

**THE IMPACTS OF CHILD MARRIAGES ON YOUNG GIRLS. CASE**  
**STUDY OF MUTASA DISTRICT.**

**By**

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The undersigned certifies that he has read and recommends to the Midlands State University for acceptance; a dissertation entitled:

**THE IMPACTS OF CHILD MARRIAGES ON YOUNG GIRLS. CASE STUDY OF  
MUTASA DISTRICT**

Submitted by: **ADOLF TINASHE MUTANDWA** REG # **(R134424J)** in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in Development Studies

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## DECLARATION

I, **Adolf Tinashe Mutandwa** of registration **R134424J** declare that this is my original research project and has not been presented to any university before. All sources are properly cited. It is being submitted in partial completion of the requirements for the BSc Honours Degree in Development Studies, in the faculty of Arts at Midlands State University, Zimbabwe.

Signed by

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Date

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## **DEDICATIONS**

I dedicate this work to my mother Ms Patsanza and my family members whose unforgettable inspiration helped me realizing my full potential and the faith they had in me.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost I would like to express my profound gratitude to Ms Mukuhlani, my supervisor for the guidance he gave me throughout the study. The constructive comments she made in each stage of the study, right from the onset enlightened me and shaped the direction of this research.

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## **Abstract**

*Despite international agreements and national laws, marriage of girls below 18 years of age is common worldwide and affects millions. Child marriage, defined as marriage of a child below 18 years of age is an ancient worldwide custom. Other terms applied to child marriage include "early marriage" and "child brides." Child marriage is a human rights violation that prevents girls from obtaining an education, enjoying optimal health, bonding with others their own age, maturing, and ultimately choosing their own life partners. Child marriage is driven by poverty, religious beliefs, security of the child to mentions just a few. This thesis therefore seeks to depict the drivers of child marriages in Mutasa pointing out also the effects on girls' health: increased risk for sexually transmitted diseases, death during childbirth, and obstetric fistulas, school dropout, domestic violence, child sexual abuse and poverty. Critical issues are the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among young people; childbearing by young girls, which can lead to obstetric fistulas and death of the mother; and child marriage Girls' offspring are at increased risk for premature birth and death as neonates, infants, or children. To stop child marriage, this study points out possible strategies or policies and programs that must be implemented like educate communities, raise awareness through NGOs and relevant line government ministries, engage local and religious leaders, involve parents, and empower girls through education and employment. Awareness of reproductive health issues in most affected areas in developing nations is of paramount importance to combat the problem of child marriages.*

## **ACRONYMS**

AIDS.....	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CEDAW.....	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC.....	Convention on the Rights of Children
CRIN.....	Child Rights Information Network
BEAM.....	Basic Education Assistance Module
DAPP.....	Development Aid from People to People
HIV.....	Human Immune Virus
MDG.....	Millennium Development Goals
NGO.....	Non-Governmental Organization
STI.....	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UNICEF.....	United Nations Children Education Fund
UNESCO.....	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN.....	United Nations
WHO.....	World Health Organization
ZDHS.....	Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey
ZIMSTAT.....	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency



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## **INTRODUCTION**

The issue of early child marriages have emerged as the topical issue of much heated debate as to the social economic and political effects on young girls hindering development in Africa and Zimbabwe as a nation. Early marriage, also referred to as child marriage, is defined as any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing. According to the data collected by UNICEF in 2014 worldwide, more than 700 million married women were married as children and about 250 million were married below the age of 15. This study specifically looked at the aspect of early child marriages impacts on the young girls as a barrier to national development of Zimbabwe. The research was an analysis of life experience of the young mothers who are in marriage in a bid to explain the problematic issue of child marriages. Mutasa District was the area of study which the research was based on and this is because it is one of the Districts where the issue of early child marriages have intensified due to high population of the Marange Apostolic sect members which encourage the marrying of children at their young age.

The main objective of this study is to address the horrific consequences of early child marriages on girl child, like social evils of sexual exploitation, physical abuse and deprivation of education and how this is affecting national development of Zimbabwe

## **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The marriage of young adolescents remains prevalent in many parts of the world despite repeated efforts by national governments and international development agencies to eradicate the practice. According to the State of World Population Report 2005, 48 per cent of women in Southern Asia,

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

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

Zimbabwe, as one of the developing countries is experiencing similar cases of early child marriages. There is much concern over the involvement of girls who are married before the national maturity age of 18 years since they still have dreams of acquiring educational

achievements and finding employment to end the cycle. This has for several years resulted in high deaths of young pregnant women and also high maternal mortality rates in parts of Zimbabwe as Morna et al. (2015) postulates that teenage pregnancies has been cited as the leading aspect upon maternal mortality in Zimbabwe.

There is much concern over the involvement of girls who are married before the national maturity age of 18 years since they still have dreams of acquiring educational achievements and finding employment to end the cycle of poverty in their families. According to the Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS) of 2010, the country's current economic and political situations have forced many families to violate children's rights, especially those of the girl-child. Some teenagers are forced into marriage because of poverty, religious beliefs and cultural practices that encourage children to be married under the age of consent. Research findings have shown that in Zimbabwe the major drivers of child marriages are economic hardships in families and also religious and cultural practices. Kim et al. (2001) postulates that social and economic factors contribute to the rise of teenage pregnancy in Zimbabwe which is a result of early marriages and this can be evidenced with an analysis of the impact of diamond mining in Manicaland since 2006 on teenage women's sexuality and reproduction. The existence of economic poverty in Manicland increased young women's vulnerabilities by engendering their economic reliance on men who were mining diamond in Marange for survival of their families through marriage.

Mutasa District as the area of study is one of the Districts that has high cases of child marriages because the Marange community went through a social and economic transformation with the advent of illegal diamond mining in 2006. This transformation coincides with the rising trends of

early marriages resulting in teenage pregnancy in Manicaland since 2006 as shown by ZDHS data of 2005-2015. Therefore such a transformation could have had an impact on the sexual and reproductive experiences of young women in the area. Since the discovery of alluvial diamonds In Marange, there was an influx of thousands of artisanal miners and buyers from different social contexts. Thus, the arrival of the miners was followed by new patterns of sexuality and reproduction from other cultures, probably influencing the rise of child marriages in Mutasa.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Early child marriages have emerged as the major factor hindering national development of Zimbabwe. Many multilateral institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations like UNICEF have advocated for protection of the rights of children through programs and awareness campaigns against Child Marriages. Despite the fact that the Constitution of Zimbabwe under Marriage Rights section 78 (1) stipulates that every person who has attained the age of eighteen years has the right to found a family child marriage still remains the major threat to the lives of young girls and a stumbling block towards the attainment of development. The problem of child marriages in Zimbabwe is driven by unconstitutional laws or Acts that guide children into child marriage. These acts are the Section 22 (1) of the Marriage Act [*Chapter 5:11*] which sets the minimum age of marriage at 16 years and also the Customary Marriage Act [*Chapter 5: 07*] which is also unconstitutional because it does not provide the age limit of 18 years for marriage.

