administered to key respondents (females in the child bearing age between 11 and 18 years old) that gave direct insights on child marriages and were collected through face-to-face interviews using an interview schedule Appendix II.

3.4.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

FGDs (Appendix III) were used to capture information that could have not come out clearly from the questionnaires as a triangulation measure. Each FGD comprised of 10-12 discussants, this number was manageable and every discussant had a chance to share their experiences on the topic of study.

3.4.4 Informal Discussions and Observations

Information was also collected through informal discussions with some females involved in child marriages and key informants, and through personal observation at their respective homes.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data in this study was analyzed by employing both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. This was done by grouping it into categories according to themes and then be critically analyzed in order to interpret the information gathered and hence make valid and reliable conclusions. The conceptual framework guided in the analysis of data in classifying the dependent and independent variables of the study and how they affect or influence one another in relation to the topic understudy.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize quantitative data using Microsoft Excel for the functions in Excel were sufficient to analyze quantitative data. This was done by coding the respondent's answers from questionnaires before entering the data in Excel. The purpose of coding in this research was to transform the data into a form suitable for computer-aided analysis. The categorization of information was an important step, for example, in preparing data for computer processing with Microsoft Excel. The data that was analyzed using Microsoft Excel was presented using the tables, pie charts and bar charts.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical authorization was sought from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Zambia. Authorization to conduct the research in Nyimba District was obtained from the relevant authorities in the district. For the purpose of this investigation, the investigator did not subject the respondents to any harm, or any form of dishonesty. Since child marriage is a sensitive issue, participants were assured of being concealed and the information collected remained confidential. It was imperative to note that participants knew that they participated on a voluntary basis in this particular rural area. A consent form was to be filled in by the participants. Since teenagers are minors consent was sought from their parents and, or guardians, before including them in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Profile of the Respondents

The study was conducted in Chamilala ward of Nyimba district Eastern Province. A total of 77 females who were involved in child marriages (married and not married) participated in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD), interviews and questionnaires. The profile of the respondents is shown in Figure 4.1 spread in age cohorts with the highest representation from the age cohort of 15-16 years and the least being the 11-12 years age cohort. Key informants included to the study were the Community/Traditional Leaders, Zambia Police (Nyimba Gender Based Violence Wing), Faith Leaders, *Alangizi*, Teachers and Nurses.

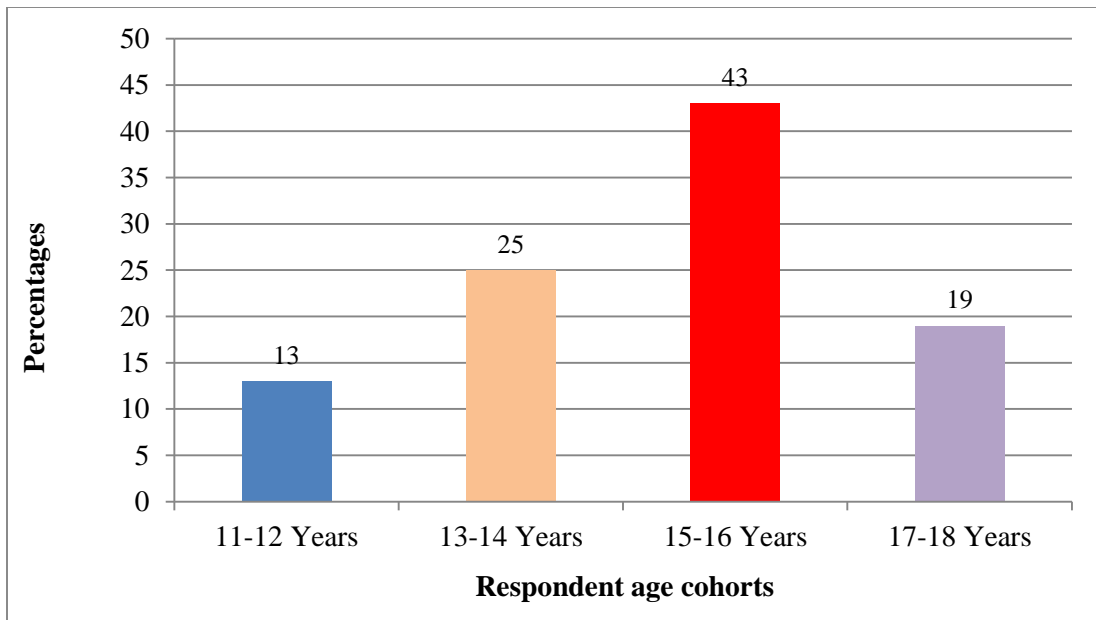


Figure 4.2: Respondent age cohort representation

Source: Field data 2022

4.2 Status of child marriages in the study area

4.2.1 Households experiencing child marriages

According to the results obtained in this study, the households experiencing most of the child marriages are the poor ones with 40 percent and the least are the grand parented (6 percent) households see Table 4.1. A key informant confirmed that most of the poor households experience child marriages because they do not have a lot of resources to support their children, as a result when the children grow (develop breasts) they marry them out to reduce on the responsibilities. The illiterate households according to the respondents are usually the ones who see no much value of educating the girl child and would rather marry off the child for lobola benefits. The lobola benefits which were in terms of money and cattle were so much valued among the parents in the study area. This has been motivated because they are a farming area and if given cattle as lobola that would mean expanding the cultivated area because they would use the cattle for ploughing. *“My parents wanted some cattle for their agricultural purposes and the only option was to marry me off at my tender age, I feel as though I was a sacrificial lamb,”* complained a discussant in a FGD.

Table 4.1: Households experiencing child marriages

Household Type	Frequency	Percentage
Poor Families	31	40
Illiterate Parents	20	26
Orphaned Homes	12	16
Grand parented Homes	5	6
Single Parents/Widowed	9	12
Total	77	100

A key informant revealed that girl children from the grand parented homes were the ones who were more immoral because grandparents in most cases cared less on the behavior of their grandchildren. The children in these families are usually free to do whatever they felt like doing and there were less regulations on the time to come back home from other activities. *“I was kept by my grandparents who were old and I took advantage of them to the point of bringing boys in*

my house at night without their knowledge and got pregnant hence my being married off,” explained one of the discussants in a FGD.

4.2.2 Respondents’ perceptions on child marriages

Participants in the FGDs gave different responses on how they perceive the widespread of child marriages in the study area and the most prominent response was that child marriages are widespread. Results from the FGDs were similar to the results collected through the questionnaires which showed that child marriages were widespread (60 percent) in the study area as shown in Figure 4.2. Results from the questionnaires further revealed that 26 percent and 14 percent of responses indicated that child marriages were moderate and not widespread respectively as shown in Figure 4.2. One of the key informants agreed to the results that child marriages were very common in the study area. Through personal observations and interactions with the village members, it was clear that many young girls were married and ran their own homes.

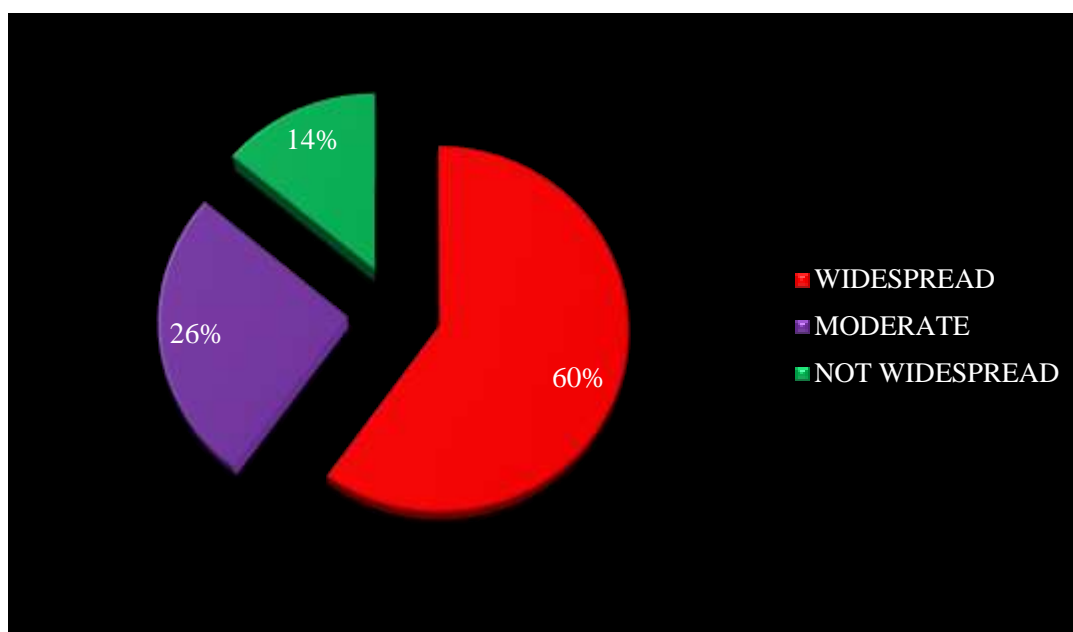


Figure 4.2: Respondents' perceptions on child marriages in the study area

Source: Field data 2022

4.2.3 Age groups affected by child marriages (girls)

According to 51 percent of responses given by the respondents through the questionnaires showed that the most vulnerable age cohort affected by child marriages ranges from 15-17 years. Among

the reasons cited why this age cohort was more vulnerable was because of peer pressure, poverty and it is at this age range that girls become sexually active. Further 35 percent of the respondents to the questionnaires perceived that the age cohort of 12-14 years though not so much was also affected by child marriages compared to the 9-11 years age cohort which was the least affected see Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Age cohorts affected by child marriages (girls)

