

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

**THE EFFECTS OF CHILD MARRIAGE ON THE GIRL CHILD'S WELLBEING AND
FUTURE: A STUDY OF CHILDREN IN KASOA.**

BY:

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DECLARATION.

I hereby declare that this dissertation was undertaken by me and under the supervision of Dr. Joseph Obeng Baah. Where other people's references are made, full acknowledgement had been given. I wish to state that all omissions and shortfalls in this work are entirely mine.

Therefore, I declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this institution or elsewhere.

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Candidate's Signature

Date 14th December 2021

SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATION

I hereby declare that the preparation of this dissertation was supervised by me in accordance with the guidelines of supervision of dissertation laid down by School of Graduate Studies and Research, Ghana Institute of Journalism.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Obeng-Baah', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dr. Joseph Obeng-Baah

Date 14th December 2021

(Supervisor)

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the following:

My father, the late Forson Kweku Asare Antwi

My mother, Dora Araba Ohemaa Foriwaa Amissah

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My warmest gratitude goes to the Almighty God for the gift of life with good health that has made me come this far.

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ABSTRACT

Child marriage is a very critical social problem that derives attention. There are limited studies regarding the examining child marriage within the Kasoa communities especially with regards to the Kasoa Zongo community.

The aim of the study is to examine the risks associated to child marriage in the community, and also to examine the reasons why people still practice child marriage in this modern era. This research is grounded by the Social Learning Theory.

A qualitative research approach is used for the study where a semi-structured interview guide is administered to sampled respondents and the data gathered is analyzed and expressed in descriptive terms for easy comprehension. This will aid in identifying the study findings for drawing conclusions and making recommendations.

The findings of the study proved that young girls truly suffer a lot of abuse when they are forced to marry. Most of them become school dropouts and mothers at a very tender age. In some cases, the girls run away from the marriage and no one seems to know their whereabouts.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION:

1.0. Background of the topic:

Child marriage according to Babatunde et al, can be defined as “both formal marriages and informal unions in which a girl lives with a partner as if married before the age of 18”.

Child marriage has been one of the major problems most developing countries are facing and Ghana is no exception. Girls below 18 are given out for marriages to men they might not necessarily be interested in and parents do this without the content of the child due to some rigorous traditional and religious beliefs. Some people believe that child marriage is a great opportunity to prevent STDs, premarital sex and unwanted pregnancies since they bring shame to the family as perceived by the society. Boys are also affected however; the girls are mostly the vulnerable so far as child marriage is concerned.

According to UNISEF/BANA 2013, Niger is the country that has the highest overall prevalence of child marriage in the world, 77% of women aged 20-49 were married before age 18 in contrast to 5% of men in the same group. Girls are considered to be the ones that this emotional torture affect the most. It leads to a destruction of the girls’ future and distort their economic wellbeing.

UNISEF then discovered again that Bangladesh has the highest rate of marriage involving girls under age 15. South Asia is home to almost half (42 per cent) of all child brides worldwide; India alone accounts for one third of the global total.

According to a recent research conducted by World Vision International, every minute 22 young girls are given out for marriage worldwide. Early child marriage affects these young girls to the extent that they are being denied of their freedom of choice or preference, future education and dreams. Child marriage is now becoming more predominant and if care is not taken over 100 million young girls will be married due to the prevalence pressure that has been mounted on the average parent from the covid 19 pandemic.

Child marriage in Ghana is a discriminative act on the part of the girls since they are the most negatively affected. Child marriage is very common in Ghana especially in the northern part of Ghana. Where young girls below 18 are giving out for marriage to older men who are old enough to be their father.

According to Elizabeth et al 2020, “the literature on cultural underpinnings and implications of the practice in Ghana is sparse”. In other words, there is a huge backing of some cultural and traditional practices that motivates the people to do such.

In other parts of Ghana in the Muslim communities, early child marriage is being practiced which makes the young girls lose focus in pursuing some greater achievements for themselves. One of the major consequences the girls encounter is the vulnerability of maternal mortality. In some other communities, early child birth and marriage seem to be a huge achievement since it is believed that the essence of a woman is being a wife and a mother.

1.1.Problem Statement

Early child marriage has been one of the problems seen as a controversy in Kasoa over the years. This mostly happens among the Muslim communities in Kasoa where young girls below 18 are forced to get married without their consent. Most of such girls are being forced to drop out of school or asked to stop chasing their carrier and concentrate on their marriage. These young girls are mostly immature in handling marital issues and end up being maltreated by their husbands. These old men often take advantage of these girls and mishandle them. The parents of the girls don't often understand the negative impacts child marriage has on the young girls because they went through the same thing and they see it to be normal. Early child marriage is not only an infringement on the fundamental rights of these girls but also a breach of the laws of Ghana which forbids a child below 18 to get married.

Religion is often blamed for the prevalence of child marriage. Notably, however, the practice is not unique to any one faith; in fact, it occurs across religions and regions. (Rachel B. Vogelstein, 2014). One may blame this practice on the Islamic religion however, some Christians and

traditionalists also practice child marriage. Child marriage is mostly found among the northerners in which most of them are Muslims. That is why in almost every Muslim community child marriage seems to be predominant. What pushes the people to practice child marriage is the imitation of what their forefathers did. Hence, it has become a cultural norm

According to the Ghanaian constitution of 1992, any person under the age of 18 is a child and can therefore not marry or be married of. Child marriage in the Kasoa communities is predominant because of the need for more hands in the market, therefore the need for procreation. These girls are typically denied education, difficulties related to early childbirth and become more vulnerable to intimate partner violence.

1.2. Research questions

- What constitutes to the infringement of a child's right?
- What adaptive measures can be used to tackle the issue of abuse of child marriage?
- What are the risks associated with children who are deprived of their rights and are forced to marry at a very tender age to men old enough to be their father?
- Who can we blame? The parents of the victim, the leaders of the communities or the government?

1.3. Research objective.

The general objective of this research is to study more about child marriage and its diverse consequences on the girl child's future. The specific objectives are as follows:

- To identify some other unknown reasons why people still practice early child marriage in this present age and time.
- To reveal the risks these children, face when they don't enjoy their rights as children.
- To examine the perception of the people in the Muslim communities of early child marriage.

1.4.Scope of the study

Nawal M. Nour (2009) defines child marriage as a marriage that involves a child below 18 years of age. He further went on to state that child marriage is a human right violation that directly impacts girls' education, health, psychologic well-being and the health of their offspring. It also exposes the girls to an increased risk of depression, STIs, cervical cancer and maternal mortality. In view of this definition, this research will focus on how these young girls are forced into such marriages and the mediums through which the husbands of the girls get access to the girls' family.

1.5.Limitations of the study

The major limitation of this study is that, it focuses on one community in Kasoa in which the inhabitants are the center of the research. The study is conducted within a period of six months and only about 10 respondents are sampled and interviewed. This study also focuses on the emotional abuse of young girls between the ages of 14 and 17.

However, insufficient sample size, population traits or specific participants for statistical significance, insufficient or lack of previous research studies on the topic which will allow for further analysis and limitations in the technology/instruments used to collect the data are some challenges the study will face.

1.6. Significance of the study

There has been a lot of campaigns concerning the end of child marriage however, there appears limited efforts in breaking this chain. This practice seems to have been accepted by especially those in the Muslim communities and has been acclaimed as a traditional and cultural practice.

This research will be beneficial because the reputation of the girl child's future is built on her childhood experience hence, they need to be treated fairly by making their future the center of how they are being treated. In effect, this research will provide findings that connect to early child marriage and its impact on girls especially.

1.7. Organization of the study

This work is divided into five chapters. The first chapter looks at the introduction, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, the significance of the study and the study's organization. Chapter two is designed for the review of the related literature. In chapter three, the research methods used in data collection for the study will be described. It deals with the population and sample, research instruments, research design, data collection procedure and analysis. Chapter four will deal with the data presentation, data analysis and discussion of data. Chapter five also presents the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses some existing scholarly research on child marriage, reviews existing literature on the subject as well as various studies undertaken by other researchers. It is also an exposition of the theories used by the researcher in this study and how they underpin the work.