Studies have shown how child marriage infringed the fundamental rights of the girl-child particularly; the right to education, injury or abuse including sexual abuse; the right to be protected

from all forms of sexual exploitation; the right to educational; the right not to be separated from parents against their will and the right to protection against all forms of exploitation affecting any aspect of the child's welfare. Current interventions lack commitment and coordinated action to eradicate this practice thus, this study sought to establish strategies that can help to eradicate the girl-child marriage in Mutasa District

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

It was important for the researcher to take a position on which theory or theories could guide the research.

### **Socialization Theory**

The socialization theory depicts that parents do not have long term effects on the development on the child's personality. This theory is context specific that when socialization takes place there are many factors attached to it that contributes to the child's perspective nature of life that leads to child marriage. According to Belsky et.al (1991) the theory is presented in terms of two divergent development pathways considered to promote reproductive success in the contexts in which they have arisen. One is characterized in childhood by a stressful rearing environment and the development of insecure attachments to parents and subsequent behavior problems, in adolescence by early pubertal development and precocious sexuality and, in adulthood, by unstable pair bonds and limited investment in child rearing, whereas the other is characterized by the opposite. In this study this theory explains that people around the child or parents' treatment of the child as well as the environment give the hand in causing child marriage of the child. For example, the mother of

the kid was a child bride, also her grandmother and so on if the family has been poor or the child grew up being abused by the surrounding people, it will lead to child marriage.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

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

**Marriage** is the formally or legally recognized union of two people as partners in a personal relationship specifically a union between a woman and a man. **Child Marriage** is a formal or informal marriage of two people with one or both parties below 18 years but the practice is more common in young girls. Therefore any marriage of a person or persons below 18 years is child marriage because at the age of consent or when a person is considered to be responsible and mature is 18 years so any form of marriage below 18 years.”

The minimum age of marriage was prescribed by the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) (CEDAW Committee) to be 18 years. This was as a result of the definition of child by Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Children (CRC) which came into force on 2 September 1990. Article 1 of CRC defines a child to mean every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. According to SS 78 (1) and 81 (1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe the minimum age of marriage is set at 18 years. This therefore means that any child or



any person under the age of 18 cannot be compelled to enter into marriage except given written permission by the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs.

Mutasa District is the area of research where child marriages are prevalent among the Johanne Marange Apostolic sect. This church is commonly well known as ‘*vapostori*’ that is believed to constitute approximately 1.2 million members in the country and Johanne Marange the church founder passed away in 1963, leaving 13 widows who were taken over by his son Abel (Hastings, 1994). Since the religion promote child marriages there are cases where the parents are marrying their children to elders from the church or to older men without the child’s consent as a sign to appease the avenging spirits. This issue of child marriages has reached an alarming level and the effects are just serious such that there is need to intervene in order to rescue the girl-child from further abuse of early marriage.

## **RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The main aim of the study was to investigate the major social and economic effects of child marriages and how these effects are affecting young girls in Mutasa District,

### **Objectives**

- 1 To identify the factors leading to early child marriages in Mutasa District, Manicaland
- 2 To analyse the effects of child marriages on young girls in Mutasa District
- 3 Suggest possible strategies that can be implemented to eliminate child marriages in Mutasa District, Manicaland.

## **Research Questions**

- What is causing child marriages in Mutasa?
- What are the, (a) the social (b) psychological and (c) physical effects of early child marriages?
- How are these effects affecting the young girls in Mutasa?
- What strategies can be employed to eliminate child marriages in Mutasa District, Manicaland?

## **AREA OF STUDY**

Mutasa District is one of seven districts in the Manicaland province of Zimbabwe. Mutasa district is located 30 km from Mutare and stretches up to the Honde Valley, which is about 100 km northeast of Mutare along a tarred road that branches off the Nyanga road. Population in Mutasa stands at about 169 00 as of the last census held in 2012 (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency 2012). Most of the health care facilities in the district are owned and run by the government's Ministry of Health and Child Welfare although local communities are involved in the management of some clinics. The main referral hospitals are Hauna Hospital and Bonda Mission Hospital. There are several poly-clinics in the district that offer primary health care to people from the villages in the district. Some of the people in Mutasa District are Catholics ,Anglicans, Methodists, African Apostolic Church AAC known as (Mwazha) but a large group also is a follower of the Johanne Marange Apostolic Sect .Traditional beliefs are also still dominant. The area of study is highly populated by the Johanne Marange sect members which practice child marriages and that is why Mutasa District was cited as the area of research. Below is a map showing Mutasa District.