Age Cohort	Frequency	Percentage
09-11 YEARS	11	14
12-14 YEARS	27	35
15-17 YEARS	39	51
Total	77	100

Research results also showed that initiation ceremonies such as *kulanga ndola*, *cinamwali* and *cisungu* are the most influencing cultures to child marriages especially to the 12-17 years age cohort. Most of the girls get initiated at the age of 12-13 years when they start developing breasts. It is after such initiation ceremonies that girls would want to practice what they have been taught. In the process of practicing, they end up in child marriages said a key informant. A FGD discussant said that the ages at which children are engaged in the initiation ceremonies were too early for the girls. “*The boys also feel happy to have sex with girls who have been initiated hence increasing the number of child marriages,*” lamented a key informant. The determinants that were prominent as the motivators to child marriages in the study area are; immorality, education challenges, forced marriages, poverty, peer pressure and mistreatment at home, and are discussed in the following section.

4.3 Determinants of child marriages

Research results showed that there were many determinants of child marriages and the most outstanding cause is immorality at 29 percent and the least being mistreatment at home with 7 percent (Figure 4.3). The determinants of child marriages that were revealed using different research collection tools were similar to all the age cohorts that were involved in this study hence compiling the results together.

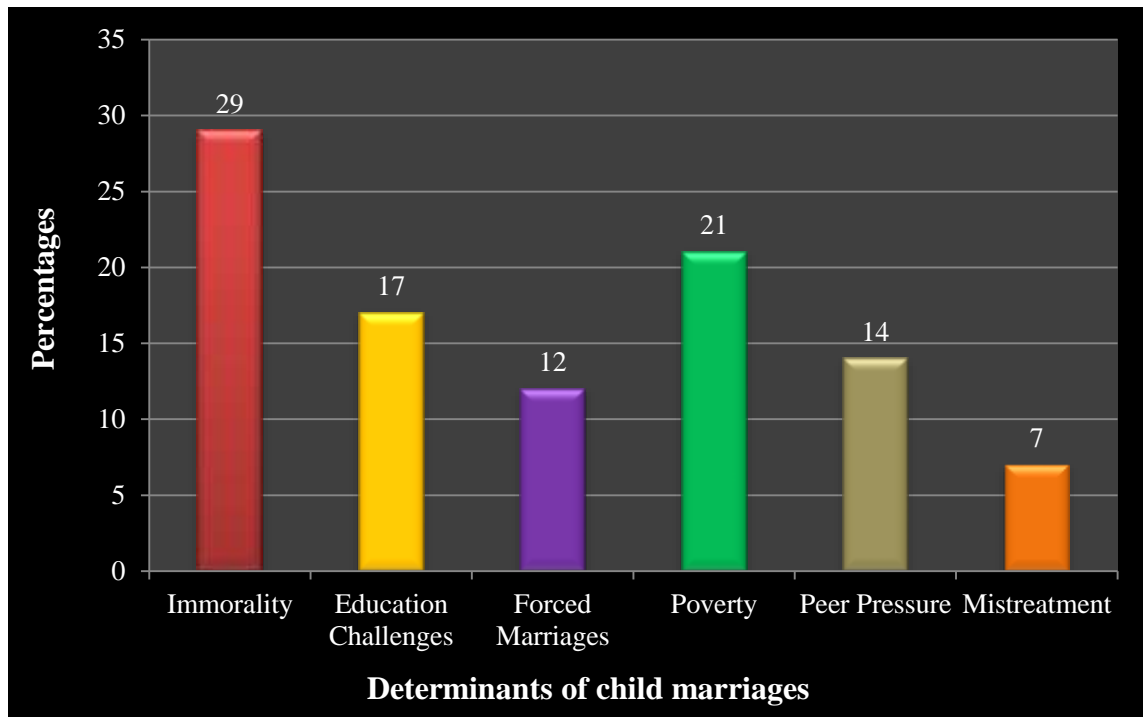


Figure 4.3: Determinants of child marriages

Source: Field data 2022

4.3.1 Immorality

Research results using the questionnaire showed that 29 percent of the respondents found themselves into child marriages due to their immoral conducts see Figure 4.3. Children of these days are usually excited (*kucenta*) in their activities which lead them into having pregnancies and later early marriages argued an interviewee in a face to face interview. It was revealed by a key informant that “*children under the age of 18 years are a problem for they do not want to listen or get advice from their parents; they have high sexual feelings and appetite for sex.*” In another discussion a key informant argued that most of the young people do not adhere to what they are being in taught in the churches against fornication. “*No church supports child marriages and these are the same things we teach in the churches that stay away from fornication but the young stars think we are old fashioned and the unfortunate ones end into child marriages,*” revealed a key informant.

An interviewee said that “*immorality has gone high for most of the young ones get married in the name of cohabiting.*” “*I got married at the age of 14 due to my stubbornness of not wanting to get*

advice from the elderly people, I enjoyed cohabiting but to my own peril” highlighted a discussant in a FGD. In another discussion a key informant lamented that some of the children were rude and immoral to the point of beating their parents who advise them on the evils of child marriages. *‘It is not your organ that is used in sex but mine, during your childhood you also used yours and enjoyed, so why stop, let me enjoy also,’* are some of the responses we get from the children when you advise them said an interviewee in a face to face interview. Immoral behavior among the youth has become difficult to control especially with coming in of technology where they can be able to watch what their parents would not approve. It has led to cultural erosion and ultimately leading to the spread of child marriages which are motivated by infatuation.

In the recent years, child marriage became the central issue affecting most countries due to cultural and moral degeneration especially among the young ones and the so called modern parents (Forbes, 1979). Whilst there are many reasons given in defense of child marriages the true motivation behind child marriages these days are more sinister and perverted than meets the eye. The results by Sibanda (2011) which highlighted that tradition, immorality, and poverty continue to fuel the practice of child marriage are similar to what this study found. Immorality is further necessitated because the role of religion on various aspects of personal life in general and on moral behavior in particular has been diminishing over time due to the impact of traditions, modernization and urbanization (Islam et al., 2017). Most young girls nowadays are willing to engage in sex for various reasons such as the economic benefit or just plain promiscuity and experimenting after undergoing initiation ceremonies (Sibanda, 2011). Initiation ceremonies for girls who begin menstruation (often between the ages of 9 and 13) include education on marriage, how to take care of a husband, and how to take care of a home as a mother hence fueling immorality and child marriages (UNFPA, 2017). According to McDougal et al., (2018) marital decision-makers emphasized that social norms sustain the practice of child marriage, with indicators of readiness for marriage based more on signs of puberty or perceptions of emotional maturity than age.

It also is probable that young girls are being forced into marriage with men twice their age because of ridiculous beliefs such as the fact that if an HIV positive man sleeps with a virgin he will be cured (McDougal et al., 2018; Kassa et al., 2019). On the other hand girls’ expectations included a belief that they would have a better life after marriage in terms of better clothes, food, and

facilities, and revealed a desire to get away from their parents (Ouattara et al., 1998). However, after getting married their experience is what they never expected leaving them more vulnerable to poverty, a consequence of child marriage as well as a cause. Due to moral decline; religiosity is one of the factors to prevent early and child marriages. Religion is brought into play because of its role as an important transmission channel of marriage norms and morals that can help reduce child marriages (United Nations, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, 1990). Therefore, involving religious leaders in the prevention of child marriage is an essential area of intervention to reduce immorality, sexual and reproductive health problems among adolescents (Kassa et al., 2019). Education for girls, improvement of physical health, moral advancement through religion and even political independence were recommended as ways on improving the status of women so as to reduce child marriages (Forbes, 1979; McDougal et al., 2018).

4.3.2 Education Challenges

Education challenges were cited by 17 percent of the 77 respondents that were involved in this study using a questionnaire as a determinant that led them into marriage at a tender age in the study area as shown in Figure 4.3. Poor performance by some girl children has caused the parents to force them into early marriages for they feel that they are just wasting their resources on children who are poor academically argued a key informant. In a FGD a discussant in affirmation said that *“I had no interest in school and my performance was not impressive, the only thing I was seeing at the end of the tunnel was to get married and leave school programmes to those interested.”* Very few rural parents would want to support a child with education if the child was not interested with it for it would be just a waste of resources to them. A key informant said, *“most of the parents are struggling to raise money for household needs and if they have a child who is not interested with school, to them it is an opportunity to stay away from the responsibility and would rather have the child married.”* In a FGD some discussants complained that the school environment in the study area was not conducive for the girls hence forcing those who had little interest with school to opt for marriage at the expense of school.