2.1. Theoretical foundation

The theoretical foundation of this study consists of two theories (The Social Learning Theory and The Theory of Reasoned Action) that will help us to explain the issue that is driving the research.

2.1.2. The Social Learning Theory.

According to Dr. Serhat Kurt, Albert Bandura, a social cognitive psychologist believed in learning by observing and imitating what others do especially when some sort of motivation is involved. Dr. Serhat further went on to narrate how famous Bandura is for his studies of children observing adults who acted aggressively toward a doll. After the children have viewed this behavior, they were given dolls to play with and they imitated the aggressive behavior they observed earlier. This behavior is likely to be repeated even after the children have reached the adult stage. Many behaviors we see in the society is an imitation of what one might have experienced through an observation.

Bandura took the meaning of observation even further by constructively explaining the verbal instructional model, whereby learning is improved if certain explanations and descriptions were presented. In other words, if a behavior is carefully explained to you verbally, the likelihood of understanding it better is very high. Sometimes we imitate certain behaviors after the understanding we derive from the explanation given to us. When a child sees some elders in a community perform certain rites, curiously he/she demands explanation and once the explanation is given and gets into the memory of the child, he/she is likely to repeat the same thing when he/she grows.

Again, Bandura affirms that observation alone cannot influence a person's behavior. However, when a person is motivated after exhibiting a particular behavior, he/she is likely to repeat that same behavior. For example, if a warrior wins a war by killing many people on a battle field and receives praises afterwards, he will definitely kill more people on the next battle.

According to Saul McLeod 2016, "the social learning theory, proposed by Albert Bandura, emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others". The theory takes into consideration certain factors such as environmental and cognitive believed to have some level of influence on the human learning and behavior. The theory throws more light into observing and imitating the behaviors of others. For instance, in the case of child marriage, it keeps on happening because it has been a norm or a culture that has been practiced since the olden days and every generation that comes learns and follow suit. In the observational learning of the social learning theory, it has been elaborated that "children observe the people around them behaving in various ways. This is illustrated during the famous Bobo doll experiment" (Bandura 1961) According to the intergenerational transmission hypothesis, children grow up to share what they saw and experienced as children with their own children. Social learning is most often presumed as a primary mechanism for the intergenerational transmission of child maltreatment. However, parents, guardian, and caretakers treat the children as they were treated in their infancy. In other words, a mother who was given out for marriage before the age of 18 is likely to repeat the same thing for her daughter.

2.1.3. The Theory of Reasoned Action

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) first developed by Martin Fishbein in 1967 and later revised and expanded by Fishbein and Icek Azjen in 1975 says that a person's behavior is determined by the intentions that person has towards performing that behavior. In other words, an individual's decision to engage in a particular behavior is based on the outcomes the individual expects will come as a result of performing the behavior. People's reaction towards behaviors is backed by what they will gain after exhibiting such a behavior. For example, a drug addict will continue to abuse drugs since he/she get some sort of energy to perform a lot of tasks at the same time because without the drugs he/she will not get that kind of energy. The human attitudes to behaviors is such that some sort of motivation is attached to reasons why people behave in the way they do. Hence, the behaviors come with conditions.

According to Henk Staats (2004), "the TRA assumes that the behavior under investigation is under volitional control. In other words, people believe that they can execute the behavior whenever they are willing to do so". In addition, people make conscious choice or decision to exhibit or portray certain lifestyles or behaviors willingly. Due to perhaps the benefits or the motivation that comes with the practice of the behavior, people tend to execute it willingly.

Staats further went on to say that "gradually, the TRA was used more often for the study of behaviors which control was a variable factor. For that purpose, the TRA was completed by a component that was named "**perceived behavioral control**". This idea describes the amount to which people believe they can undertake the behavior because they have sufficient talents and/or opportunities, or because they lack them. Because many behaviors require specific abilities or external facilities, it is easy to understand how this element might significantly improve the model's universality of application. For example, recycling is virtually impossible if no collection system is available, and abandoning private cars is often impractical, at the least, when public transportation functions poorly.

The theory of reasoned action's main goal is to better comprehend an individual's voluntary behavior by looking at the underlying core motive for doing something. According to TRA, a person's intention to do a behavior is the most important predictor of whether or not they actually do so. This is known as behavioral intention, and it arises from a conviction that engaging in the behavior will result in a specific result. Because behavioral intentions are influenced by attitudes

toward behaviors and subjective standards, they are crucial to the idea. Stronger intentions, according to TRA, lead to higher effort to carry out the activity, which enhances the likelihood of success.

Some of these behavioral intentions come as a result of a belief that performing the behavior will lead to a specific outcome. Some of these beliefs could be associated with certain cultural norms and practices and in order to satisfy these traditional superstition, certain behaviors are demonstrated. For example, in the Ada community, the “dipo” rite is practiced on the young girls because it is believed that it opens doors for the girls to have good marriages and makes them conceive without any problem and it also cleanse them from a lot of misfortunes.

These two theories have certain things in common that underpin the concept of child marriage. It all boils down to the behavioral exhibition towards nature and human beings. The social learning theory talks about the fact that we imitate and portray what we have consciously and unconsciously learnt as a result of observation while the theory of reasoned action highlights the intention people have for demonstrating a particular behavior and also people perform certain behaviors because they are backed by some sort of motivation. Both theories talk about behavioral attitudes and what constitutes to those attitudes.

2.2.0. Review of Related and Relevant Literature

2.2.1. Why Child Marriage?

Child marriage keeps dominating as a common practice in most traditional communities due to the protection of chastity and the prevention of teenage pregnancies. Most traditional rulers and family educators believe that when teenage girls are allowed to stay in school, they will end up being impregnated by their peers and this will bring a lot of shame to the family. So in view of this, the girls are encouraged to marry at a very tender stage of their lives resulting to emotional trauma, maternal mortality, infant mortality and what have you. Most of these young girls agree to marry early because they have seen their elder sisters and peers also marrying early however, they are also motivated to marry early since no girl child will see herself as the only person in that situation.

According to Ahonsi et al 2019, “In traditional Ghanaian societies premarital sex and child bearing is frowned upon, hence early marriage is encouraged. For instance, betrothal (in some cases, exchange of girls) is often early, sometimes before birth to ensure sex and child bearing occur within marriage.” For some strange reasons, some of the girls who marry early are betrothed to old men in exchange of plots of land or some other assets. The parents of the girls do this due to extreme poverty. Once the girl is betrothed, the man takes care of her and the family until she gets to the puberty stage or to the stage where they feel she can marry. Interestingly, the girls are told about their betrothal so they are encouraged to stay away from other men in case they approach them.

Another factor that contributes to child marriage is poverty. When parents find it difficult to cater for their numerous children, the possible solution is to marry off the girls to reduce the burden. Sometimes, in some cases, the brothers of the girls use their sisters’ bride price to pay the bride price of their wives since they don’t have the resources to marry when they want to. Ahonsi et al continued to raise the issue of child marriage saying, “the influence poverty has on child marriage is multi-dimensional that stems from parents’ socio-economic status and children’s demand for material goods that their parents cannot afford (in some cases attributable to parental neglect and supervision).” Poverty has a lot of influence on a parent’s decision to marry off his girl child. Sometimes these influences are associated to social class and security.

In some cases, the fathers use their underaged daughters to exchange debts. This is how poverty can place a lot of influence on a father’s decision to marry off his underaged daughter. It is also noticed that in some instances, the man in which the father is owing rather proposes to the father to give him his daughter in exchange of the money he owes him. And for this burden to leave of his shoulders, he complies with the proposal. Can we blame such fathers? They tend to find some level of security also which could benefit their daughters and his family at large.

As discussed earlier in this study, child marriage is not only found among the Muslim communities however, the Christians and the traditionalists also believe in early child marriage. All the major religious group in Ghana encourage early child marriage because premarital sex and child birth are considered immoral. So they ensure that both sex and child birth occur in marriage. All the major religious group tend to punish any girl who ends up indulging herself in premarital sex or getting pregnant out of wedlock. In effect, girls who get pregnant out of wedlock are married off

to the men who impregnated them. These religious leaders ensure that the marriage happens to cover all the “shame”.