## Mutasa District Map

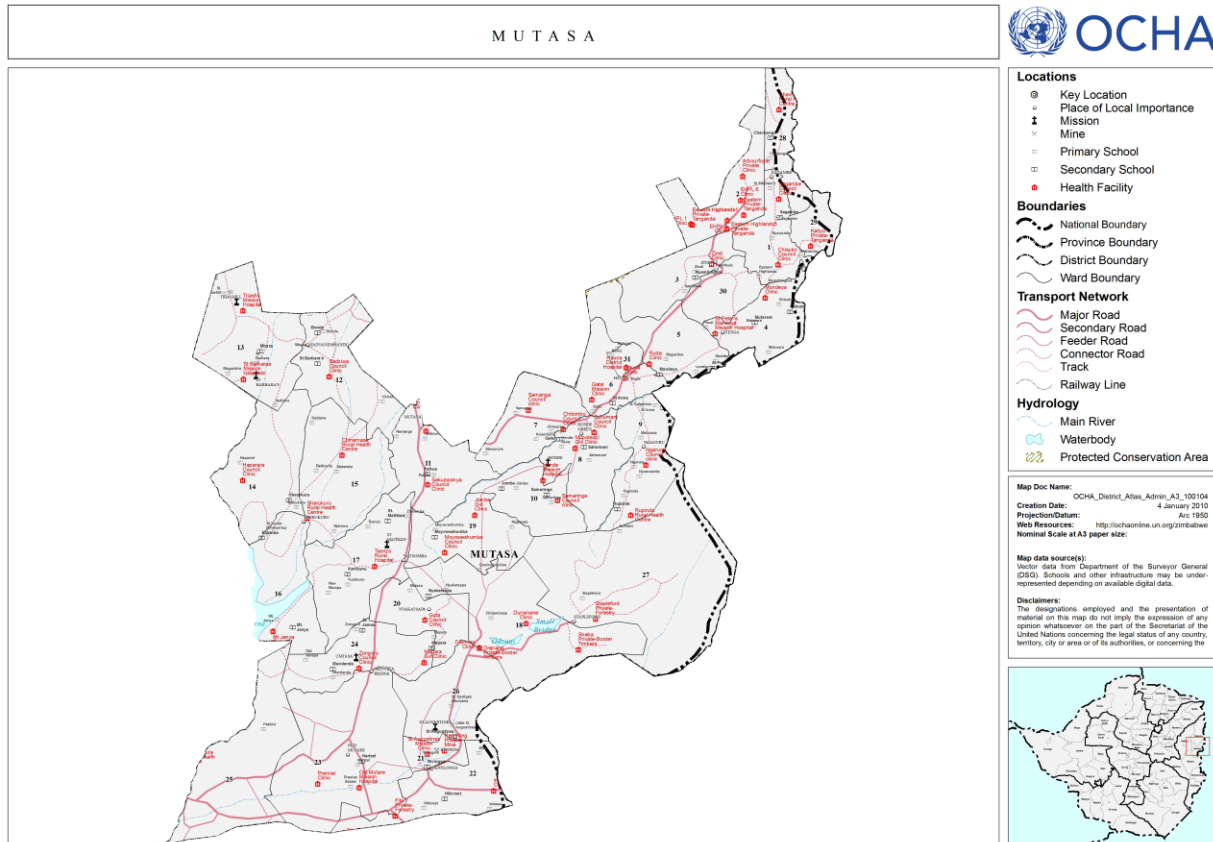


Fig 1. Mutasa District Map

## JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Though a lot has been written about the early child marriages in Mutasa District in Manicaland, what remains less understood and analyzed is the impact of early child marriages on young girls. In seeking to address the existing empirical gaps within the literature on early child marriages, the study differs from the existing literature because it's an eye opener to the community and encourages the community of Mutasa to take part in fighting child marriages as it pointed out the

horrific consequences being faced by young girls The study also helps the government Ministries and non-governmental organizations that deals with such issues in the district to come out with proper policy strategies to overcome the problem.

The choice of the study was also guided by the statistics gleaned from the government's national statistical agency which revealed in its 2012 census report that Mutare rural was amongst one of the eight districts of Manicaland province heavily affected by the challenge of high teenage pregnancies resulting from early child marriages. These census results revealed that 12 664 women aged between 15 to 19 years in Manicaland rural gave birth in 2012, Zimstat (2013). According to Morna et al (2015) the trends of teenage pregnancies resulting from early child marriages is problematic as it has been cited as the leading influence upon maternal mortality rate in Zimbabwe. This therefore, is crucial to the development discourse since maternal deaths and child marriage impedes women's empowerment and participation in social and political decision making processes. This then raised my interest as a student – researcher to explore such a contemporary issue which has remained topical in both scholarly, policy and in public discourses.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The term “literature” refers to the analysis of text books or manuscripts. Although many people rightly associate literature with novels and poetry in research the term is more specific in that it consist of interrelated ideas based on evidence and writing from previous studies. In terms of a literature review, the term literature means the works the researcher consulted in order to understand and investigate the research problem. Literature review offers a justification for the

research in terms of what has been done before, a reasoning of its value and importance. The literature review assist the researcher to get points on what has been dealt with previously that needs to be addressed to now.

Though a lot has been written about the issue of child marriages what remains less understood and analyzed is the impact of child marriages on the girl child. In Bangladesh, poverty is the major driver of child so marrying off a child is seen as a way of relieving burden to the family as White (1992) postulates that after birth, girls are viewed as a burden to the parental household, whereas boys are regarded as an asset .Where a girl's family is very poor she may be married as a third or fourth wife to a much older man, as a way of the family to eradicate poverty and also to fulfil the role of sexual and domestic servant. Polygamous child marriages in Bangladesh expose women to oppression by men and since the women would be coming from poor families this keeps in bay the aspect of subordination as Khan (1993) postulates that non-accessibility to the resource base keeps women away from income generation and maintains their subordinate position. This therefore have a negative impact on the girl child than the boy child in a child marriage because it is the girl child who will carry the burden of being a subordinate to the husband.

A recent study by UNICEF in six West African countries<sup>2</sup> showed that 44 per cent of 20-24 year old women in Niger were married under the age of 15. The need to follow tradition, reinforce ties among or between communities, and protect girls from out-of-wedlock pregnancy were the main reasons. In the communities studied, all decisions on the timing of marriage and the choice of spouse are made by the fathers.

According to ZIMSTAT (2013), 12 664 women aged between 15 to 19 years in Manicaland rural gave birth in 2012 and this result will affect children's experience causing a lot of problems

ranging from social, psychological, educational, emotional and even physical eventually deaths. This therefore hinders the functionalism perspective, for a community to function effectively and productively for sustainable economic and social development in which every member of the society should be an effective participant.

Studies have shown that there is much concern over the involvement of girls who are married before the national maturity age of 18 years since they still have dreams of acquiring educational achievements and finding employment to end the cycle of poverty in their families. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, (2004) globally, 39 million girls aged 14–15 in developing countries do not reach secondary education due to several reasons that include early marriage. This would mean that if a child gets into marriage before she completes her education she will have to depend on the husband or the community as UNICEF, (2000) postulates that failure of a girl child to further with education because of marriage increases the girl-child's chances of remaining a second class individual and dependent in the society.

Writing on the rise of teenage pregnancies, several scholars noted that early child marriages coupled with teenage pregnancies are a problem which contributes to health complications such as maternal deaths Magadi et al. (2007), Mashaba and Robson (2002). In fact, according to the World Health Organization (2015), pregnancy related complications are the second main cause of deaths amongst teenage mothers aged between 15-19 years globally. In Zimbabwe, the problem of unplanned teenage pregnancies is reportedly more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas as evidenced by a Zimstat survey which reveals that in 2014 alone 28.7% of rural teenage women had begun childbearing as compared to their urban counterparts at 14.2% (Zimstat, 2015). In these

rural areas, Marange area located in Mutasa District (this study's research area) contributes to these national statistics.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology refers to the design of collecting information that is going to be used by the researcher. A research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigations conceived as to obtain answers to research questions and or problems. In this study, the researcher will used qualitative approach

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Qualitative**

The study was based on a qualitative research. According to Ghauri (1995) qualitative research methods emphasize on understanding interpretation, observations in natural settings and closeness to data with a sort of insider view. The qualitative paradigm was employed because it enables the researchers to collect in-depth information on what the community say or do in their natural settings. The design enables the researcher to focus on the affective, cognitive and behavior domains of the participants on the effects of early girl-child marriage. According to Gage, (2011) the question of perceptions and attitudes of the community or participants is an epitome concept and requires direct inquiry so as to unravel perceptions because they lie at the heart of the participants.