It was noticed through observations that most of the participants were illiterate which proved that they had no interest with school and the school challenges facilitated a loophole for marriage desires. *“After assessing my academic behavior compared to the social one, my guardian forced me into marriage,”* claimed a discussant in a FGD. The intergenerational problem that was

observed in the study area was that most of the girls in child marriages are from families whose parents/guardians were illiterate and did not see the value of education. Some discussants in a FGD were open enough to say that they regretted quitting school and wished they had a way of going back but would not desire the same happen to their children. On the other hand, in a FGD it emerged that during menstruation, parents in rural areas cannot afford sanitary pads. Further the school environment is usually not conducive as highlighted by a discussant in a FGD *“sanitary pads were expensive; I was therefore forced to use tissue paper, newspapers, plastic papers, papers from exercise books, leaves and rags instead, this situation was very difficult and led to my drop out from school and got married.”* Given the sentiments echoed by the participants in this study, these problems associated with menstruation and poverty negatively influence the girls’ schooling, thus causing lower completion and poor attendance rates, culminating in child marriages.

In typical African culture Zambia inclusive, boys are, in most cases, given more preference in all matters of life as they are the fathers to be, entrusted with the responsibility of fending for the house while girls stay at home doing the household chores (Dunga and Mafini, 2019). These cultural beliefs are so profound that even in schools most teachers tend to look at girls as inferior to boys, which de-motivates girls in their academic pursuits (Ouma, 2013; Nasrullah et al., 2015; Dunga and Mafini, 2019). The research by Ouma (2013) showed that the socio-cultural factors ultimately result to child marriages, male preference in family, community initiation into adulthood, negative attitudes of girls in education, cultural practices and feeling of being adults which do affect the participation of a girl child in school. Apart from cultural factors in the study by Nasrullah et al., (2015) it emerged that that poverty lies at the heart of many of the challenges that hinder girls’ access to education. Chinyoka and Naidu, (2014) noted that children who experience poverty may live in physical environments that offer less stimulation and fewer resources for learning especially to the girl child. The home circumstances of girls from poor backgrounds are not usually conducive to learning because of a lack of lighting, spending much time on domestic chores, having no desk or table to work at, or not having books at home (Chinyoka and Naidu, 2014; Makewa et al., 2014). Chinyoka and Naidu (2014) noted that the girls were exposed to too much work by their parents thus they did not have time to study and to do their homework thus negatively affecting their academic performance. Nasrullah et al., (2015) found that girls were withdrawn from education when families had financial burdens simply

because they were to get married, so it was to be wastage since the husband's family would be the beneficiary.

Lack of sanitary facilities affect girls more than boys; adding that poor sanitation conditions hinder education of girls especially that the pit latrines are the commonest sanitary facility in the rural areas (Makewa et al., 2014; Dunga and Mafini, 2019). Chinyoka and Naidu (2014) posit that the lack of adequate water and sanitation, both at home and at school, prevent menstruating girls from attending school when menstruating. In addition Makewa et al., (2014) noted that girls may drop out of school due to lack of safe and clean private sanitation facilities. When the sanitation facility is clean and brightly colored, girls feel comfortable and not threatened to contract any diseases, but when they are dirty, girls either avoid them or feel uncomfortable when using them (Chinyoka and Naidu, 2014; Makewa et al., 2014; Nasrullah et al., 2015). Given this situation, it is the responsibility of school administrators to ensure that the school environment is conducive for learning, and this can be achieved by establishing clear rules and policies.

On the other hand, as shown by Porter (2007), areas with poor physical access, or areas with strong (culturally imposed) mobility constraints on females, poor access to schools is likely to be an important contributing factor to girls' low educational achievement and increased child marriages. Ouma (2013) highlighted that the wider the distance the more insecure the girls are in their participation in education and distance from school makes the girl child to become fatigued due to long walking. Girls may be vulnerable to sexual abuse when they have to travel the long distance and this will also result in pregnancy which later will lead to child marriage (Nasrullah et al., 2015). Further, Abubakar and Kwashabawa (2021) found that school girls face lots of physical threats and insults from different categories of men on their way to school and even inside the school environment. Sometimes these threats and insults as Abubakar and Kwashabawa (2021) noted become so serious that either the girls submit themselves sexually or choose to drop out of school and get married. Dunga and Mafini (2019) revealed that within school environments, girls sometimes also face abuse committed by both teachers and male pupils. Given the above, it is reasonable to conclude that child marriages are fuelled by such/all variables mentioned above because they lead to girls getting frustrated which in turn kills their self-esteem and confidence and may eventually drop out.

4.3.3 Forced Marriages

Some of the children have been forced into early marriages by their parents as a way of getting rid of them and avoid their responsibilities towards the girl child as revealed by 12 percent of the 77 participants in the questionnaires see Figure 4.3. Results from FGDs also showed that parents force children into marriages so that they could benefit from the bride price (*lobola*) paid. A key informant said *“child marriages are common in the village because some parents are fond of forcing their children into the same so that they could benefit from the lobola due to high poverty levels.”* A discussant in a FGD lamented *“I was forced into marriage and I feel like I was sold and my rights were infringed but could not come out of it due to lack of options.”* This revealed that most people in the study area were not aware of what to do and where to report when their rights were being infringed by others and the only thing they could do was to continue with what they did not believe in. Further, it showed that there were weak reporting systems of the wrong doers to the law enforcement offices, if at all the reporting system was there then it was hidden by the privileged group.

Most of the child and/or early marriages in rural areas are mostly instigated not by the spouses, but by their two families, with the objective of ensuring family security, welfare and well-being (Otoo-Oyortey and Pobi, 2003; Seff et al., 2020). In addition Blackburn and Bessell (1997) whose results are similar to this research noted that child marriage was also often associated with forced marriage, where consent was absent and the girl might not have met her husband prior to the marriage. The study by Erulkar (2013) also showed that those married during early adolescence are arguably the most vulnerable, as they frequently enter marital relations without foreknowledge, through force and at a stage in their life that is considered too early from multiple perspectives. Child marriages must be viewed within a context of force and coercion, involving pressure and emotional blackmail, and children that lack the choice or capacity to give their full consent (Sibanda, 2011; Erulkar, 2013). Luseno et al., 2017 argued that coercing children into or giving away in an arranged marriage was total mischief and childish behavior by the parents which needs to be curbed by all well-meaning citizens. The research by Anagol-McGinn (1992) found that there was unanimity of opinion about child and an arranged/forced marriage that they created tensions between couples and that not long afterwards divorce is the result.

Forced marriage and forced sex within marriage are horrors that befall countless numbers of girls across the world (Ouattara et al., 1998; Asghari, 2019). The results by UNFPA (2017) are similar to what this research found that the girl's family would force a child into marriage because of the benefit through the payment of *lobola*, whose value has been increasing over time. However, Ouattara et al., (1998) highlighted that forcing of one human being by another is an infringement of many human rights that are promised to all, but are systematically denied to girls across many countries. Mostly girl children experience such infringements, which include being forced into marriage and into sex within marriage, without the opportunity of giving consent (Ouattara et al., 1998; Erulkar, 2013). Seff et al., (2020) say that some parents feel a strong obligation to force the girl child to marry the man they have chosen for her and in some cases, the children are forced into marriage because of pregnancy outside marriage. Blackburn and Bessell (1997) highlighted that the greatest objection to child marriage was that it represented a form of forced marriage, burdening children with responsibilities which they could not fully understand. According to Asghari (2019) the international human rights system has identified any marriage before the age of 18 as forced marriage or a harmful traditional practice which should be eradicated mainly through legal reform. The recommendation to this scenario is that anyone infringing the rights of the other human being through child marriages should be reported to the relevant authorities so as to reduce the vice especially in the rural areas where it is rampant.

4.3.4 Poverty

Poverty among the rural dwellers has its own effects and one of them is linked to child marriages as affirmed by 21 percent of the respondents to the questionnaires used in this study see Figure 4.3. A FGD discussant complained that poverty in the family caused her to get married early for the parents were unable to provide for her needs. She further said, *“parents do not want to help the girl child to look nice by buying soap, cosmetics and other needs for the girl.”* Due to this challenge a girl child is forced to look for someone who can provide for her needs added another FGD discussant. *“Poverty is bad, it caused me to be in this marriage which was against my wish but I had no alternative for I needed someone to help me out,”* complained a discussant. A key informant said *“as long as poverty among the villagers continues at the rate it is, then there is little hope to end child marriages because the girl child suffers and thinks the only solution is marriage.”* The key informant further said *“unfortunately most of the girls through child*

marriages are married to families which are also in dire poverty resulting into worse poverty and frustrations.”

In a face to face discussion a respondent complained *“I was cheated by my husband that things will be okay once he marries me since I was going through difficulties but five years down the line nothing has changed; I was better off with my parents than suffering like this.”* It was revealed by the discussants that due to poverty others had to stop school so as to help the parents at home who also later advised them to get married. *“I felt it was not necessary to stay with my parents for there was no help for anything hence getting married early in trying to find solutions to my challenges,”* argued a respondent. The poverty challenge is wide spread in the village and the observations showed that most of the young couples were really struggling in their marriages. The household assets helped to understand the levels of poverty among the villagers and proved why child marriages were rampant.