2.2.2. The recognition of a child’s rights

Children’s right in simple terms are a subset of human rights that pay particular attentions to the rights of special protection and care that are not to be confused with the youth rights. In other words, every child regardless of the race, gender, nationality, tribe, age, etc. Has rights. These rights are enshrined into the 1989 convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) which defines a child as “any human being below the age of eighteen years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.”

Children are the weaker vessels in the society because they do not have the voice to defend themselves when they are being tortured. Therefore, in every society, before forming any laws, children’s right need to be recognized and considered. In almost every Ghanaian community, the child is supposed to obey and conform to all laws and norms practiced by the society, be it favorable or not favorable. Rules and norms that are not favorable to children end up making the children being molested and tortured. There should be a general healthy attitude towards children and their rights because children too are equal as human beings.

UNICEF in their publication on June 2019, outlined four major principles of the Convention on the Rights of a Child. However, the implementation of these four principles will grant children equal value and at the same time guarantee them with the necessary protection.

The first principle is the Non-discrimination principle which says that every child is to be allowed to enjoy his/her rights as a child and should not be subjected to any form of discrimination where one child receives something better than the other child. In other words, there is an obligation that children should have equal rights. This point is well highlighted in the Article 2 of the first paragraph which says "States parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's parents or legal guardian, race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, poverty, disability, birth or other status."

The second principle is the Best Interests of the Child Children which says that children are vulnerable and so they need support to enable them enjoy their rights as children. This principle throws more light on the fact that as a child is being given an equal right, he/she needs to be protected too. Formulated in Article 3:1, it says "In all actions concerning children whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institution, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration."

The third principle is the Right to Survival and Development. This principle is mostly directed to a child's socio-economic wellbeing. The application of this principle goes beyond just granting the child protection, it captures the developmental wellbeing of the child as well which is formulated in Article 6:2 and states thus: "State parties shall ensure to the maximum extend possible the survival and development of the child."

The fourth and final principle is The Views of the Child which says that the views of the child should be respected by giving the child a listening ear. We need to understand that children also have emotions and feelings therefore we ought to factor them into consideration. The principle is formulated in Article 12:1 which states that "States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the rights to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the view of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child."

Children suffer a lot of abuse from their parents, teachers and the government because their interests are not considered before any action is taken in the community. C. Lohrenscheit affirms that, "Special human rights norms for children are necessary because of young persons' vulnerability, since history has proven that parents and teachers often do not have the best interest of the child in their hearts and minds."

2.2.3. The risks associated with children who suffer child marriage

Child brides are exposed to a lot of risks that distort their life progress. Child marriage affects the girl child's future aspirations and ambitions resulting to chronic poverty, violence against women and socio-economic instability. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) serves to create progress that will improve the lives across the world. However, every year, 15 million girls are locked away from a better life (CAMFED 2017). Therefore, as long as child marriage exist, so will poverty since child marriage is standing in the way of progress towards many of the 2030 Global Goals.

Child brides often suffer health related issues such as obstetric fistula and maternal mortality. "Obstetric fistula is one of the most serious and tragic childbirth injuries. A hole between the birth canal and bladder and/or rectum, it is caused by prolonged, obstructed labor without access to timely, high-quality medical treatment" (UNFPA 2021). Maternal mortality is mostly expected among girls under 18 because they got pregnant before their bodies are ready to carry a baby hence, they tend to receive high risks of complications during pregnancy and childbirth which endanger the life of both the mother and child. Since in our part of the world child marriage seems to be prevalent, maternal mortality also keep rising and has been the leading cause of death among teenage girls.

Adolescent girls who are forced to marry are likely to be widows and or contract HIV/AIDS. Most of these girls marry old men who are old enough to be their father, men who have had many previous sexual encounters over the years. In effect, if the man is a carrier of the HIV virus, he will easily infect the girl which will lead to a serious destruction of her future. In the other side, some of these old men die in the course of the marriage leaving these young girls behind as widows. These girls end up being emotionally traumatized since the widowhood rites is too much for them to contain. Moreover, life after the burial of the husband becomes very frustrating she wouldn't have the necessary requirements to cater for herself and her children.

Child marriage is a major barrier to achieving gender equality. Child brides face a lot of problems which their male age mates might not necessarily face. Girls who are married as children are more likely to experience domestic violence and have a lower status in the society. This happens because these girls are denied their right to pursue education, gain employment, learn a trade or have other entrepreneurial opportunities. Whenever a girl is denied equal opportunities with her colleague

boys, the society and the country at large is likely to lose a future teacher, lawyer, doctor, entrepreneur or even a president. The cost a society or a country pay as a result of child marriage is tremendous and is mostly resulted to slow economic growth.

Child marriage kills women's enormous potential to help solve global problems. When women indulge themselves in some leadership roles to tackle global issues, the results become very favorable. For example, women in some rural areas are often in charge of agricultural operations, and so they are best placed to implement sustainable agricultural, energy and environmental initiatives in their communities, which can help to address poverty and hunger, and in turn health and education, as well as increase resilience to climate change. Now, if child marriage continues to become dominant in the society, a lot of communities will lose women's impact to achieve developmental goals.

Child marriage has made a lot of girls to be entangled in a cycle of poverty. Child brides are mostly deprived of education or better still get employment which could empower them to become better people in the society therefore they struggle to break the chain of poverty. Women who are empowered reinvest about 90% of their earnings back into their families and help their children, siblings and relatives out of poverty. The ability of a girl to become financially independent ends at the point where she was married off. As the prevailing child marriage continues to happen in or societies, the inter-generational cycle of poverty also continues which leads to youth unemployment, economic instability, conflict and violence.

2.2.4. Who is to blame?

In many of the communities where child marriage is always practiced, people tend to blame the parents of the child bride and also point fingers at them by accusing them of selling their young daughters out. Some are also of the view that, this practice is backed by the influence of the family heads and leaders.

In one of BBC's 2014 publications, it was ascertained that the men are to blame for the continuous practice of child marriage when after the launch of "Girls not Brides" initiative in New York, Demsond Tutu argued that "men have "aided and abetted" the continuation of child marriage". This statement made by Demsond triggered BBC to probe further by creating a debate section for

people to express their views on the matter with the motion “Men tend to be political, traditional and religious leaders. They have the power to make things change. But they don't use it. Is this because men themselves benefit from child marriage?” People joined the debate and however, majority of the people agreed with the motion and supported Desmond Tutu’s argument.

In most discussions of child marriage, the men are to blame because they are mostly the direct beneficiaries of the practice as they enjoy every single aspect of it. It is also perceived that men in general always want to be with younger females because they think the younger girls have “fresh blood” and can function better than the older and matured ladies. Again, almost every man would want to have a virgin as his wife regardless of the numerous partners he has had and since most of young girls above 18 are no more virgins, men prepare to marry the underaged. Moreover, most men who are into this practice certainly have lost control of being responsible to cater for the needs of their families therefore, the young girls need to be married off.

However, some researchers have proven that child marriage is rather backed by the influence of socio-cultural practice. The practice of child marriage across Africa is being backed by certain socio-cultural norms and beliefs. “Ethnicity and the fear that girls may engage in premarital sex are two important factors associated with early marriage in rural Gambia”. (Lowe M et al 2020)

2.3. Conceptual Framework

This is based on the idea that children who are forced to marry at a very tender age are mostly affected psychologically, physically and emotionally hence they end up being traumatized. These young girls suffer a lot of abuse in their marriages as their husbands take advantage of their innocence. Therefore, these young girls are likely to suffer in many years as they endure the pain of dropping out of school, not being able to become industrious and not being able to handle their marital issues because they lack the capacity and the maturity.

2.4.0. Operational Definition of Terms

2.4.1. Child marriage

Child marriage (or early marriage) can be defined as “both formal marriages and informal unions in which a girl lives with a partner as if married before the age of 18” (Ahonsi et al 2019).