The researcher employed the qualitative method of research because it is an appropriate method of studying phenomena using a thorough analysis of an individual case among many. Marshall and

Roseman (2006) contend that a case study provides a unitary character to the data being studied through triangulating facts that are derived from a variety of instruments. Therefore, the effectiveness of a case study lies in its ability to provide in-depth understanding of important aspects of a new problematic area.

## **SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

In this section the researcher is going to discuss the sampling methods that were used in carrying out the study. According to O’Leary (2014) sampling is the process of identifying specific features of a population that are to be included in the study. In this study the researcher employed purposive sampling and snowball sampling.

### **Purposive sampling**

The researcher purposively sampled the young mothers between the age group of 14 and 20years in Mutasa District. The researcher identified the young mothers through working with government ministries like Ministry of Women Affairs and Community Development and NGOs operating in the area of study. Laws et al. (2003) postulates that purposive sampling entails selecting a population with characteristics that are correlated to the purpose of the study. The researcher’s choice for purposive sampling was stood guided by the fact that these young women were knowledgeable on issues of the social and economic effects of child marriages and the life experience under the circumstances of child marriage in their community. Since most of them were experiencing life in child marriage, they were better placed to offer insights to this study and helped the researcher in answering the research questions.



### **Snowball sampling**

The researcher also utilized snowball sampling. Such a technique is privileged because it enables the student-researcher to get respondents through referrals. Through this technique, after identifying a young mother who then helped in referring the researcher to another teenage mother. The researcher also used the same technique in identifying NGO workers and government personnel who also referred him to their colleagues and work mates. Referrals and recommendations helped especially in a context.

## **DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

Data collection methods are instruments or ways which the researcher used to collect data beyond the physical research of the observer. According to Ghauri (1995) when using a special technique for collecting data the collected data can be either primary or secondary. In this study the researcher used questionnaires, interviews, case studies and also direct observation.

### **Interview**

Qualitative research interview seeks to describe and the meanings of central themes in the information world of the subject. In this study the researcher used open ended interviews to obtain information from the community. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006) interviews are regarded a very reliable way of accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and their constructions of reality. In order to understand others the researcher needed participants' constructions of reality to ask them and ask participants in ways that they can provide in-depth description of the phenomenon.

The researcher managed to interview 14 respondents and the research was targeted at the females between the age of 14 and 20 who were not married and also those in marriages so as to get primary information on their system of life and the challenges they were facing in those marriages. The researcher interviewed one girl who was not married, 9 young mothers, 2 married men from the Marange Apostolic Sect, one policeman and also health worker. Interviews were conducted for 10 – 20 minutes and these were carried out privately so as to allow the interviewee to freely answer the researcher's questions, to safeguard confidentiality and to create a form of cooperation and understanding between both parties so as to gather sufficient information to answer the research questions. The researcher also interviewed the government workers from the Ministry of Women Affairs (Ward Development Coordinators), also NGOs agents in Mutasa about how child marriages were affecting the young girls.

### **Questionnaire**

During the course of collecting data the researcher used the questionnaires. A questionnaire is a tool used to collect and record information about a particular issue of interest or topic and it is made up of questions and space for answers. The questionnaire had closed and open- ended questions to solicit in depth understanding of the phenomena. The questionnaires allowed the researcher to gather a lot of information in a short period of time from different people. The questionnaire included questions like:

1. What are the major causes of early child marriages in Mutasa District?
2. What effect does the issue of child marriages have on the girl child?
3. How do the people of the community or Mutasa District view the issue of child marriages?
4. How is the aspect of child marriages in Mutasa District hindering development?

## **Direct Observation**

The researchers also employed direct observation to generate data in the participants' natural environment. According to Johnson (2007) direct observation enables the researcher to record what is happening in the real world of the participants. The researcher visited the area of study observed how the people were surviving, paying attention to activities, appearance or physical structure and also way of life young women in Mutasa District were experiencing. This enabled the researcher to judge from his perspective the life that the participants/ young mothers or girls in child marriages were living. This had an advantage that it facilitated for accurate and unbiased data.

## **Desktop Review**

The researcher also used secondary sources of information which include internet, journals, textbooks, scholarly articles, newspapers. These secondary sources were important to the researcher because the topic of child marriages is mostly found in secondary sources and also because of the area of study it helped the researcher to acquire some information which the researcher failed to get from the participants. Secondary sources also were of greater advantage to the researcher because they provided a wide database of information which was vital to the research of the study.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Before commencing with the fieldwork, the researcher first assessed the research approaches to make sure that no harm befall any of the respondents. This was done by re-looking at the research objective and questions as well as the semi-structured themes to make sure that they would not

offend, embarrass or cause any feelings of resentment or discomfort to the respondents. Having done this, the researcher then travelled to Mutasa District to acquaint himself with the society and the community. After that the researcher applied for consent to interview young women in Mutasa District from the District Administrator of Mutasa District Office as well as from the different organizations for the key informant interviews. The researcher also had to sought informed consent from the young mothers themselves before conducting face to face interviews

Throughout the research process, the researcher ensured that all respondents participates on their own free will. This was done through seeking consent before the interviews as well as permission to take down notes or recordings during the interview. Some respondents may have refuted that the researcher take notes from what they were saying, therefore the researcher carried the school identification card that will help convince the respondents that the research is for academic purposes. The school identification card also helped in interviewing the key informants so that they give their names for purposes of data analysis. Before commencing with the research, the researcher will provide a brief background information of the study and also disclose his identity to the participants. When conducting the interviews the researcher did not directly depict that he was against the issue of child marriages as this would have affected the study since most of the people in Mutasa District are the Marange Apostolic sect members, they would have refused to participate. Confidentiality and anonymity were also guaranteed in all interviews.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The researcher faced some challenges during the research and these include:

**Finance** – the researcher faced difficulties in funds as he was travelling from one point to another and conducting interviews in search of information for the research and thus it became a problem to smooth sailing of the research.

The area of study, Mutasa District is highly populated by the Johanne Marange apostolic sect members. Given that members from this church are very secretive about their practices and that discussing marriage issues is considered taboo, there were high chances that the researcher would face non-disclosure on issues concerning early child marriages from Johanne Marange apostolic sect members. However, the researcher tried to overcome this challenge by convincing the participants that the research was for academic purposes only and also by avoiding criticizing their religion.