It is well recognized that in both developed and developing countries child marriage is associated with poverty especially among the poor in society and can deepen and perpetuate poverty by reducing livelihood opportunities (Neal et al., 2015). This implies that over time adolescent or child mothers are likely to become increasingly concentrated amongst the poor, which may create further marginalization and disadvantage. UNFPA (2017) highlighted that child marriages are necessitated by various factors including poverty, where marrying off the child serves as a means for the girl to escape poverty and be provided for by the husband. Although child marriage is seen as a way to escape the cycle of poverty, child marriage in fact worsens the cycle of intergenerational poverty (Sibanda, 2011; Islam et al., 2017). Child marriage not only perpetuate an intergenerational cycle of poverty and lack of opportunity, but also reinforces the subordinated nature of communities that traditionally serve the powerful classes by giving a girl child in marriage to an older male (Sibanda, 2011; McDougal et al., 2018). When families are very poor a young girl is considered to be an economic burden to the family; therefore, if she gets married that is one mouth less to feed (Otoo-Oyorley and Pobi, 2003; Tremayne, 2006; Sibanda, 2011).

The findings by Islam et al., (2017) which are similar to this study’s findings showed that teenage girls in the poorest wealth quintile were more likely to experience adolescent/child motherhood than the richest wealth quintile. Otoo-Oyorley and Pobi (2003) also showed that poverty pushes many young girls into short-term marriages where men marry young women sometimes only for

a few hours, for the purpose of sexual gratification. In most cases girls who are completely illiterate or have little education agree with their mothers that marriage was their only choice since they had no other way of living and were poor, and remaining unmarried would be socially unacceptable and an imposition economically on the family (Tremayne, 2006; Neal et al., 2015; McDougal et al., 2018). The findings by McDougal et al., (2018) are unfortunate that girls in families with greater social and financial instability, particularly the underage girls whose father or other caregiver had died, or live in poverty, were more vulnerable to child marriage. Therefore, prevention of child marriage improves not only the health of women and children, but also helps to mitigate poverty and improves socio-economic status of a country (Kassa et al., 2019). Child marriages, particularly among the girls, are most common among the poorest and least educated, and progress in reducing rates within this group has not been made over the last few decades. Targeted programmes are needed to reduce child marriages amongst the most vulnerable, yet often large scale programmes fail to eradicate it, and out of school girls are poorly served. This must be done against the background that child marriage restricts girl children from fully developing and realizing their full potential in life which every well-meaning citizen should stand against.

4.3.5 Peer Pressure

Peer pressure in this study was viewed from two perspectives; the first one is from the parents' point of view who feels it as a family curse if a girl child is not married hence forcing the girls into marriage when an opportunity avails itself. The other view is from the girls' perspective that they cannot stay unmarried when their friends of the same age are married and also that they even underwent the initiation ceremony making them ready for marriage. This pressure builds in most families and ultimately leading to uncontrolled child marriages among the dwellers in the study area. Research results show that 14 percent of the respondents cited peer pressure as the determinant of early and child marriages in the study area (Figure 4.3). "*Children admire their friends when they get married and bear children,*" revealed a key informant. Another key informant argued that "*some girls are pressured by their friends to practice what they learn in cinamwali (initiation ceremony for girls) by getting married or finding a boy who later marries them.*" "*It was peer pressure after undergoing cinamwali that made me to get married early, our argument with friends was why learn without practice,*" said a respondent in an interview. A key informant in an interview said "*peer pressure and the modern technology which has also now*

come in the rural areas influence girl children to engage in sexual activities and ultimately child marriages.”

On the other hand a key informant said that *“some families especially among the poor forced their children to get married because they felt it a curse and shameful situation of having an unmarried girl at home.”* *“I was coerced into marriage by my guardians because I was the only girl was not getting married when my friends were married,”* lamented a FGD discussant. In a face to face interview a key informant said that some parents due to pressure which builds in them when they see their friends benefit in terms of *lobola* after their girl children are married, are forced to also have their children get married at a tender age. *“I got married at a tender age because my parents wanted to have some lobola benefit, they felt this pressure when they saw their fellow parents enjoy the lobola benefit when a friend of mine got married,”* argued a discussant in a FGD. According to the discussants, the other strongest reason for child marriages is the desire or need to maintain the family’s good name and social standing especially by the parents. Parents do not want to be associated with bad names especially when it comes to marriage issues, they would do everything within their means to make sure they come out clean at the expense of the happiness of the girl child who has been forced into marriage said a key informant.

Peer and social pressures, male dominancy and parent’s ignorance are among other determinants of child marriages in the rural areas especially among the poor families (Ahmed et al., 2014). McDougal et al., (2018)’s results which are similar to the findings of this study showed that peer pressure was strong especially among the young girls who had undergone initiation ceremonies which coerced them into child marriage. Alemu (2008) highlights that the strongest reason for child marriage is the desire or need to maintain the family’s good name and social standing, and many young girls and their parents have been undergoing this peer pressure. Islam et al., (2017) revealed that peer pressure was associated with higher prevalence of child marriage among teenage girls. Peer pressure still plays its role in favouring child marriages among the new generations just as strongly as it did among the older generations, particularly in rural areas (Islam, 2012). In addition McDougal et al., (2018) noted that traditional practices and ceremonies on the part of a groom’s family rendered girls’ parents more vulnerable to social pressures to move forward with a marriage proposal, and the girl was commonly informed after the decision to move forward with a marriage was already made escalating the levels of child marriages. Due to peer and social

pressure parents are often eager to marry off their daughters as soon as they reach puberty to avoid the stigma of remaining unmarried as well as being an economic liability in poorer house (Blackburn and Bessell, 1997).

4.3.6 Mistreatment

The study through the use of questionnaires showed that 7 percent of the respondents got into child marriage due to ill-treatment/mistreatment at home as shown in Figure 4.3. Mistreated girl children as revealed by a key informant opted to be married so that they could run their own homes and be free. *“I stayed with my uncle and was terribly mistreated that sometimes I would go without food the whole day and marriage became my option out of it,”* complained a discussant in a FGD. Another discussant in a FGD claimed that life was very difficult such that as a girl child she could not have what a normal girl needed for survival even just the basics were not available. *“I am an orphan and was kept by my relatives who cared less and everything wrong at home was linked to me even when it was not me involved; my voice was not heard in the house, it forced me to get married as a way of relief,”* lamented a respondent.

Child mistreatment in most homes is always heard especially to the girl children and most of them end up getting married early a key informant claimed. Another key informant said *“we receive reports of child abuse and mistreatment and that the victims end up into marriage but the challenge for us is that it becomes difficult to remove such a victim from marriage.”* Further the key informant said that if reports were reaching their offices before a girl is married they would help to prevent it. *“My life was like a slave, I would cook, go to the field, fetch water, collect fire wood and many other home chores alone while my cousins would just sit; life was not bearable for me,”* said a discussant in a FGD. She further said *“when I assessed all my chores at home, I felt that it was as good as running my own home and I gave in and got married as young as I was.”* Girl children especially orphans suffer in some of the homes to the extent that they look as though they are the ones married to their guardians and this makes them to just get married at a tender age highlighted a key informant.

Some girl children choose love marriage at an early age for different reasons and among them is mistreatment from home and an environment which is not conducive. Ouattara et al., (1998) showed that mistreatment at home; having nowhere to go and a lack of recreational activities in

the rural areas; lack of guidance by parents; the frustrations of staying in the rural areas for a long time; and a desire to find security because life as a rural dweller meant an uncertain future and a disorganized social environment, contribute to the increasing child marriages. Ahmed et al., (2014) highlighted that young girls are put under pressure of heavy domestic chores, reduced life choices, withdrawal from education and to exhibit fertility, which turn into high levels of ill-treatment leaving the girls with no option but to get married to avoid the mistreatment. In their study, Luseno et al., (2017) found a couple who said they got married because they were being treated poorly by family members from their different homes. Further in Luseno et al., (2017)'s study a participant claimed being ill-treated by the uncle and aunt who locked him/her in the gate and told him/her that s/he was no longer going back to school which made the participant to find an opportunity to run away and get married at a tender age.

Girls' expectations in child marriages include a belief that they would have a better life after marriage in terms of better clothes, food, and facilities, and revealed a desire to get away from a home life where they were being abused by step-parents or guardians (Ouattara et al., 1998; Luseno et al., 2017). According to Sibanda (2011) exploitation and abuse of children determine the increase of child marriages but people hide behind religion and custom. The reason why child marriage is rampant is that most of the men hide behind prophecies; they usually abuse their position as prophets to hand-pick girls for the elderly men in the church who already have other wives (Sibanda, 2011). In some societies where rape cases are rampant, girls are forced to marry their rapist which is serious ill-treatment on the part of the girl child. Marrying off a young girl to her rapist because he has offered to marry her is exposing that child to revictimization, and it amounts to cruel inhuman and degrading treatment (Sibanda, 2011; Ahmed et al., 2014; Luseno et al., 2017). There is need of consented effort among stakeholders to end the vice of child marriages in the communities especially among the rural communities.