Child marriage, defined as marriage of a child under 18 years of age, is a silent and yet widespread practice. (Nawal M. Nour 2009)

2.4.2. Girl Child

The Convention on the Rights of a Child defines a child as every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Girl Child can be defined as any female under the age of 18.

2.4.3. Child Rights

Children's rights are human rights specifically adapted to the child because they take into account their fragility, specificities and age-appropriate needs.

2.5. Relevance of the study

The findings from this study contributes to the literature on the effects of child marriage on the girl child’s wellbeing and future within the traditional communities’ context. This study also provides further data to examine and probe more on the reasons why parents choose to marry off their young daughters to men who can even father them. This will help gender quality advocates to identify the effects this decision has on the girl child’s future in order to push their interests to take bold steps on how to help resolve this matter and it will save a lot of upcoming young girls to

also experience child marriage. Finally, the study arouses the interest of other researchers' interest in conducting research in this area of study to add to the existing body of knowledge. It also provides empirical work on the effects of child marriage within the Muslim communities in Kasoa.

2.6. Chapter Summary/Knowledge Gap

In this chapter, literature for the study is gathered from published books, journals, articles, website publications and other sources and it is rightly cited. The theoretical foundation for the study is based on the Social Learning Theory which highlights the behavior of people from the perspective of observation and imitation and also the Theory of Reasoned Action which also states that people's behaviors are backed by some intentions the person has for performing that behavior.

Literature provides data on the reason why child marriage is still being practiced, the recognition of the child's right the risks associated with children who suffer child marriage and who to blame as this practice keeps prevailing in our communities. A conceptual framework is also developed based on the evidence gathered from the literature.

Based on the reviewed literature, it is clear there is limited data on the practice of child marriage in Kasoa compared to the practice of child marriage in the northern part of Ghana. It is therefore necessary to undertake a study of this nature to address this existing gap.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The study uses a qualitative approach to explore the perception of the people in the Muslim communities in Kasoa on the issues of child marriage and how it affects the girl child's wellbeing and future. This chapter discusses the methodology for the study, the source from which the data are collected, and the related topics addressed by this study. Mention is also made of the description of the population and the sampling procedures, the instrument used for data analysis, collection of data, and data analysis.

a) Data Sources

Data collection as defined by Formplus (2021), is a methodical process of gathering and analysing specific information to proffer solutions to relevant questions and evaluate the results. It focuses on finding out all there is to a particular subject matter. Data is collected to be further subjected to hypothesis testing which seeks to explain a phenomenon.

When gathering information for research, there are two empirical alternatives. (1) Primary data; gathers raw data collected at the source, done through interviews, surveys, experiments, or observations. (2) Secondary data; the gathering of second-hand data collected by an individual who is not the original user. (Vignali, & Hallier 2015)

This study will use both primary and secondary data sources to provide the required responses to the research questions. The primary data will be acquired by administering interviews, while secondary data will be obtained through related literature on the research scope.

b) Sampling Technique

The sampling technique adopted for this study is the snowball sampling technique. The snowball sampling technique will be used for the community survey. Thus, the inhabitants of Kasoa Zongo were identified and contacted specifically for the required data.

C) Data Analysis

Data will be analyzed to provide and explanatory and standardized information. The results will be displayed using the thematic analysis approach. The results will then be properly analyzed by making sense out of the interview respondents' individual stories. This type of analyses will highlight important aspects of their stories that will best resonate with the readers of this study and also to aid in discussions, conclusions and recommendations.

3.1. Approaches

A qualitative research approach is used for this study which will attempt to identify the characteristics of the study variables through the explanation. The study will use a semi-structured interview guide which will be administered to sampled respondents to provide data to aid in further analysis. The data gathered will be expressed in explanatory terms to aid in better understanding and displayed using analytical frameworks. This method will be ideal because it provides an easy and effective method of collecting data on a range of research questions that can be expressed for better interpretation and comprehension.

3.2.0. Research Design

The design investigates possible relationships among variables without trying to influence those variables. It determines whether and to what extent or the degree a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables.

The study adopted a survey design. (Lau 2017) observed that explanatory surveys are used to investigate and understand a particular issue or topic area without predetermined notions of the

expected responses. This study is qualitative, and selected respondents will be allowed to provide responses and data related to the variables of the study and the study objectives for context analysis. A qualitative cross-sectional study approach is used to collect data on study variables at a particular time. The advantages of this study design are that it is economical and efficient; provides explanatory information provides standardized information. A disadvantage of this design is that it results in the likelihood of having a low response rate.

3.2.1. Population

The study population consists of about 2, 500 inhabitants of the Kasoa Zongo community. The inhabitants are of different characteristics but same or similar background. They live in the same community which is being governed or ruled by some traditional and religious leaders

3.2.2. Sample Frame

This is the list from which the sample units will be drawn. The sample frame to be used in the study is the list containing names of sub-areas of the Kasoa Zongo community. This helped to ensure that comprehensiveness and accuracy regarding the sample selected would be assured.

3.2.3. Sample Techniques

A non-probabilistic sampling method, specifically the snowball sampling technique, is employed in this study. It relies on a method that involves a primary data source nominating other potential data sources that will be able to participate in the research studies. This type of sampling method is purely based on referrals and that is how a sample could be generated in this study.

3.3 Sources of Data

The study will use both primary and secondary data sources to provide the required responses to the research questions. The primary data source is a questionnaire administered to the people of the Kasoa Zongo community. The secondary sources will include literature on the research scope.

3.4. Techniques of Data Analysis

The results from the respondents were analysed using the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and the Narrative Analysis. Data collected will be analysed by saying the meaning of the stories the respondents will share since their stories will have a functional purpose of making sense out of their world. Also, data collected will be analysed by explaining the personal experience of the respondents and also their world view concerning the subject matter. The results will then be properly classified under each of the objectives of the study to aid in discussions, conclusions, and recommendations.

3.5. Ethical Issues

This study involves sensitive issues, and as such, clearance will be sought from appropriate authorities. Permission will be firstly sought from the traditional ruler of the Kasoa Zongo community for permission to undertake the research. Also, participants were assured of confidentiality and that their identities will not be revealed.

3.6. Limitations/ Delimitations

Limitations

Child marriage is or has been one of the prevailing issues compromising the bright future of the younger once in our communities. This study is limited to child marriage rites among the Muslim communities in Kasoa. The study does not consider child marriage rites among the Christian or the traditional communities in Kasoa or anywhere in Ghana. Therefore, even though, study will contribute to the body of knowledge on child marriage within the local communities: however, a possible limitation is that it explores the prevalence of child marriage in the Kasoa Zongo

community only within the context of a Muslim community. It examines a purposeful sample and may not be generalizable to other contexts or types of marriages. One major limitation of the research is that it is a case study survey focusing on only one community.- The conclusions and results may not be easily applicable to other communities.

Delimitations

Child marriage is or has been one of the prevailing issues attacking the bright future of the younger once in our communities. This study is delimited to child marriage rites among the Muslim communities in Kasoa. The study does not consider child marriage rites among the Christian or the traditional communities in Kasoa or anywhere in Ghana.

3.7. A total brief description of the interviews used as the data collection tool for this study.

A semi-structured interview was used as the data collection tool for this study. A semi-structured interview was chosen in order to keep the respondents on track and focused to the agenda while they also shared their views and experiences concerning the subject matter. The interview guide contained open-ended questions which allowed the participants to explore and share their experiences. The semi-structured interviews allowed for impromptu questions and the answers that came out were very detailed and gave information on why people behave in a certain way. Using the snowball sampling method, 10 people were interviewed in the Kasoa Zongo community. Because the people living in that community inter relate and know themselves better, the snowball sampling method was chosen such that, respondents were allowed to recommend people who also have experience that relates to the agenda. Below is the table that contains the interview guide.

Table 3.7.1

Topic	Questions
Demographic Information	Sex Age Educational background
Questions on child marriage	What do you understand by child marriage? What is your view on child marriage?