**Security** – some organization / NGOs and government ministries that the researcher went to look for information at had tight or difficulty formality and the researcher was not able to get in to conduct interviews because they demanded permission from the National Head Office formally which was long procedure and hence no information was obtained.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO EARLY MARRIAGES**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Child marriages has emerged as the problem situation hindering development in Zimbabwe as it poses negative effect on children. This section is going depict the various causes of chid marriages in Mutasa District. The prevalence of child marriages in Mutasa District is as a result of various factors and these factors can be grouped into economic, social and cultural or religious. The factors include unemployment, lack of education, financial problems facing teenagers, security of the child, poverty and religion. Religion is the major cause of child marriages in Mutasa District since the area is highly populated by the Marange Apostolic Sect members and their religion does not prohibit child marriages but rather they encourage them which has escalated the problem in the area.

### **1.2 ECONOMIC FACTORS**

#### **1.2.1 Unemployment**

Unemployment has emerged as one of the main economic causes of early marriages. This is because unemployment cause many girls and boys to engage in love affairs at an early age. Experiences show that girls get into relationships at an early stage because they have nothing to do in life so they tend to get a social life in relationships. This is more prevalent to girls than boys as young girls who would have finished their primary or high schooling engage in relationships with older boys or men who are employed and some who would have finished school earlier than

those girls. The researcher observed that approximately more than 50% of the young mothers who were married below the age of 18 are still unemployed and they are house wives. Some of the causes range from low education status to male prejudice among the employees who subordinate women's reproductive roles with interference in their work performance even if they have to perform the job

### **1.2.2 Financial Problems facing teenagers**

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

### **1.2.3 Poverty**

Poverty is also one of the causes of child marriage. Families who are poverty stricken tend to marry their young girls so as to get income. According to UNFPA, poverty and child marriage are connected, where poverty exists, child marriage is likely to also be present. The researcher observed that more than 25% of the population in Mutasa community are poor judging from their way of living, activities and assets at their houses and also most of the population stricken by poverty are young mothers or women. The girl is often considered as an economic burden, where families are often eased when finding a spouse for the girl (UNFPA, 2006:18). This tends to take place when the child is still very young. This is because where poverty is acute families and the young girls believe that marriage is the solution to their problems. The families believe that marrying a daughter reduce the family expenses by ensuring they have one less person to feed provide clothing and also education.

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



## **1.3 SOCIAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CHILD MARRIAGES**

### **1.3.1 Lack of education**

Lack of education is also a driving factor to early marriage of young girls. Young girls that enter into marriage are mostly not educated. According to Plan International Policy Brief 2016 access to education has declined due to economic factors and the imposition of school fees, net enrolment ratio has declined from 98.5 per cent in 2002 to 91 % in 2009 while about 30 % of children are unable to complete primary education and more than 300 000 secondary school age children are out of school per annum. Education is a vital factor in breaking the cycle of poverty, sexual discrimination and oppression by men. Therefore these young girls are rushing into marriage and some forced into marriage because they lack education and they do not have another better chance of pursuing their life in working for their own life, feeding themselves and also looking after their families. Lack of education to both the parents who marry their children at early ages and also those young girls that rush into marriage at early stage is that they do not have the knowledge of the horrific consequences of child marriages, they do not know that it affects the girl child on health conditions and her life too.

To add more, lack of education as a root of child marriages is as a result of the violation of the child's right to education by the Marange Apostolic church in Mutasa District. The Marange Apostolic Church prohibit some children from going to school for some reasons of best interests of the leaders. The researcher interviewed 2 young mothers who refused to disclose their identities and to be recorded and they reviewed that young girls and boys are deprived their right to education because of their religious leaders that view education as something that is not imperative especially for the girl when the central point is being a spouse and mother in the future, not focusing on

attaining more knowledge. This therefore depicts the religious effect of the Marange Apostolic sect towards depriving the children education.

The researcher observed that more than 25% of the young girls and boys population in Mutasa are not going to school as at January 2017. Sibanda (2011) postulates that this trend has affected the girl child ending up being idle and at times vulnerable to being married off (by their parents) to the elderly men especially in Vapostori sect. This trend has continued through generations and is maintaining the legitimatization of child marriage. (UNFPA, 2006:19) Education, economic solvency and age help to develop a woman's personality so marrying off of girls at an early stage stop them from developing their personality. This therefore undermine the girl child's capacity to see the fortunes of the world but rather depend on being married at younger age because she would have been blinded by the lack of education.

### **1.3.2 Security of the Child**

Since the HIV and AIDS epidemic was brought to attention, the number of child marriages has increased significantly. The most probable reason for the encounter is the families attempting to protect the girls from such infections and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) by child marriage. Since the emergence of diamond mining in Marange area there has been an increase in HIV & AIDS and STIs spread in Manicaland due to prostitution as Muchadenyika (2015) posits that, as most of the laborers had left behind their wives, they resorted to prostitution at the local shopping Centers such as Marange shopping Centre, Mukwada and Bambazonke. He notes that the age group most affected by prostitution was the 12 – 16 years age group and this age group accounted for the high rise of teenage pregnancies in Marange. In these possible scenarios, having a spouse is considered the best option to keep the girl safe. After interviewing two men from the

apostolic sect church, the participants reviewed that in cases of sexual assaults marrying a man who is at a higher position is the best way for safeguarding the young girls. Therefore, entering an early marriage can be seen as protection of the girl for various reasons. (UNFPA, 2006).

### **1.3.3 Gender inequality**

The unfair treatment of girls' children over the boys is also another driver of child marriages. Child marriage is also as a result of the inequality between men and women and the stigmatization of women across the globe (WHO, 2013). In most cases girls are not valued as important people than the boy child instead they are seen as burden to their families. Therefore, according to Save the Children marrying a girl child at a younger age is viewed as a way to ease economic hardships transferring the burden of a girl child to the husband. The researcher observed that many young girls are sent to fetch firewood and also fetch water and some of the muscular duties that are desirable for boys and this may force a girl to be married to be relieved from that burden.

The prevalence of child marriages of young girls in Mutasa District is also as a result of a patriarchal dominated community which is highly populated by the Marange Apostolic sect members who believes that a man controls the female sexuality, for instance, how a girl should behave, how she should dress, who she should be allowed to see, to marry. Patriarchal society always considers a woman's personality as a challenge therefore girls are married off at an early age to stop the development of their personality. The Marange Apostolic Sect members also safeguard the girl's sexuality and virginity by practising child marriage. One participant from the Marange Apostolic Sect who refused to disclose her identity reviewed that this is because girls who become pregnant out of marriage are not only a shame and dishonour to the family but also a

bad reputation to the religion so they practise child marriages to have control over sexuality of young girls.