4.4 Risks/dangers of child marriages

Research results through the use of questionnaires have shown that child marriages result into health complications (44 percent, see Figure 4.4) mainly as result of undeveloped bodies for reproduction, and marital violence (18 percent) due to being immature in handling and solving marital problems. A key informant confirmed that in the marriages involving children there are a

lot of fights (gender based violence) due to the lack of maturity and understanding the meaning of marriage as a long life companionship. Lack of decision making (14 percent) was the least cited effect or danger of child marriage in the study area see Figure 4.4.

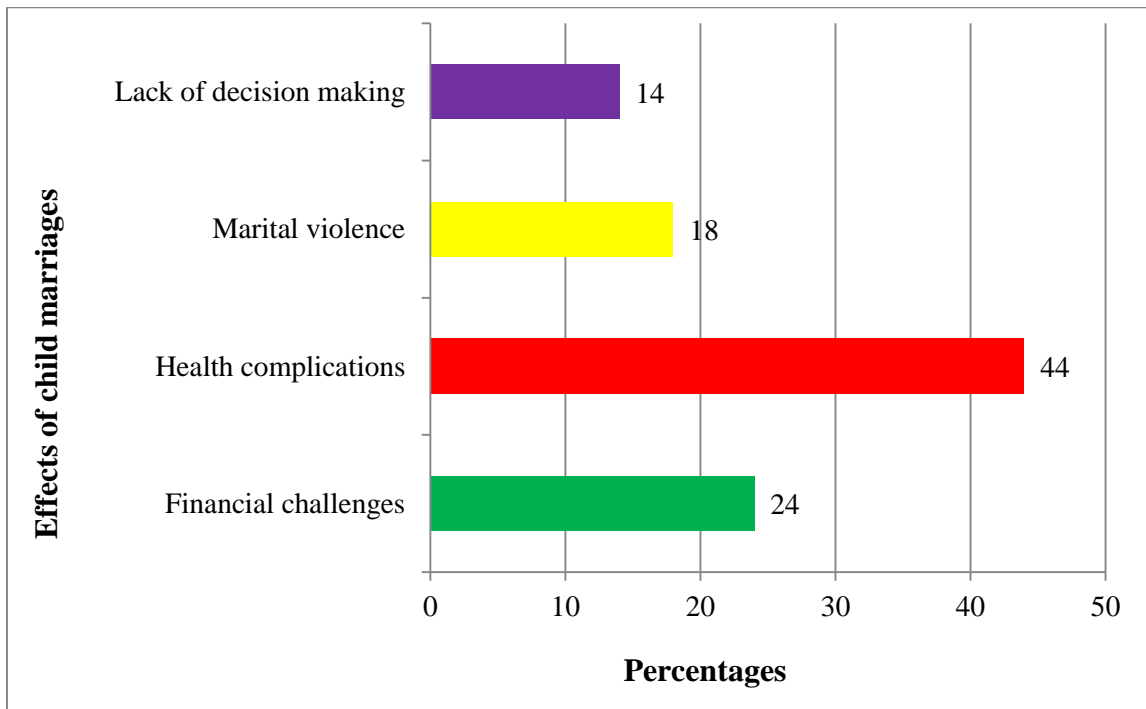


Figure 4.4: Effects of child marriages

Source: Field data 2022

4.4.1 Marital Violence

Research results as shown in Figure 4.4 showed that 18 percent of the respondents said that child marriages have challenges of marital violence. One of the key informant said that *“marital violence emanates from the failure of keeping the home secrets and lack of respect for one another.”* *“I was beaten by my husband and no one came to my help, I later thought it was a way of life in marriage and though painful I never reported to anyone,”* claimed a discussant in a FGD. Girls who are married early are at a higher risk of experiencing violence than girls married after age 18 highlighted a key informant in a face to face interview. A FGD discussant said, *“whenever I deny sex to my husband or even delaying to serve food I am always beaten and whenever I tell my in-laws they support my husband which makes me feel abused in this marriage.”* In a face to face interview a key informant said *“we receive few reports about marital violence because women*

are told to believe the justification for wife battering as a corrective measure and therefore acceptable for a husband to do so and are therefore especially the young ones more likely to experience and accept domestic violence themselves.” *“Though painful, I was told that being beaten by my husband is a sign of love and in return I am expected to love him more,”* lamented a FGD discussant. Such norms may have conditioned women to believe that violence against them is acceptable by their male counterparts and is a form of affection argued a key informant.

It was revealed by a key informant that child brides suffer emotional violence in their homes and experience severe isolation and depression as a result of early marriage. Another key informant said *“child brides are also at higher risk of experiencing physical, sexual, emotional, and other forms of violence in the home at the hands of their husbands’ families and in-laws.”* Violence can be physical, emotional, or sexual, and can have serious negative effects on the physical and mental health of girls, including for reproductive health. A discussant in a FGD said *“when I got pregnant due to violence in our marriage I developed serious complications to the point of having a stillbirth, it is really bad.”* Another FGD discussant said, *“I fear to be pregnant because even when I am pregnant abuse does not stop which makes me feel not loved and usually I develop health challenges.”* *“Due to violence I always feel emotional, anxiety, stressed, and depressed, insomnia, and feel like life does not make sense,”* narrated a discussant in a FGD.

Child marriage and violence have been globally recognized as human rights violations and major public health problems with significant consequences for women’s health (Nasrullah et al., 2014; UNFPA, 2017; Qamar et al., 2022). Girls who marry early experience abuse and violence than others, with inevitable psychological as well as physical consequences (UNICEF 2014; Adedokun et al., 2016; Clark et al., 2017; UNFPA, 2017). According to UNFPA (2017) child marriage puts girls at an increased risk of sexual, physical, and emotional gender-based violence. Abused women as noted by Nasrullah et al., (2014) were observed to suffer from detrimental health effects such as injuries, chronic pain, gastro-intestinal complaints, gynecological signs, including sexually transmitted diseases, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder. Young brides are more often than not subjected to different forms of abuse such as psychological trauma, domestic violence, forced sexual acts, marital rape by the husband and in-laws and subjected to domestic slavery, given their position as the young wife (Raj, 2010; Adedokun et al., 2016; Tenkorang, 2019). Sexual

violence according to Qamar et al., (2022) was higher among women who married before the age of 15 by 22% compared with those who married as adults.

Child marriages are characterized by spousal age gaps, power imbalances, social isolation and lack of female autonomy; these characteristics are demonstrated risk factors for violence and represent potential causal mechanisms (Kidman, 2017). Women marrying at ages 14-18 have a higher risk of experiencing violence in villages where very early child marriages are more prevalent because their behavior deviates from a collective practice reflecting social expectations about how women are or should be treated (Yount et al., 2016). A lack of familiarity before marriage which is also portrayed in child marriages lead to greater marital conflict and elevates the risk of subsequent violence (Nasrullah et al., 2014; Kidman, 2017; Qamar et al., 2022). According to Raj (2010) girls engaged or married as minors are at increased risk for depression and suicidality, in great part to its link with varying forms of gender-based violence. Parsons et al., (2015) argue that in reality, protection from violence is not guaranteed, and physical and sexual violence is often experienced at the hands of the husband once the marriage has occurred. As these young married girls are often dependent on their husbands and in-laws, they are unable to speak out against these acts of violence (UNICEF 2014; Parsons et al., 2015). In addition to effects on individual girls, the effects of violence can be felt across generations, with negative impacts on children's health and well-being and reinforcing the acceptability of violence (Parsons et al., 2015; Yount et al., 2016; UNFPA, 2017).

4.4.2 Health complications

Results obtained through the use of questionnaires revealed that girls who are involved in child marriages have experienced the risk of having health complications (44 percent, see Figure 4.4) such as being operated on when giving birth due to their being not yet well developed reproductively. More of the respondents in the FGDs indicated that they have experienced at least a health complication during their life time. A key informant said *“girls aged 14 years and younger run a risk of complication in pregnancy and child birth when compared with those of older ages.”* Another key informant said that early marriage is also responsible for other maternal risk factors associated with negative birth outcomes such as still birth and pregnancy termination. In a FGD a discussant said *“I was married at 14 years and had two miscarriages for I was forced to there and then have children when my body was not yet ready for child bearing.”* Another discussant in a

FGD said *“all my child deliveries have been done through operations which is very risk to my health.”* Information through a face to face interview with a key informant revealed that child brides were often unable to negotiate safe sex with their husbands, making them more susceptible to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and putting them at higher risk for early pregnancy.

Results through interactions with key informants further highlighted that when child brides are not physically mature, fully developed or mentally ready to handle the stress of labor and the difficulties of mothering young ones they face complications involved in the childbearing process. *“With limited sexual reproductive health knowledge, child brides are highly susceptible to unwanted pregnancies, mistimed births and having stillbirths,”* explained a key informant. Another key informant explained that child brides are also less likely to receive proper medical care during pregnancy and delivery than those who give birth later. A FGD discussant revealed that *“my lack of education made it difficult to access information on health and welfare for myself and my children.”* Researcher observation found that girls who are married young experience higher rates of malnutrition, isolation, and depression. *“Women who marry in childhood more often are underweight, report unintended pregnancy, experience obstetric complications and maternal death,”* said a key informant. These maternal concerns in turn increase risk for neonatal death and stillbirth, premature and low birth-weight infants, and infant and child morbidity and mortality revealed another key informant.