	<p>What do you think may constitute to child marriage?</p> <p>Do you think young girls who marry before 18 could be exposed to some risks?</p> <p>Who do you think is the spearhead of the prevailing child marriage among various families?</p> <p>What could be some of the preventive measures that could tackle this issue?</p>
<p>Personal Experiences</p>	<p>Have you ever witnessed a marriage ceremony in which the bride was below 18?</p> <p>Has any young girl in your family ever experienced this?</p> <p>Would you want to give your teenage daughter out for marriage in the nearest future?</p>

Before the interview was administered to any participant, their consent was first sought and he or she was assured of the confidentiality of any information shared. No participant was forced to have the interview moreover; they were assured that if at some point of the interview they realize they are not comfortable or no more interested in the interview they had every right to decline. All the respondents were given the chance to share their experience freely and also share what they think about subject matter. All the 10 respondents were adults between 20 and 44 years, 6 females and 4 males.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the analysis from the data obtained. The discussions of the findings from the study were done under the following major themes: causes of child marriage, the effects of child marriage, who to blame, how to stop child marriage and the participants' personal experience on child marriage.

4.1. Data Analysis

All the 10 interviews were transcribed verbatim and Thematic Analysis was used for the data analysis which followed Clarke and Braun's six phases of thematic analysis; familiarization, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing up.

In the first step, the interviews were listened to for a number of times, noting initial impressions and getting familiar with the points raised. In the second step, a general codebook was developed according to the highlights of the sections of the transcribed data thus the important phrases and sentences. After, a shorthand label was developed to describe the content and the transcribed data was rearranged and summarized according to the descriptive codes. In this step, sub-themes derived from the findings were outlined and reviewed carefully to make sure that all the themes represent the data. In the fourth step, each theme was named and defined understandably such that they figure out how they help to understand the data. Finally, the data was analysed whereby the findings were developed into sections that address each theme.

4.2. Results

The findings of this study are categorized based on the themes that represent the data. Below is the table which contains the main themes and the sub-themes.

Table 4.2.1

Main themes	Sub-themes
A- Causes of child marriage	1- Child betrothal 2- Poverty 3- Preservation of cultural values 4- Propagation of religious beliefs
B- Effects of child marriage	1 -Domestic violence 2- Extreme poverty 3- Loss of self-esteem 4- Psychological effects 5- Environmental factors
C- Who to be blame	1- The fathers 2- Religious leaders
D- How to stop child marriage	1- Education through communication mediums 2- Application of the laws of Ghana
E- Personal experience on child marriage	1- A witness to child marriage 2- Opinions about child marriage

4.2.2. Causes of child marriage.

The participants shared some causes of child marriage. Almost all the respondents had the same view concerning this matter. During the interview section, the respondents are allowed to share their views on what actually brings child marriage or what actually constitutes to child marriage. Most of them did not deny the fact that child marriage is caused by poverty, child betrothal, preservation of cultural values and the propagation of religious beliefs.

Child Betrothal

Child betrothal is a very common cause of child marriage especially among the Islamic communities. According to the participants, some of the children who married before 18 were betrothed some men somewhere right after their birth. In some cases, the man takes care of the girl including her family and give or provide them with their needs. Right after, her puberty, she is married off to the man whether she liked it or not. At this point, she is made to drop out from school and move to her husband's house. *“Some of the girls are betrothed to old men right after their birth. These men take care of them and the family. As soon as she gets to her puberty stage, she is married off to the man while her wellbeing is future are not even considered”*. (Interview with respondent 1)

In other cases, the child is betrothed to her cousin (her uncle's son) who could be much older than her. According to the participants, some of the fathers want to maintain the wealth they have in their families. In view of this, they marry off their daughters to their nephews which is allowed in their tribe. This is a practice that has existed for a very long time and those who are into this practice find nothing wrong with it. *“Some of the parents also follow the practice of their forefathers. In other words, they imitate what they have learnt from the already existed people hence they follow and do same. In some rich families, the girls are made to marry their cousins with the aim of maintaining the wealth among themselves”*. (Interview with respondent 4)

According to the participants, the girls become so unhappy because, they are forced to marry someone they see as a brother. Child betrothal also occurs when the fathers tend to admire one particular family due to their good behaviours and in order not to miss the chance of becoming their in-law, he marries off his daughter quickly without considering her wellbeing or future.

Poverty

Poverty is the leading cause of child marriage since 9 out of 10 participants spoke about it as the cause. Poverty among some communities had influenced the decision of some parents to marry off their teenage daughters in order to reduce the burden of taking care of their numerous children. In the communities where child marriage is common, the parents seem to have a lot of children which

they find difficult to feed and not to talk of educating them. However, in the process of reducing the burden, they marry off the girls.

In some cases, the fathers marry off their children due to some financial gains they receive from their friends or peers. According to the participants, since the fathers want to maintain the kind gesture they get from those people, they marry off their teenage daughters either to them or to any of their family members. *“Some fathers also marry off their teenage daughters due to some financial gains and some selfish interests. Some also marry off their daughters due to poverty”*. (Interview with respondent 5)

The participants presumed that if these fathers were well empowered in terms of financial stability, they wouldn't have indulged themselves in this practice. Poverty has made such parents have a lot of reasons to give out their daughters with the aim of reducing the burden on them. Again, poverty has made some parents to believe that when they struggle in their poverty to educate their girl child and she gets pregnant out of wedlock, all the years she had spent in school and the money invested in her shall be in vain so marrying her off is a better option. *“Some parents also are not willing to invest into their daughters due to some rigorous perception and financial constraints. These parents believe that when a girl child is educated and ends up getting pregnant out of wedlock, the years of her being educated will be in vain”*. (Interview with respondent 2)

Preservation of cultural values

Every tribe or ethnic group has certain cultural practices and values that defines them therefore people do everything within their power to preserve their cultural values. During the interview section with the respondents, most of them affirmed that those people who practice child marriage tend to do that in order to preserve what their forefathers invented. Some of the cultural values are pre-marital sex, the avoidance of unwanted teenage pregnancies, and some immoral acts. One of the participants was very sentimental about their cultural values and sees child marriage as one of the tools that can preserve these values. *“Our forefathers were wise enough to invent this cultural practice. It helps to prevent unwanted teenage pregnancies and other immoral behaviours”*. (Interview with respondent 9).

These cultural values are very peculiar to them that is why such people do everything within their power to preserve it. According to this cultural certain, every girl's pride is her virginity. Therefore, if any girl marries as a virgin, it brings a lot of glory and honour to her and her family at large. In such communities, the girls are not allowed to walk around with boys in order not to trigger any immoral act. Sometimes when the girls grow up to certain stage, the parents are not able to have control over them anymore so in order to avoid her from practicing any immoral behaviour, she is married off as early as possible for her husband to have total domain over her. "*The main cause of child marriage is the quest to protect the girl's virginity and pride*". (Interview with respondent 10).

Propagation of religious beliefs

Muslims tend to be a one religious group fond of practicing child marriage. In a community where the Muslims dominate, child marriage is very common. During the interview section, 9 of the participants were Muslims and they explained the reason why most of their people are into this practice. According to them, the Qur'an gives them the mandate to marry off their daughters who are 16 years and above. In other words, if a girl turns 16, she is mature enough and ready to be married. One of the participants affirmed that this is the reason why the Islamic leaders are quite about this matter because it is not wrong to practice child marriage in the context of their religion. "*For instance, in Islam, a girl of 16 years is of age and can get married*". (Interview with respondent 3). This has influenced a lot of some parents' decision to marry off their girl child.

Child marriage has become the common practice among Islamic communities because it is backed by the Qur'an. Some of the participants confirmed that, some of the fathers indulge in this practice so that they can dodge their responsibilities without anybody blaming them. For instance, a father of about 10 children who finds it very difficult to feed his children decides to practice his religious belief by marrying off his daughters as soon as they turn 16. If it happens like that, it covers his inability of taking care of his children.

In most of such cases, the girls get married to men that can take care of them in order to follow what Prophet Mohammed said about marriage. Prophet Mohammed said, "الباءة منكم استطاع من"

فليتزوج”: translated into English as “he who can afford a living should marry”. Because of this, fathers ensure that they give their daughters to men who are capable of taking care of their wives.