#### **1.3.4 Environmental Influence**

The environment that children grow up in contribute to the life experience that they will have when they grow up because a child replicates on the environment that he or she grew up in. the researcher observed that environmental influence is also another major driving force of child marriages in Mutasa District. The area is highly populated by the Marange Apostolic sect members who practise child marriage and they view it as a thing or a system that all the young children must follow. The researcher interviewed a young mother in a polygamous child marriage who refused to disclose her identity for her own reasons and the participant reviewed that since she started attending school her wish was to finish her primary school and get old enough to get married so that she can have her own family because when she was young she used to admire her relatives who were married whilst still young and felt it was an achievement. Therefore the children who grew up in the Marange Apostolic church believe that early marriage is a way or a path that they all should follow in because it is from child marriages where they come from and parents teach their girl children that when they grow up they should be married to the elder men from the church.

#### **1.3.5 Lack of access to information**

Limited and lack of access to information is also another cause of child marriages in Mutasa District. The young girls lack the knowledge of the effects and the negative impacts of early marriages because they lack access to information like internet, newspapers, books which depicts the horrific consequences of child marriage. This is because the majority of the young girls are

denied education and access to the internet and other source of information due to their religion and their church leaders that prohibit the children from going to school. The area of study is highly populated by the Marange Apostolic sect members and their church does not view education as a need to a child especially the girl child because they believe a girl child is only there to grow up to an age that she can bear a child then get married to an elder person from their sect. Since the community of Mutasa is highly populated by the members from the Marange Apostolic church lack of access to information for the young girls is another major driver of child marriages.

### **1.3.6 Culture and Religion**

Culture and tradition is also another major driver of child marriages in Mutasa District. Child marriage is a traditional practice that happens simply because it has happened for generations. Through Desk Research and interviews the researcher came to an understanding that in Mutasa Community the Marange Apostolic Sect members believes that when girls start to menstruate they become women in the eyes of the community and therefore marriage is the next step towards giving a girl her identity as a wife and mother. Menstruation is also a part of child marriage in some communities since the girl is then considered being ready for carrying a child and is therefore considered an adult (UNICEF, 2001:6). According to a young mother (participant from the Marange Apostolic Church) who refused to disclose her identity, her father asked her to get married at an early stage otherwise he was going to marry her off to a man of his choice because the father didn't want to do away with the shame of a child who do not get married to their religion so she got married before the age of 18 and now she have one child. Traditionally these practices often go unquestioned because they have been part of the religious life and identity for a very long time for the people in Mutasa since the emergence of the Marange Apostolic sect in the area. But

as Graça Machel, widow of Nelson Mandela, once said traditions are made by people – and people can unmake them.

### **1.3.7 Polygamy**

Polygamy also constitute to the causes of child marriages in Mutasa District. Polygamy is a system or condition of having more than one wives at the same time. The researcher observed that his practice has been the system of the community of Mutasa District causing the young girls to be married at an early stage and almost 50% of the young mothers are in polygamous marriage. This system of marriage is more prevalent in in areas such as Marange there has been a prevalent trend of young women being married to the older men within the church (Machingura 2011:197). This is because the community is highly populated by the Marange Apostolic church members and their religion does not prohibit but rather encourage polygamy. According to Hastings (1994) Johanne Marange the church founder passed away in 1963, leaving 13 widows who were taken over by his son Abel. This therefore has caused child marriages as young girls from the church are being married to the elders from the church as second or third wives.

### **1.3.8 Teenage sex**

Teenage pregnancy can be defined as a teenaged or underage girl, who usually between ages 13 to 19 years old, becomes pregnant. Most young girls nowadays are willing to engage in sex for various reasons such as the economic benefit or just plain promiscuity and experimenting. In Zimbabwe, Mutasa in particular families value marriage such that when a young girls falls pregnant she is married off if the father of the child accepts responsibility. The researcher interviewed a young mother aged 20 from Kagweda Village who refused to disclose her identity

and she revealed that she was married off by her father after he heard that she had sex with her boyfriend and the father went with her to the boy's parents and left her there and now she is married to that person with one child. Teenage pregnancies therefore cause early marriages.

### **1.3.9 Impunity**

Inadequate implementation of the laws result in child marriages being conducted with impunity. In fact, advocates against child marriage argue that the conviction rate in breach of the prohibitions against child marriage in most countries is virtually nil. With regards the issues of child marriages in Mutasa police officers often turn a blind eye and this might be why it continues to happen. One male participant interviewed by the researcher about how the community view the issue of child marriage revealed that the law enforcements like the police should take serious action about reported cases of child marriages to show that the practice is indeed against the law. The participant reviewed that the law enforcers are reluctant at times to act to the reported cases in Mutasa which is causing the problem to escalate each and every day. No one should be allowed to rape a 13 year old girl, impregnate her, and then marry her after the fact, and still be protected by the law. Paradoxes and legal contradictions are rife in the institution of child marriage. While consensual sex with girls below a minimum age constitutes statutory rape, the same act with a similar aged girl goes unsanctioned by the protective mantle of "marriage".

### **1.4 Summary**

The problematic issue of much heated debate has emerged as the factor contributing to underdevelopment of Zimbabwe. This section depicted the major economic, social, cultural and religious factors that are leading to child marriages in Mutasa District. The factors include

unemployment of young girls and boys, financial constrains facing teenagers, security of the parents from the parents and religion. This chapter depicted religion as the major factor contributing to child marriages in Mutasa because of the Marange Apostolic Church which promote child marriage whilst they constitute a large number of the district population.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **EFFECTS OF CHILD MARRIAGES ON YOUNG GIRLS IN MUTASA DISTRICT**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

When entering marriage there are some complications and consequences which mainly affect the young girls. This chapter is therefore going to depict the consequences or negative effects of child marriages on young girls in Mutasa District. Consequences of child marriage on young girls can be both physical and psychological. These negative effects include sexual abuse which is mainly common, wide spread of STIs, HIV and AIDS, high rate of school dropouts, death of the child or the mother due to early pregnancy, and domestic violence.

#### **2.2 Fatality Associated with Teenage Pregnancies**

Child marriages are highly associated with early pregnancies in many young girls and when under the age of 18 the girl is more likely to have severe consequences while expecting and delivering a child. The risk of dying for both the girl and her child is because the young mother's body is not yet enough developed. The researcher interviewed one participant from Kagweda Village in ward 14 and she reviewed that 75% of the young girls who die expecting and while delivering are from the Marange Apostolic sect and this is because these young girls bodies are not yet strong to carry and deliver a child and also that they do not get proper health care because their religion does not allow them to go to the hospital.

Young girls particularly those below 15 years of age face serious reproductive health hazards sometimes losing their lives as a result of early pregnancies. If a mother is under the age of 18, her infant's risk of dying in its first year of life is 60 per cent greater than that of an infant born to a mother older than 19 (UNICEF, 2009). The complications that occur during pregnancy as well as giving birth may also result in the premature birth of the child, low growth rate, poor mental and physical growth of the child. Along similar lines, Svanemyr et. al (2012) postulates that studies indicate that a child from an under-aged mother has 40 per cent less chance of surviving during the child's first year.