Child marriage and teenage pregnancy expose girls to early childbearing and greater risks of life-long fertility with significantly higher maternal and infant morbidity and mortality (Adedokun et al., 2016; WHO, 2014). According to UNFPA (2013) child brides are at risk of negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes, including early pregnancy, exposure to HIV and other STIs, and increased discrimination. The study by Kabir et al., (2019) revealed that child marriage snatches off the childhood of a girl and thus creates severe physical and psychological health risks and robs her globally accepted human rights. Early marriage often followed by adolescent pregnancies has enormous harmful effect on women’s health as they are not ready physically and psychologically, hence increases the risk for different sexually transmitted diseases, obstetric fistulas, pre-term deliveries, miscarriage accompanied by mental depression, physical abuse, lack of social coherence and isolation and complications (Kabir et al., 2019; Sekine and Carter 2019;

Tenkorang 2019; Ahinkorah et al., 2022). Sekine and Carter (2019) found that adolescents especially those of 11-14 years face a high risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth due to their biological immaturity and socioeconomic factors. Some of the complications mentioned by Adedokun et al., (2016) include prolonged and obstructed labour which may lead to hemorrhage, excessive bleeding and prolonged sickness after birth. For example, the study by Qamar et al., (2022) showed that globally, the leading cause of death in females aged 15 to 19 are complications with pregnancy and delivery, and girls younger than the age of 15 are five times as likely to die due to such causes.

Miscarriage, still birth, abortion, pre-term delivery, low birth weight baby, complications during delivery and poor attention to her own health and child upbringing are some of health issues that are propitiated by early marriage (Kabir et al., 2019; Tenkorang 2019). Due to early pregnancy and childbirth, as found by Raj (2010) in conjunction with lower access to healthcare among adolescent wives, girls marrying as minors are at substantially greater risk for maternal and child morbidity and mortality. According to Parsons et al., (2015) the combination of girls being physically immature and the lack of proper medical care during pregnancy and childbirth puts adolescent mothers at higher risk for complications during gestation and delivery, including prolonged or obstructed labor, fistula and death. Complications of pregnancy and childbirth are the second leading causes of death among adolescent girls ages 15– 19 globally, with nearly 70,000 dying each year (UNFPA 2013; WHO, 2014).

A study by UNICEF (2014) highlighted that infant mortality among babies born to mothers under age 18 was 60 percent higher than among those born to mothers over age 18. Kabir et al., (2019) showed that stillbirth, miscarriage and pregnancy termination were significantly associated with child marriage and were greater than to women who married after getting adult. Parsons et al., (2015) say that due to health challenges faced by young married girls, intergenerational effects are seen in their children, who may have poor physical health outcomes and poor nutrition status, and experience higher rates of infant mortality. These challenges are exacerbated by what Sekine and Carter (2019) revealed that child marriage put women at a disadvantage in accessing information about the importance of maternal health care and danger signs during pregnancy and childbirth. In addition Parsons et al., (2015) noted that many child brides face pressure from their in-laws and husbands to become pregnant soon after marriage, which can lead to early pregnancy, increased

child bearing over time and unhealthy birth spacing. The unhealthy birth spacing make the child weds to have many children with less care for them whose impacts are seen in their children's upbringing and into their adult lives, family formation, and the generation they, in turn, raise (Raj, 2010; Yount et al., 2016).

4.4.3 Financial challenges

Financial challenges according to 24 percent (Figure 4.4) of the 77 respondents to the questionnaires said was another risk or danger in child marriages because dependence on the parents for household needs such as food, clothing and other basic needs was perpetual. The situation is exacerbated as observed because most of the child brides still stay at the in-laws place. *"I feel not to be independent in whatever I do because I now depend on my in-laws for all my household needs, it is just like a shift from depending on my parents to now depending on my in-laws,"* lamented a discussant in a FGD. Another discussant in a FGD said *"I thought by getting married I would have financial control and freedom, alas the situation now is even worse such that I have to depend on my in-laws causing my children lose confidence in me."* A key informant said that most young brides are not free for they are always controlled by their in-laws making them frustrated in whatever they do.

"I always feel ashamed of myself, when my children ask for something from me, I also have to go to my in-laws to ask for the same so that I can satisfy my children's needs, I am now a married beggar," claimed a discussant in a FGD. The discussant further said, *"my husband does not care with the way I am begging from the in-laws and to my surprise he also goes to beg from them; it makes me wonder whether I am married to my in-laws or I was married to continue in poverty."* Personal observation showed that most of the respondents were dependent to their in-laws and had no financial freedom. This situation could be attributed to the lack of education and financial knowledge among the child brides which left them to continue suffering in the cycle of poverty. *"There are times when I have no bathing soap, washing soap, lotion and many other things and life continues,"* complained a discussant in a FGD. A key informant in a face to face interview said that life was very difficult to most of the child brides in the study area to the extent that others have opted to start prostitution just to make some money for their needs. *"Promiscuity among the child brides due to financial challenges has led to the increase of marital violence, STIs, HIV/AIDs and ultimately death and/or early divorce,"* argued a key informant.

Child brides especially in rural areas are likely to drop out of school, curtailing opportunities and realization of their full potential. Research results by Ahinkorah et al., (2022)'s study which are similar to the findings of this study showed that child marriage has been associated with a number of negative health, economic, and social consequences, which have been validated in a variety of settings. In their research Adedokun et al., (2016) revealed that the practice of child marriage dooms girls and women to a life of poverty due to lack of a stable financial activities. Child marriage invariably confines young girls to a life of poverty, in a cycle that is often difficult to break and significantly deprive them of freedom and entitlements to life (Adedokun et al., 2016; Tenkorang, 2019; Ahinkorah et al., 2022). According to UNFPA (2017) child brides do not receive education and economic opportunities that help lift them and their families from poverty, hence child marriage perpetuates a vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty. By virtue of their low levels of education, the child brides are often not seen by their husbands and in-laws as capable of earning or managing finances or making financial decisions for the household (Parsons et al., 2015). Child marriage constrains the human, economic, and social resources that a woman brings to her marriage ultimately limiting their access to social capital and networks that can increase their earning potential and productive use of earnings (Parsons et al., 2015; Yount et al., 2016).

4.4.4 Lack of decision making

Decision making which is cardinal in every marriage was lacking among the child brides as shown by 14 percent (Figure 4.4) of the respondents through questionnaires. Decision making among the women make them more confident in their marriage and more loving to their husbands, when it is lacking the opposite is the case, said a key informant. *"I am always at the receiving end because all the decisions are made by my husband, either wrong or correct, I have no option but to follow them,"* explained a discussant in a FGD. *"I have never made a decision in my marriage, my husband does it with my in-laws, they say I am too young to make tangible decisions which makes me worried as a wife,"* complained a discussant in a FGD. In most cases child brides are not allowed to make decisions putting them in an awkward situation in their married life said a key informant. A discussant in a FGD lamented *"one day I made a decision in the absence of my husband, I will never forget the beating I received and from that time I do not make any decision even if something is urgent."*

Girls who marry early have little decision making power within the marital home, and less control over productive household assets. Child brides often experience overlapping vulnerabilities because they are young, often poor, and undereducated which affects the resources and assets they can bring into their marital household, thus reducing their decision making ability (Parsons et al., 2015; Tenkorang, 2019). According to Tenkorang (2019) reasons for the limited autonomy of child brides include both cultural context and the age gap between the young brides and their older spouses. Further, Tenkorang (2019) noted that this is often made worse in a cultural setting where women are expected to be subservient to their husbands and not question their authority. According to Parsons et al., 2015 and Adedokun et al., 2016 child marriage places a girl under the control of her husband and often in-laws, limiting her ability to voice her opinions and form and pursue her own plans and aspirations. Consequently, as shown by Tenkorang (2019) the majority of child brides are heavily dependent on their male spouses and sometimes their extended family networks.

Husbands and in-laws' control of young wives often remains the case throughout her marriage and translates to weaker control over resources in her household, tighter constraints on her time, more restricted access to information and health services, and poorer health, including mental health, self-confidence, and self-esteem than women who marry later (IFPRI 2003; Parsons et al., 2015; Adedokun et al., 2016). This lack of power and decision-making autonomy can have a significant influence on economic decisions. Nasrullah et al., (2014) found that within her marital household, a young wife typically has little bargaining power and ability to make decisions regarding various aspects of her life. Where women have decision-making power, their priorities are reflected in how household resources are allocated, household expenditures on key areas such as education and health tend to be higher (IFPRI 2003).