4.2.3. Effects of child marriage

Child marriage has a lot of negative effects on the girl child’s wellbeing. The people who are into this practice do not factor the dangers it could have on the girl child when making such decisions. These girls since they don’t have the voice to speak out, find themselves in a lot of trouble and yet they cannot share their pain. Most of the time, they are not given a listening ear.

Domestic violence

The participants shared the effects child marriage has on the girls and domestic violence seemed to be one of the prevailing effects. This mostly happens because the men place less value on the girls and handle them badly without any caution. In other words, the higher the age difference between the girls and their husbands, the more likely the girls are to experience domestic violence. In some cases, the girls are made to serve their mother-in-law and do a lot of farm work for them. Some of the girls are also asked to trade with their mother in laws without any financial gains. *“Yes, they face a lot of risks such as domestic violence and child labour. Sometimes, the girls are made to work hard in the farms. Some of them too suffer physical abuse from their husbands”*. (Interview with respondent 3)

Child marriage exposes these young girls to domestic violence in which their parents may probably not be aware of. The parents may not be aware due to the distance. According to one participant, some of the girls are married to men who live very far from where the girl lives or sometimes the girls are sent to men who live in countries like Mali and Niger. When the distance is very far, the girls do not get the chance to report the abuse they suffer since they don’t know anyone there and their husbands keep taking advantage of that and keep abusing them. *“Another risk is that some of the girls live very far from their parents so whenever she needs help she doesn’t seem to find one. For instance, a girl in Kasoa who has been married off to a man in Mali suffers a lot of abuse and finds no help since she doesn’t know anyone around to help her”*. (Interview with respondent 4)

Extreme poverty

Child brides end up finding themselves in extreme poverty due to their inability to be productive. The girls are not allowed to work or do anything productive which leaves them in extreme poverty and hunger. This mostly happens when the girl gets married to a polygamous man who already has a wife or wives. *“Another risk is a girl getting married to a polygamous man. She finds it very difficult to have some level of security in her marriage and since she is not allowed to work, taking care of herself and her children become barely impossible”*. (Interview with respondent 4)

Poverty is another prevailing effect of child marriage on the child brides because their husbands are not even able to take care of their current wives and children hence taking care of the new bride becomes a problem. Girls are mostly affected with poverty because they are denied access to education and employment opportunities so their only source of income is the little they get from their husbands which is always insufficient. Some of the participants affirmed that the poverty becomes more extreme when the girls begin to have children, sometimes the children suffer malnutrition.

Loss of self-esteem

Some of the participants affirmed that the child brides lose their self-esteem when they realize that most of their peers have achieved greater heights. It is in the dream of every child to be well educated and empowered. However, the child brides suffer emotional trauma when they see their peers going to school while they are forced to live with a man who is old enough to be their father.

“Before a girl is married of, she had a normal self-esteem and she even able to share her problems freely. Most of the girls in their teens are very courageous among their peers and are able to relate well with them. From the moment they are forced to marry someone she does not even know, it minimizes her self-esteem drastically”. (Interview with respondent 7)

According to the participants, when an adolescent brides get pregnant, they tend to hide themselves a lot in order not for their peers to see them. This emotional trauma makes them lose their self-

esteem. They begin to feel or think that they are worthless and cannot fit into the standard of their peers. At some point, they are mocked by their peers which even increases the emotional torture they suffer.

Psychological effects.

After the interview sections with the participants, it was realized that after the child brides have lost their self-esteem, they begin to experience some level of psychological trauma that is why some of them run away from the marriage and go back home or find another place to hide themselves. *“One of the girls that I know who was about 16 years run away from the marriage 2 months into the marriage. Upon interrogating her, she told me that her husband is too old for her and she is not interested in staying in the marriage”*. (Interview with respondent 2)

According to the participants, the girls are not secured around their husbands since they see their husbands to be too older than them and old-fashioned so they run back home. One respondents confirmed a story about one child bride who run out of her marital home to come back and stay with her parents because she was not comfortable with staying with her husband. Unfortunately, her parents kicked her out to move back to her husband’s house because they have already collected her bride price. The girl out of frustration didn’t return to her husband’s neither did she return to her parents’ and since then, no one knows her whereabouts. Sometimes, their situation makes them over think and run mad. In some cases, when the girls flee from the marriage, they become very deviant and practice a whole lot of immoral behaviours. *“Due to the early exposure of sex, when the girls finally flee from the marriage, they tend to practice it more with other men which ends up making them prostitutes”*. (Interview with respondent 4)

Environmental factors

Some respondents affirmed that change of environment has an effect on the girl child's wellbeing. According to the participants, there are some cases where the girl would have to spend some months or years with her mother-in-law to learn how to cook for her husband and also learn certain cultural values before she is allowed access to her husband's house. The child brides are made to do a lot of tedious work all in the name of learning how to keep a home. Sometimes, they work like slaves. *“After the marriage rites were performed, she was made to stay with her mother-in-law until she had matured enough and has learnt how to cook and to take care of a home before was allowed access to her husband's house. During the months she spent with her mother-in-law, she was denied access to formal education”*. (Interview with respondent 3)

The change of environment affects the way the girls think and does things due to cultural differences and imbalances. Sometimes, because her new home has certain beliefs and practices she has never seen nor heard, fitting in in such an environment becomes very difficult since she is nothing but a young adolescent who knows virtually nothing about marriage or serving in-laws. And when she finally gets to her husband's house, she would have to learn something new and different since her husband might have his own preferences.

4.2.4. Who is to be blame

Almost all the respondents blamed the existence of child marriage on some people in the communities who propagate this practice. According to the participants, child marriage has been a chronic practice because the fathers are the spearhead of child marriage and some religious leaders in Islam have been quiet about it.

The fathers

Most of the participants mentioned fathers as the people who push for child marriage in the families. The fathers are sometimes noted for marring of their stubborn daughters as a form of punishment. The fathers believe that when they marry of their stubborn daughters, their new home will transform them and again, they cannot misbehave in their husbands' house. *“It is mostly the fathers who push their daughters into force marriage. Most of the time, they push their stubborn daughters into marriage by means of punishing them or making them change from their bad behaviours”*. (Interview with respondent 5)

According to the participants, the mothers are mostly not in support of child marriage but they dare not challenge their husbands. This is because in their cultural certain, it is the man who make all key decisions and he makes them alone without consulting his wife or wives. One respondent affirmed, *“... the pain of a mother seeing her underaged daughter being married off to one old polygamous man is so disheartening”*. (Interview with respondent 1). In most cases, the mothers don't see their daughters for a very long time after the marriage rites unless they travel all the way to visit them (thus if they have the financial means).

Most of the fathers are also noted for marrying of their underaged daughters to prevent them from indulging themselves in pre-marital sex that could bring shame to his family. The fathers weigh the options of marrying off their daughters at a tender age and a shameful teenage pregnancy and realize that marrying them off at a tender age seems better. *“Among the Muslim communities, it is the fathers who push for child marriage with the aim of preventing immoral behaviours among their daughters.”* (Interview with respondent 6)

The religious leaders

The respondents shared their sentiments on how the Islamic leaders are handling the matter. According to them, the religious leaders seem to be too quiet about this issue and it's worrying. The respondents believed that if the religious leaders could add their voice to the anti-child marriage team, the problem will solve. Some participants believe that these religious leaders are in a tight corner concerning this matter because child marriage is not a bad practice according to their religion hence stopping it is barely impossible.

Some of the respondents were very angry about the silence of the religious leaders who have the voice to speak up and yet are still quiet and watch these girls suffer a lot of abuse from their parents, husbands and in-laws. In view of this, some participants confirmed that they have lost hope and they don't think this problem could be eradicated. *"I don't think there could be a solution to this problem because the people who are into this practice cannot be advised to change due to the way they think and perceive things. Child marriage has been a chronic practice among some Muslims and some tribes in Ghana because the Islamic leaders themselves are quiet about it and I don't think any person can change it"*. (Interview with respondent 3)

4.2.5. How to stop child marriage

The quest to eradicate this practice has been a journey for many stakeholders in Africa and beyond and some interventions have been administered yet it still exists. The respondents however shared some interventions that could help solve this social problem.