*Fig 2. Expecting young mothers at Hauna RDC Clinic in Mutasa*

### **2.3 Domestic Violence**

In a child marriage the common factor is that the husband is older than the wife and this has intensified the problem of domestic violence in child marriages. Girls find themselves in new homes where they have more responsibilities than before, without much independence or decision-making power and have no sexual experiences and do not know how to negotiate sex with their partners within the marriage. Therefore the girl is likely to lose influence and this sometimes result in domestic violence (World Bank, 2014). The assault can be physical such as beating, it can also be psychological they cause anxiety and in some cases can result in suicide.

In Mutasa community there has been high level of cases of domestic violence in child marriages that has been reported. According to NGOs reports from Plan International on the cases of domestic violence it has been as a result of misunderstanding between the husband and the wife on issues of taking care of children and the home because the girls are too young to be responsible for being the mother of the household. One participant who refused to disclose her identity also pointed out that economic dependency on the husband and lack of social support that expose the girl child to some kind of violent ordeal during marriage among the child marriages of the Marange Apostolic sect members. The participant also reviewed that in most child marriages young children are not allowed to use money in the house and only the father of the house is allowed to go to work leaving the mother with no options but rely on the husband. Therefore this has caused a lot of physical assaults of the girls in child marriages.

### **2.4 Polygamy**

Child marriages are also in most cases highly associated with polygamy. According to Sachiti (2011) polygamy is seen as a taboo that is not widely understood or accepted e.g. in the Roman

Catholic Church but in the Apostolic churches and some upcoming churches, polygamy is accepted and widely practiced. One of these societies is the Johanne Marange Apostolic Church. The researcher observed that almost 50% of young mothers in Kagweda Village are in polygamous marriage and they are from Marange Apostolic sect after seeing young mothers carrying children on their back walking around at a homestead with a polygamous setup of houses. The Johanne Marange sect encourages men to have two or more wives if they can sufficiently support those wives. They believe that the more the wives a man can have, the more power and success they are believed to have in the society.

Since the Johanne Marange sect is a diverse group that share the values of “authoritarianism, collectivism, and patriarchy where the husband is the head of the house and they have control over everything, children in polygamous marriages may face abuse, psychological distress, low self-esteem, and marital discord. According to Elbedour et al., (2012) the frequent marital conflict and distress can cause emotional harm to these learners through conflict, tension, unequal treatment by the polygamous father and jealousy. The researcher interviewed one participant in a polygamous child marriage from Kagweda village and she revealed that from her own experience in their Apostolic setup when a girl gets married at a younger age she will feel discontented with her family and she will be unable to receive any emotional or social support from the family and the fathers in particular. The participant also reviewed that this has resulted in psychological damage on the children in polygamous marriage and increased suffering.



*Fig 3. Polygamous chid marriage in Kagweda Village, Mutasa*

## **2.5 School Dropouts**

Child marriages undermine the girl child's ability to pursue education after marriage. According to the UNICEF (2011) report, lack of education has proven to be one important factor for the high number of child marriages, especially for girls who often are the most exposed. Through desk research and interviews the researcher came to an understanding that after marriage young married girls' access to education is very limited because of the restrictions placed on their mobility by the domestic burdens of a mother, child bearing and social norms that view marriage and schooling as incompatible resulting in high cases of school dropout.

The Marange Apostolic religion beliefs is one of the factors that has resulted in school dropouts of young married children in Mutasa District as Nenge (2013) postulates that the Marange church

curtails education for women. One young mother from the Marange Apostolic church who refused to disclose her identity and more information about herself and their religion reviewed that she was married off by her father when she was doing form 3 and after she got married she was told to stop attending school because it was of no significance since she was going to be a mother. It is common for young adolescent girls' schooling to be stopped during the religious festival in July during which they may be married (Child Rights Information Network [CRIN 2011]). As revealed by the Education Officer, Mr. Derek Duma during the commemoration of the International Day of the Girl Child, The Standard of 21 October, 2012 also reported on increasing cases of girl- child marriages in Mutasa District in Manicaland Province where nearly 50 girls drop out of school each year and get married to older men and the religious and cultural beliefs were cited as the major causes.

The Marange Apostolic church members' beliefs are that when a girl is married there is no need for her to further with the education because they believe that when a girl is married her duties are to take care of the child and the home. Mutyaba (2011) postulates that instead, taking care of the household and the children tends to be the major task for young brides and the social norm in many communities. Their religious practices also deny the girls opportunity to have access to social networks and social structure because they do not believe in education for girls. Depriving a girl in child marriage education often result in the lack of knowledge on health issues as Abu-Ghaida & Klasen (2004) postulates that lack of education also makes it more difficult for girls to access information on health and welfare for them and the child. Because they are married early, little or no focus is given to their education, going grossly against the maxim, "educate a woman and you educate a family, educate a family and you educate a nation." Pulling out of the future generations

from schools perpetuates the cycle of poverty and thereby, curtails the overall economic growth of the nation.

## **2.6 Sexual Abuse**

A girl in a child marriage is likely to be sexually abused by the husband because of age difference because of lack of knowledge. Young girls with low levels of education are more likely to experience violence by an intimate partner. A young girl who is still struggling to understand her own anatomy is forced to make conjugal relations and often show signs of post-traumatic stress and depression owing to sexual abuse by her older partner. Neither their bodies are prepared for that nor their innocent little minds. Forced sexual encounters lead to irreversible physical damage to the girl child and also psychological damage. In a child marriage the girl child experience marital rape whereby the husband sexually exploit the child and the children are reluctant and scared to report.

The girls from the Marange Apostolic church who are in child marriages are not allowed to report any case of sexual abuse to the relevant authorities before they report to their parents and the church leaders. After interaction with one girl who refused to disclose her identity the researcher came to an understanding that the sexual abuse cases in a child marriage do not go further to the police or relevant authorities but instead the issues are discussed by the church leaders and the victims are just called for guidance on how to handle a husband in a marriage and some of the victims of sexual abuse are scared to report the abuse but just suffering in their marriage. This has therefore results in physical damage of the girl child and also anxiety. Some of the girls who marry

young also join the bandwagon of perpetuating cruelty against women. Sex determination and female feticide continue, for a girl child would possibly further add to their woes.