4.5 Opportunities for addressing the challenges/

4.5.1 Community reactions to child marriages

In the study area, community members have been reacting in several ways when they hear of child marriages as indicated by the participants of this study. One of the most outstanding reactions from this study through the use of questionnaires was that of reporting the offenders to the Police (victim support unit) with 35 percent of response as shown in Table 4.3. Other respondents (30 percent) revealed that they report child marriage cases to the traditional leaders who include the Chief and

Headmen. In addition 25 percent of the respondents said that they report the child marriage cases to the one stop center (GBV) of Nyimba district. However, 10 percent of the responses showed that when they hear issues of child marriages they literally do nothing at all may be because they do not know where to report such cases or they are ignorant on issues related to child marriages. Sometimes it could be that such cases are not reported by the 10 percent because they are in support of the child marriages through the benefits they get from lobola paid to them. According to the respondents this group is the one which is more indoctrinated with child marriages due to the initiation ceremonies that they encourage young girls to go through such as *kulanga ndola*, *cinamwali* and *cisungu*.

Table 4.3: Community reactions to child marriages

Type of Community Reaction	Frequency	Percentage
Report to Police (victim support unit)	36	35
Traditional Leaders	31	30
One Stop Centre	25	25
Nothing	10	10
Total	102	100

On the other hand some discussants in a FGD said that they do nothing for they fear of being bewitched by the parents of the children involved in the marriages. *“There are usually threats especially from those perceived to be witches that whoever is going to report a given child marriage will not live long hence the current scenario in the village,”* said a discussant in a FGD. Another discussant said *“even if we make reports about child marriages, there is usually nothing tangible that happens for the laws seem to be weak somewhere.”* A key informant said that some cases that are reported to the village leadership are dealt with casually such that the culprits are just made to pay a chicken which he felt was not punishment enough for such offences. Lack of serious punishment and implementation of laws to the offenders has made many community members to stop reporting such cases argued a key informant in a face to face interview.

4.5.2 Preventive measures to child marriages

With reference to the responses shown in Table 4.4 on preventive measures to child marriages, the results indicated that 36 percent of the 77 respondents were for the idea that law enforcement be enhanced in the study area. In addition, some other respondents (22 percent) highlighted the need of community awareness on the negative effects of child marriages and 42 percent said there was need for the community to realize the importance of girls' education.

Table 4.4: Preventive measures to child marriages

Preventive Measures	Frequency	Percentage
Law enforcement	29	36
Community awareness	18	22
Girls' education	34	42
Total	81	100

4.5.2.1 Law enforcement

Law enforcement is a critical sector if child marriages were to be reduced in the rural areas argued the 36 percent (Table 4.4) of the respondents to the questionnaires. *“There is need for the community leaders to follow the law and regulations pertaining child marriages to the latter if it is to be reduced,”* said a key informant. A discussant in a FGD said *“the community leaders who are fond of siding with the wrongdoers should be serious with the powers conferred on them and should avoid being bribed by the wrongdoers if we are to reduce child marriages.”* She further said *“the interest of some leaders in the village was the little payment they get from their unfair judgments such as chickens and goats at the expense of the mistreated girl child.”* *“If the law has some basic punishment like paying a chicken, I suggest that it should be changed so that stiff punishment is given to the offenders,”* said another discussant in a FGD. Another discussant suggested that *“the age limit for marriage should be enforced and followed by everyone and whoever goes against it should be jailed so as to close all the loop holes leading to child marriages.”* The police should take an active role in this case with the help of the gender based

violence unit so as to enforce the already existing laws of the land against child marriages advised a key informant. A FGD discussant advised *“there is need that everyone gets involved and report the offenders to the relevant authorities, there is no need to fear of being bewitched otherwise no one will do it for us as a village.”*

Reducing rates of child marriage and its health impact especially in rural areas requires legislation and legislative enforcement against the practice combined with community level and social change approaches to improve status and opportunity for girls (Raj, 2010). In their study Kabir et al., (2019) showed that regulation of marital age, compulsory marriage registration, strengthening birth registration system and proper enactment of law can be effective and preventive to the child marriage. Enacting minimum marriage age legislation, expanding educational and economic opportunity and changing community gender norms have all been put forth as potential solutions, but greater work needs to be done to implement and evaluate such efforts (Kidman, 2017; Asghari, 2019). A study by Ahmed et al., (2014) highlighted that there is an immense need for the public to follow or act on laws set by government as children are main part of society and their childhood shall not be wasted by such incorrect practice of marriage at teenage and they shall not be overloaded with the burdens heavier than their age and physical capability.

4.5.2.2 Community awareness

Using the questionnaires to the 77 research participants, 22 percent as shown in Table 4.4 said that there was little to no awareness about the negative effects of child marriages in the study area. Information flow is very important especially in the rural areas where access to technology like radios and televisions is scarce. It was observed that many village members were not aware of what to be done when they hear of child marriages and little information has been disseminated from the relevant authorities about its effects to the girl child. *“I only heard once from the village head man that child marriages were illegal and a punishable offence, even then he did not speak with the needed authority that the offence deserved,”* claimed a discussant in a FGD. A key informant said *“government and NGOs that operate in the area are recognizing the need of efforts to be done to make the population aware of every possible outcome of health burdens associated with child marriages.”* There is need of consented effort from all the stakeholders to disseminate information about the negative consequences of child marriages and the importance of going to school especially among the young girls if child marriages were to be reduced. *“During my*

prenatal visitations at the clinic, we were taught on how dangerous it was for young girls to be pregnant,” said a discussant in a FGD. Information emerged that sometimes the health officers advice the child brides to consider going to school due to the re-entry policy by government.

Effective interventions are needed to prevent child marriages and raise awareness about their negative consequences, especially with respect to spousal violence (Nasrullah et al., 2014). Concerted efforts are needed from all stakeholders to provide social, legal, and institutional support to women, especially those married as children and who are victims of spousal violence (Raj, 2010; Nasrullah et al., 2014; Kabir et al., 2019). The study by Asghari (2019) highlighted that awareness-raising campaigns about the negative consequences of early and child marriages are needed in all sectors of life so that girls can be able to enjoy their freedoms and develop physically without hindrances. In their study Ahmed et al., (2014) said that health providers, teachers, social workers are most familiar to the knowledge and consequences of child marriage and should play their part to spread this knowledge door to door. Further, there is immense need of knowledge from biomedical societies, researchers and parents to spread knowledge and education about child marriages and steps of awareness should be taken to teach parents, society and children (Ahmed et al., 2014; Kidman, 2017).

4.5.2.3 Girls’ education

Research results showed that 42 percent of the respondents were of the idea that education for a girl child should be treated equally to that of a boy child (see Table 4.4). This emerged because most of the parents in the study area spent less on the education of a girl compared to that of a boy. One of the key informants said *“it is essential to educate parents on the importance of girl education and avoid the cultural indoctrination of not investing in girls with a pretext that it is a waste of resources due to their being married off to another family.”* Another key informant suggested that *“to reduce the rate of the girl child marriages, it is necessary for the government to build more schools, especially in the rural areas and employ more female teachers to act as role models for girls.”* *“When I went to school I felt out of place because there were only male teachers and no female teacher I could confide with, this led me from shunning school. There is need for each school to have a female teacher with whom the young girls can confide with,”* said a discussant in a FGD. The girls are usually delicate and want someone they can identify with at

school hence female teachers as role models. Further, in times of stress, they want to relate with someone they trust and have confidence in. *“There is need for schools to be built in nearby places at least less than 10 kilometers from each village so that it is easier for the girls to have access to them and continue with their school to avoid and reduce child marriages,”* suggested a discussant in a FGD. The participants in a FGD suggested that the school environment in the rural areas have to be attractive to the girl child with sanitation facilities which are conducive and clean. With the provision of sanitary facilities, the girl’s desire to be at school can be heightened and child marriages can be ultimately reduced in the study area.

Aside from incompatibility with marriage, educational attainment, in conjunction with labor force participation, reduces the economic motivation for early and child marriage, and offsets its attractiveness by offering access to better jobs and higher income (Singh and Samara, 1996; Jones and Gubhaju, 2009). Moreover, formal education exposes women to nontraditional roles and provides viable alternatives to child marriage thereby expanding their opportunities and choices (Ikamari, 2005; Islam, 2012; Abalos, 2014). Neal et al., (2015) showed that the relationship between child marriage and education can operate in two directions: girls with no or limited education may be at more risk of child marriage, or girls who become pregnant may be forced to curtail their education. Education therefore remains an important factor in marriage timing of both genders and helps in keeping adolescents especially girls from child marriages (Ogena et al., 2008; Abalos, 2014).