Education through communication mediums

Some respondents suggested that the stakeholders educate the people who are into this practice through some communication channels. According to the respondents, there could a possibility that the people don't understand the need to educate the girl child rather than collecting her bride price. In some cases, the fathers are noted for just imitating what they have learnt from their predecessors and they don't actually understand the implication of their actions." *I believe the parents ought to be educated concerning this issue. Most of the parents who indulge in this practice are mostly ignorant since they didn't get enough formal education"*. (Interview with respondent 1)

Some fathers also think that the only way to preserve a girl's virginity and protect her from pre-marital sex is to marry her off right after puberty. From the perspective of the respondents, the fathers need to be brainwashed from this ideology and begin to think about the welfare and future of the girl child. The mothers also need to be educated on how to speak up when her husband

begins to make arrangements to marry off their daughter. Most of these mothers are very timid and can't speak up and defend their daughters in times like this.

The application of the law

Some respondents suggested that the fathers who marry off their daughters at a tender age need to be dealt with because the Ghana laws forbid any girl under 18 to get married. The laws also forbid any parent to force his girl child into marriage. *“I think the government should start arresting and jail parents who marry off their teenage daughters”*. (Interview with respondent 5) According to the laws of Ghana, every child has the right to be educated and the rights to liberty. The practice of child marriage puts the girl child in a very tight corner where she loses the chance to be educated and empowered.

Some participants anticipated that if some parents were to be set as "scape goats", the others will be alert and sit up. It is believed that because nothing is done to those who are into this practice, the cases of child marriage keep rising by the day. *“Why is child marriage common in Africa and not common in some part of the world? It is because their laws are working and not even the Muslims can go against it”*. (Interview with respondent 10)

4.2.6. Personal experience on child marriage

At the later part of the interview, the respondents were given the opportunity to share their personal experience on child marriage and if they have witnessed child marriage within the Kasoa Zongo community. Child marriage does not only happen in rural areas however, it does occur in the urban areas as well and Kasoa is not an exception.

A witness to child marriage

Majority of the participants testified to the fact that child marriage does happen in the Kasoa Zongo community and it has existed for a very long time. One may think that Kasoa is a very big city however such practice may not exist but some people in the Muslim community have endorsed it and they practice it a lot. It was such an astonishment when two of the participants revealed that they have witnessed quiet a number of child marriages in the community of which some of the girls were only 12 years old. *“Yes, I have witnessed about four child marriages here in Kasoa and they all became school dropouts due this practice. Sometimes the marriage rites are performed in Kasoa, but in some cases the marriage rites were performed in their hometown (Northern part of Ghana). One of these girls was only 12 years old”*. (Interview of respondent 2)

“Yes. I witnessed a 12-year girl who was forced to get married to an old man here in Kasoa due to some financial gains. The girl run out of the marriage few months into the marriage and since that time she has become very deviant in the society. She was sent back to her husband’s house on 3 different occasions yet she still run away”. (Interview with respondent 4)

Some of the respondents revealed that in some cases, the girls run from the marriage and come back home due to the trauma they go through. However, the parents still send her back to her husband’s house or marry her off to another man. *“One of the girls that I know who was about 16 years run away from the marriage 2 months into the marriage. Upon interrogating her, she told me that her husband is too old for her and she is not interested in staying in the marriage. Her parents however gave her out for marriage again to a different man and she rum away again and this time around, she didn’t come home and no one knew her whereabouts”*. (Interview with respondent 2)

Some of the fathers are noted for threatening their daughters and force them to stay in the marriage due to some financial gains. The girl out of fear would have no option than to stay in the marriage and bear with the current situation. *“Yes, I witness a child marriage some years ago in Kasoa. The father married off his daughter of 15 because of money. The girl was however pushed into the marriage in order for her father to enjoy some financial gains from her husband. The girl was threatened by her father so she had no option than to stay in the marriage. She has 3 children now at age 19”*. (Interview of respondent 5)

According to one of the participants, some of the girls are not able to bear the pain despite the threats and warnings from their fathers. These girls choose to run away from the marriage and hid somewhere rather than being in their marital home and suffer. They migrate to a different vicinity where no one can trace them and force them to marry again. *“Yes. I have lived in Kasoa for the past 10 years and I have witnessed 4 child marriages. One girl that I knew run out of the marriage and for some years now no one seems to know her whereabouts”*. (Interview with respondent 8)

Some of the participants have equally witnessed child marriage in their families. Since they are Muslims, it wasn't surprising to hear them confirm that some of their family members have experienced child marriage. It was heart-breaking when some of these respondents had to see their very own suffer this emotional trauma and they cannot do anything about it because it is the fathers who make the decisions. *“Yes. Two young girls in my family who lived in my hometown (Yendi) have experienced child marriage. They happened to be my uncle's daughters”*. (Interview with respondent 8). *“Yes. Two of my daughters married at 16 and some of my nieces also married at 16”*. (Interview with participant 9)

4.2.7. Opinions about child marriage

In the initial stage of the interview, the respondents were asked to share their views on child marriage. Some of the respondents were very sentimental about it in the sense that they wish this practice never existed. Majority believe that child marriage should be abolished from our system and rather focus on educating the girls or perhaps think about their future and wellbeing. *“Child marriage is something I don't support at all and I would wish that any parent who will force his or her teenage daughter into marriage should be arrested and dealt with”*. (Interview with respondent 1)

some of the respondents affirmed that forcing a child into marriage make her loose her freedom and begins to struggle for some basic needs at a very tender age. *“I don't think it's right for a teenage girl to be forced to get married without allowing her to pursue her dreams. Most of these girls are forced to drop out of school in order to focus on the marriage which tends to destroy their future. Sometimes, the girls get frustrated and run away from the marriage for their freedom”*. (Interview with respondent 3)

The participants were asked if they will indulge in this practice someday. Their responses showed that most of them were not interested in adopting this practice. Some of the affirmed that, they wouldn't make their children go through something that they themselves have never experienced. *“No. I will never force my daughter to experience something that I have never experienced”*. (Interview with respondent 5)

Some of the participants also understand the importance of educating the girl-child than collecting a bride price. Some of the women even affirmed that they will never be timid like some women who allow their husbands to marry off their daughters, they will rather speak up and avoid it from happening. *“No, I will never allow my teenage daughter to get married. I would rather invest in her to have adequate formal education to better her life”*. (Interview with respondent 3). *“No. I will never support child marriage. Moreover, I will not allow my husband to marry off our teenage daughter”*. (Interview with participant 4)

Majority of the respondents who were even Muslims seemed to be unhappy about the practice of child marriage and wished there will be a time where no one will hear of its existence. That is why they kicked against the idea of marring off their underaged daughters in the future.

4.3. Discussions.

This study sought to identify the reasons why people still practice child marriage in this present age and time, the risks associated to child marriage and also to understand the ideology behind the Islamic perception on child marriage. The study revealed a lot more detailed explanations about the predictors of child marriage in the Kasoa Zongo community. According to the results of the study, some young girls between the ages of 12 and 16 tend to fall victims of child marriage in the Kasoa Zongo community. This implicates that most young girls in the Kasoa Zongo community are likely not to enjoy the privileges which are being enjoyed by their counterparts in the Greater Accra region.

This revelation is not too surprising since in most African countries, child marriage seems to be a part of cultural practice. According to Efevbera and Farmer (2021), “Guinea has the eight highest

rate of child marriage as 1 in 2 girls in Guinea is married off before their 18th birthday”. Asian countries such as India and Iran are not left out since child marriage equality dominates in their communities. “In Iran, there are no strong laws to prevent child marriage, and there are few laws that there is not enough supervision over their enforcement, and even civil organizations are not strong enough to support girls who do not want to marry in childhood, and in this way, child marriage is facilitated”. (Solhi et al., 2020)

Since child marriage is one of the tough-provoking challenges which is faced by most developing countries, this study sought to find out why this practice keeps getting common by the day. The results proved that, most of the people who are into this practice do so due to some economic factors. The fathers especially marry off their daughters due to poverty or some financial gains. Some are also into this practice as a form of protecting their cultural beliefs in form of helping the girl child to protect her virginity. Some believe that their fore-fathers were wise enough to invent this practice therefore, they will continue from where their fore-fathers stopped. This makes the earlier assertion in the study very valid. “Ethnicity and the fear that girls may engage in premarital sex are two important factors associated with early marriage in rural Gambia”. (Lowe et al., 2020)

The results equally proved that when a father wants to reduce the burden on his head as the head of the family, one of the solutions is to marry off his daughters. Ghananewsagency.org cited “Participants of the National Stakeholders’ engagement affirmed that poverty has made a lot parents marry off their underaged daughters in order to gain some economic opportunities and some girls too voluntarily move from their parents’ house to stay with their boyfriends because their parents are not able to take care of them”.