The expansion of women’s education figured prominently as one of the major factors underlying the delay of women’s entry to child marriage (United Nations Commission on Population and Development, 2002). In effect, education develops among women a sense of value orientation and aspirations that prioritize the attainment of personal fulfillment and career development over traditional roles of child marriage and reproduction (Ikamari, 2005). In addition, higher education may directly delay marriage among women because it reduces the pool of marriageable partners, since women are generally expected to marry men as educated as themselves (Islam, 2012; Abalos, 2014). The study recommends the need for greater focus on reaching the most vulnerable, very young adolescents and those who are poor or have little or no education with effective interventions and support. Improving access to education especially among girls may have an important impact of reducing child marriages in the rural areas like the study area.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study using mixed methods approach showed that child marriages exist and are widespread especially among the 15-17 years cohort in the study area. In addition, it can be concluded from the results of the study that some children who are engaged in child marriages are forced by their parents so that they can benefit from the *lobola* paid and from peer pressure that exists in the community. Furthermore, the results showed that poverty is one factor that contributes to child marriages among the community members. Socio-cultural factors where the girls' education was thought to be wastage of resources also contribute to the exacerbation of child marriages in the study area of Chamilala. Parents need to be advised to motivate their girl children to remain in school. The study also highlighted that a lot of poor households especially the illiterate, orphaned, grand parented and single parented or widowed experience most of the child marriages in their communities. Research results further showed that immorality, education challenges, forced marriages, poverty, peer pressure and child mistreatment were the main determinants of child marriages in the study area.

Results in this study further showed that children that are engaged in early child marriages experience a lot of marital violence, health complications, financial challenges and lack of decision making in the family which could be avoided if they were in school. It was identified that the community react to child marriages by reporting to the police (victim support unit), traditional leaders and the one stop center (Gender Based Violence Unit) while others did nothing about it for fear of being bewitched by the involved families. Some of the identified opportunities as preventive measures to child marriages were law enforcement, community awareness and girls' education. Given these factors which are in line with the conceptual framework, it is imperative that all stakeholders be involved to help in reducing child marriages in the rural areas.

5.2 Recommendations

In view of the results obtained in this research, the following are some recommendations that can help reduce child marriages in the study area;

1. Sensitization on the negative effects of child marriages need to be enhanced by the traditional leaders and other relevant stakeholders
2. Report child marriages to police
3. Develop legal framework to administer stiff punishment to the parents and couples involved in child marriage
4. School re-entry for the couple
5. Parents should wait for the children to grow (18 years and above) before they are taken to the initiation ceremony
6. There is need by the government to involve representative groups of parents from different sections of the communities and traditional leaders in the formulation of stiffer laws that will help to deter would be offenders.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

INVESTIGATION OF CHILD MARRIAGES IN CHAMILALA AREA OF NYIMBA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA.

INSTRUCTIONS	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. This questionnaire consists of two types of questions2. Tick (✓) the appropriate answer.3. Where comments are required, please be brief and to the point.4. Do not indicate your name in this questionnaire.
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SECTION A- Demographic Data

1. Marital status

1	Single	
2	Married	
3	Divorced	
4	Widowed	

2. Age (Yrs.):

3. Area of residence (Zone):

4. What is your highest academic qualification?

1	No education	
2	Primary	
3	Secondary	
4	Tertiary	

5. What is your occupation

1	Civil Servant	
2	Housewife	
3	Self-employed	
4	Farmer	
5	Others	

6. What is your monthly income?

1	K500-k1000	
2	K1100-k1500	
3	K1600-2000	
4	Others	

SECTION B: FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH CHILD MARRIAGES

Lack of Opportunity Education

7. What do you understand by the term Child marriage?
- Spacing children for more than two years ()
 - Avoid unplanned pregnancies ()
 - Is the getting engaged early before maturity age ()
 - Is the social power ()
8. Do you agree that there are side effects when one is married early?
- I strongly agree ()
 - I agree ()
 - I disagree ()
 - I strongly disagree ()
9. If the answer for question 8 is yes what the reasons are, tick the correct answer
- Fertility rate ()
 - Abortion ()
 - Peer pressure group ()
 - Others (mention) ()
10. What factors do you think could be associated with child marriages in your community?
-
11. What do you think should be done to end child marriages in your community?
-

Cultural Norms and Attitude

12. Do you agree with the ritual of wife cleansing?
a. Yes () b. No ()
13. Do you agree with the ritual of wife inheritance?
a. Yes () b. No ()
14. Do you think marrying before the age of 19 is ok?
a. Yes () b. No ()
15. Have you gone through the initiation ceremonies of puberty?
a. Yes () b. No ()
16. Does your culture allow marriage before 19 years?
a. Yes () b. No ()
17. Is there any cultural training that a person has to go through to prepare him/her for marriage in the community?
a. Yes () b. No ()
18. If yes, name the cultural practices that a person has to undergo before marriage?
-

Poverty and Economic factors

19. Are you employed?
a. Yes () b. No ()
20. What are your sources of income?

21. How many people live in your household?

22. What is your occupation?

23. Do you have direct access to all basic needs such as water, toilet?
a. Yes () b. No ()

Weak Law Enforcement

24. At what age did you get married at?

25. Did any leader be it civic or tradition follow you or parents/guardian for getting married at the age mentioned at question 23 above
a. Yes () b. No ()

THANK YOU

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

1. What is child marriage according to your understanding?
2. Who is involved in child marriages?
3. What are the determinants of child marriages?
4. What could be the advantages of child marriages in your area?
5. What are the disadvantages of child marriages?
6. Does the community report those involved to the police?
7. Are there cultural aspects that support child marriages in your area?
8. How far are the nearest schools to your area?

Appendix 3: Focus Group Discussion questions

1. Have you ever heard of child marriages?
2. What are child marriages?
3. Are the traditional leaders aware about child marriages?
4. What do traditional leaders do to those involved in child marriages?
5. Where do you report those involved in child marriages?
6. Are the children involved in child marriages happy about it?
7. What are the determinants of child marriages?
8. Are children forced into child marriages?
9. Do the marriage counsellors teach the children about the negatives of child marriages?
10. Which traditions in your area encourage children to rush into child marriages?
11. What do you think should be done with such traditions?

Appendix 4: Certificate of Registration



Appendix 5: Approval from National Health research Authority



NATIONAL HEALTH RESEARCH AUTHORITY
Paediatric Centre of Excellence, University Teaching Hospital, P.O. Box 30075, LUSAKA
Chalala Office Lot No. 18961/M, Off Kasama Road, P.O. Box 30075, LUSAKA

Tell: +260211 250309 | Email: znhrasec@nhra.org.zm | www.nhra.org.zm

Ref No: NHRA000467/28/02/2023

Date: 28th February, 2023

The Principal Investigator,
Ms, Ireen Nomalanga Nyambe
University of Zambia
Lusaka, Zambia.

Dear Ms Nyambe

Re: Request for Authority to Conduct Research

The National Health Research Authority is in receipt of your request for authority to conduct research titled **“Determinants of Child Marriages in Chamilala Ward of Nyimba District, Zambia”**.

I wish to inform you that following submission of your request to the Authority, our review of the same and in view of the ethical clearance, this study has been **approved** on condition that:

1. The relevant Provincial and District Medical Officers where the study is being conducted are fully appraised;
2. Progress updates are provided to NHRA quarterly from the date of commencement of the study;
3. The final study report is cleared by the NHRA before any publication or dissemination within or outside the country;
4. After clearance for publication or dissemination by the NHRA, the final study report is shared with all relevant Provincial and District Directors of Health where the study was being conducted, University leadership, and all key respondents.

Yours

Sincerely,

Prof. Godfrey Biemba
Director/CEO
National Health Research Authority

Appendix 6: Approval from Nyimba District Health Office

C/O Nomalanga Ireen Nyambe
House No. 38 K Avenue
LUANSHYA

28th Feburary, 2023.

The District Health Director,
P.O Box 570013,
NYIMBA.

Dear Sir

RE: REQUEST FOR AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH "DETERMINANTS OF CHILD MARRIAGES IN CHAMILALA WARD".

Refer to the above subject matter.

I wish to inform you that I **Nomalanga Ireen Nyambe** holder of NRC Number 236181/10/1, a student at the University of Zambia Institute of Distance Education am pursuing a Master's Degree in Public Health in which I'm required to carry out a research project of my choice during my time at the University of which the assessment will be used to determine my final grade.

In view of the above, I hereby write to request for your office's approval for me to conduct a research titled "**Determinants of child Marriages in Chamilala ward of Nyimba District, Zambia**" for academic purposes.

Find attached hereto a copy of the **Approval Letter** from the National Health Research Authority for verification.

Your positive response will be highly appreciated

Yours Faithfully



Ireen Nomalanga Nyambe
Cotanct: 0972423755

APPROVED BY:
D.H. MBEWE
01/03/23



Appendix 7: Approval from Nyimba Town Council



NYIMBA TOWN COUNCIL

Civic Centre, P.O. Box 570022
Nyimba, Zambia

Tel: +260 216 374061
Telefax: +260 216 374061

3rd March, 2023

Ms. Ireen Nomalanga Nyambe
House No. 38 K Avenue
LUANSHYA.

Dear Madam,

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN CHAMILALA WARD

The above captioned subject matter refers.

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 28th February, 2023 wherein you are seeking permission to conduct an academic research in Chamilala Ward of Nyimba District.

In view of the underscored, I wish to inform you that your request has been considered in the affirmative, you can therefore go ahead and carry out your research in Chamilala Ward as per your request.

I wish you the very best in your studies.

Yours faithfully,
NYIMBA TOWN COUNCIL

Gibson Mweemba
COUNCIL SECRETARY

CC: Deputy Council Secretary
CC: File