This is enough evidence to prove that if poverty is eradicated from our system, child marriage could be a thing of the past. It was revealed in the study that the fathers are the cause of child marriage in a lot of families because they push for it to happen. This notion meets with a publication from BBC concerning the worries shared by Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa who argued that “men have "aided and abetted" the continuation of child marriage”. According to the results of the study, some fathers marry off their underaged daughters due to

some financial gains and the reduction of the burden on them. The mothers are mostly not happy with the practice however; they cannot say anything against it because it is against their culture to challenge their husbands.

Again, our findings revealed that some Islamic leaders are to be blamed for the practice of child marriage in most Muslim communities. The religious leaders could use their voice to stop this practice however, they have been silent on this issue due to the fact that any Muslim girl of 16 is up for marriage and can be married off. People still argue that the Qur'an didn't make it compulsory for all hence, the girls should rather be educated and empowered in order to push for growth and development in the country. For it is believed that when more girls are educated in a country, they add their knowledge to the development of the nation.

Some fathers also marry off their underaged daughters in order to protect their dignity as a girl. Some people have been made to believe that if a girl should stay in school, she might be influenced negatively by her friends to practice indecent behaviours. In order to prevent this from happening, the fathers marry them off to sometimes old men who are old enough to be their fathers. This relates to the earlier assertion that some girls suffer this kind of abuse because their fathers want to protect them from practicing immoral behaviours. "In traditional Ghanaian societies premarital sex and child bearing is frowned upon, hence early marriage is encouraged. For instance, betrothal (in some cases, exchange of girls) is often early, sometimes before birth to ensure sex and child bearing occur within marriage" (Ahonsi et al., 2019).

The results from the interview also agree with some findings made earlier in the study about the victims of child marriage facing some risks. The results proved that these girls face some risks such as domestic violence, exposition to extreme poverty, no access to education and psychological factors.

Again, girls who marry before 18 are likely to be widowed because their husbands are too old for them. The results proved that in some cases, the girls are married off to polygamous men who may already have about 2-3 wives. When unfortunately, the husband dies, the girl finds herself in a very big trouble.

4.4. Conclusions

The presentation and analysis of the findings demonstrate that the items in the interview guide, identified to measure the reasons for the practice of child marriage, the risks associated to child marriage, who to blame so far as child marriage still exists and the view of the participants concerning this matter. The number of respondents who chose to agree with the motion of this study indicate the fact that child marriage is indeed a canker that needs to be abolished from our system as Africans.

In identifying the people's perception on child marriage, it was noticed that the respondents showed a low level of satisfaction in a sense that they see the victims suffering a lot of abuse even from their own parents.

The findings also showed that there is a low apathy or interest on the part of the participants in joining this practice due to the risks involved. This is why most participants expressed their disappointments in some leaders who have been quite about this matter and the girls keep on suffering from the abuse and emotional torture.

However, the low number of participants who agreed with the practice of child marriage shows that there are indeed some few people who will still choose culture over other issues such as gender rights. This also indicates that such people are willing to indulge in this practice and don't see the risks involved to be problematic at all. The next chapter will draw conclusion on the major findings in the study and recommendations will also be made.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. Introduction

This chapter seeks to summarize the work that has been done in this study. It entails the summary of the key findings, the conclusion and some recommendations.

5.1. Summary of key findings

This study focused on identifying the reasons why child marriage still exists, the spearheads for this practice, the risks associated with child marriage and the people's perception on child marriage. In this study, a semi-structured interview was constructed, administered and the data collected were transcribed and analysed to prove a significant relationship between the earlier assertions in the study and the data collected.

The study showed that among the participants, a greater number disliked the practice of child marriage and wished that it will be abolished forever. The fewer number didn't see anything wrong with the practice of child marriage and further stated their pleasure in practicing their culture and ethnic values.

The findings also showed that fathers take keen interest in seeing their daughters get married before they turn 18 as a result of poverty and cultural and ethnical factors. Through the findings, it was noted that majority of the fathers practice child by way of coming out of poverty and not necessarily practicing the cultural values and few of the fathers practice child marriage by way of propagating their cultural values.

It was also revealed that the victims of child marriage (the girls especially) face numerous risks which endanger their lives and future. Most of the participants agreed to this assertion while a few of them thought differently.

The study equally showed that among the respondents of the study, a greater number of them did not endorse child marriage and never wished to practice it someday. On the other hand, a few number of the participants endorsed child marriage and wished to practice it someday.

5.2. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that; there is the existence of child marriage among the people of Kasoa, specifically the Kasoa Zongo community. Child marriage has existed in this community for a very long time and many people might not be aware. Many people believe or think that child marriage exists in the northern part of Ghana alone however, this study has proven beyond reasonable doubts that child marriage exists in Kasoa as well.

The researcher realized that the existence of child marriage in Kasoa is not noticed by stakeholders because majority of the girls are married off to men who live outside Kasoa. In some cases, the girls are sent to men who live in neighbouring countries like Mali and Niger.

In view of this, it was concluded that the fathers marry off their underaged daughters to men who live out of Kasoa in order not to create an “open eye” for people to notice and judge them. Looking at the demographics of the Kasoa communities, any person who practices child marriage will be seen and judged in a certain manner.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is deemed necessary to make the following recommendations:

The child marriage believers should be educated on the need to educate and empower their girl child rather than being in a hurry to collect her bride price. From the findings of the study, it was noticed that most people who are into this practice are ignorant about a lot of the adverse effects associated with the practice. The education could be administered through various communication channels like TV, radio, newspapers and social media.

Again, the stakeholders need to get involved in the child marriage eradication process in Kasoa. Most of the women whose underaged daughters have been married off are dying in silence and cannot voice out either because in their cultural certain, a woman is not supposed to react to her husband's actions. It is believed that if stakeholders like the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), the Social Welfare Unit and the various NGOs should put their heads together in resolving this issue, the mitigation process will go a long way.

Last but not the least, the application of the existing laws that prohibit child marriage must be fully enforced. The fact that no one has been made to face the law, in any meaningful way, has given the people much more energy to continue with this practice. It is believed that if the government should make the practitioners of child marriage face the law accordingly, this practice will be reduced and further be eradicated. It is also noted that some of these people may not be aware that forcing an underaged girl into marriage is against the laws of the land and that is why they ought to be educated.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

A SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE KASOA ZONGO COMMUNITY

Dear Participants:

My name is Dorcas Ayimaa Asare, a student of Ghana Institute of Journalism. I am conducting a research based on the effects of child marriage on the girl child's wellbeing and future. The purpose of this interview is to gather relevant data in order to understand the high rate of child marriage in the Kasoa communities. I am requesting you to share your genuine experience to enhance the success and validity of this research. Please note that your personal details will not be revealed and the responses you provide will only be used for academic purpose.

Topic	Questions
Demographic Information	Sex Age Educational background
Questions on child marriage	What do you understand by child marriage? What is your view on child marriage? What do you think may constitute to child marriage? Do you think young girls who marry before 18 could be exposed to some risks?

	<p>Who do you think is the spearhead of the prevailing child marriage among various families?</p> <p>What could be some of the preventive measures that could tackle this issue?</p>
<p>Personal Experiences</p>	<p>Have you ever witnessed a marriage ceremony in which the bride was below 18?</p> <p>Has any young girl in your family ever experienced this?</p> <p>Would you want to give your teenage daughter out for marriage in the nearest future?</p>