## **2.7 Wide spread of HIV & AIDS**

Young brides face a higher risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases in her marriage with an older man with more sexual encounters. The risk of contracting STI's and HIV rises and married girls are unable to negotiate safe sex and are more likely to be married to older men with more sexual experience who are more likely than single men to be HIV positive. Girls that got married to elder men at their tender age are most likely not to be able to resist sexual intercourse with the partner and this has resulted in sexual abuse of young girls and also wide spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV & AIDS in Mutasa community. Through (key informant interview) interaction with officials from NGOs working in Manicaland it came to the attention of the researcher that most families in Mutasa were child headed. As a result of the death toll stemming from HIV/AIDS, most surviving children turned to marriage as a way of fending for their siblings and this has made the young girls vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and their chances of contracting HIV & AIDS increased. This trend was also witnessed in rural communities such as in Marange.

## **2.8 Poverty**

Poverty is also another factor that results from child marriages. Child marriages hinders the ability of the girl child in reducing or eradicating poverty through depriving the girl from education which negatively affect her ability to get a proper job and get income. In order to show the social effects of the girl-child the researcher generated data from the participants that depicted that almost 50%



of young girls married before 18 years are poor. This is because some of them inherited the poverty from where they were married to and also due to the Marange Apostolic church beliefs that deprive girls from education when they get married the aspect of being unemployed and being a house wife contribute as well.

There is evidence from direct observation that the girl-child's pattern of life in the marriage relationship was characterized by poverty, sorrow and anguish like a slave in a marriage relationship. The researcher observed young mothers coming from the forests to fetch firewood on barefoot carrying their children on their back. Due to the participants' religious ethics and fear of their husbands they refused to talk to the researcher about their way of life.

## **2.9 Summary**

This chapter depicted that a child marriage is associated with some complications and consequences which mainly affect the young girls. Consequences of child marriage on young girls can be both physical and psychological. These negative effects include sexual abuse which is mainly common, wide spread of STIs, HIV and AIDS, high rate of school dropouts, death of the child or the mother due to early pregnancy, and domestic violence. This chapter therefore by pointing out the consequences or negative effects of child marriages on young girls in Mutasa District the researcher concluded that the Marange Apostolic Sect or Church in Mutasa District has emerged as the centre of all the problematic situations of child marriages.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **EFFORTS THAT ARE BEING MADE TO REDUCE CHILD MARRIAGES IN MUTASA**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This section outlines the efforts that are being made by the government through the line Ministries and the authority, the NGOs operating in Mutasa District. Due to the lack of evaluations of child marriage prevention programs existing, it was rather difficult for the researcher to establish the effectiveness of measures being employed to stop child marriages in Mutasa District. Therefore, the researcher managed to acquire the efforts being made to get rid of the problem only. The efforts being made to eradicate the problem of child marriages in Mutasa are mainly by the government, NGOs mainly Plan International and also other relevant authorities and community leaders. This chapter is therefore going to depict the efforts being made by these bodies in combating child marriages.

#### **3.2 Protection of Children from Harm of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence**

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

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

In addition, the government and other NGOs like Legal Resource Foundation (LRF) are handling the cases of sexual and domestic violence in a bid to reduce children harm or abuse in child marriages in Mutasa District. The government through the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development are receiving cases of domestic violence in child marriages and reporting them to the NGOs like LRF and relevant authorities in Mutasa like police.

### **3.3 Helping Children to get Education**

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

### **3.4 Sustainable Livelihoods through Income Security**

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

### **3.5 Increased Sensitization on Issues of Child Marriages**

The thesis highlighted in chapter one the factors driving children into early marriages in Mutasa. Efforts are therefore being made to reduce the problem of child marriages through increased sensitizations on issues of child marriages by NGOs like Plan International. Plan International in conjunction with the the community leaders, the police and government through the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development and are advocating for reduction of child marriages by launching of I Am a Girl Campaign as part of the 18+ program of ending child marriages in Mutasa. According to Plan International report the 18+ program emphasizes the need to ensure that the girl child takes time to pursue education, achieves personal and professional growth awaiting to turn at least 18 or beyond before getting married. Plan International with the

help of the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development are sensitizing the community the community of Mutasa on the issue of child marriages.

### **3.6 Summary**

In light of this thesis the researcher depicted the efforts that are being made by the government, NGOs and also the community leaders and the police in contribution to the programs that are being launched to reduce child marriages in Mutasa. There are increased sensitizations on issues pertaining child marriages, working of government in conjunction with Plan International in ensuring income security of the young children in Mutasa, ensuring education for children and also attending to the issues of sexual and domestic violence. The researcher evaluated the efforts and observed that there is little being done pertaining to the problem in this District because of few NGOs operating in Mutasa relating to the issue and also lack of finance to carry out the campaigns as some of the areas of the district are not being reached out to thereby hindering the effectiveness of the campaigns in reducing the child marriages.

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 4.1 CONCLUSION

Child marriage is a complicated spectacle, partly since the topic in question is sensitive to discuss along in the area of study the factors seem to vary depending on the specific contexts within each individual in the community. The study has been mainly focused on girls below the age of 18 who are entering marriage due to the high number of occurrence and also the horrific consequences that often follow them in those marriages. Different studies show that global humanitarian organizations have been implementing programs concerning the subject of child marriages in a bid to end the problem. An example is that several of the eight goals of the MDGs are trying to deal with the matter of child marriage but no sufficient result have drawn from the attempts.

It is difficult for one to simplify the matter besides taking it from any level of education that everyone has when it come to the issue of child marriages therefore one cannot suggest or come up with one valid solution valid across the globe but there is need for close investigation in the area in question in order to extricate the factors influencing child marriages since there are many factor. These factors varies depending with the community because there are different myths and norms that rule each and every area and these can influence the prevalence of child marriages.

This study is focused on the issue of child marriages in the area of Mutasa District, what is causing the problem, how this problem is affecting the young girls in the community and suggestions of what can be done in a bid to combat the problem. The study depicts that the major causes of child marriages in this area are poverty, the religious practices of the Marange Apostolic sect members

that constitute more than 40% of the population in Mutasa, unemployment rates and also lack of education to mention just a few. Through data generated from desk research, observation and interviews carried out with a few participants from the Mutasa community the researcher noticed that some of the major horrific consequences of child marriages are domestic violence, high fatality rate, and high rate of school dropouts and also continued cycle of poverty. However the research evaluated the outcomes of the research and came with the suggestions that there should be more sensitizations on the issue of child marriages in Mutasa, alignment of customary laws with the constitution is of paramount importance, NGOs active in the area should also take part working in combination with other relevant stakeholders and community leaders in combatting the problem and also financial support towards the anti- child marriage programs to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of the programs.

## 4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

**Alignment of customary laws with the constitution.** The legislature should speed up the realignment of the existing customary laws with the constitution. Litigation and the constitutional making process can be used to ensure that there is harmonization of laws, and that the Customary Law Marriages Act specifies marriage age in line with other statutes such as the Marriages Act and the Constitution of Zimbabwe. Introducing laws to raise the legal age of marriage to 18 years, as agreed in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, would be another useful legislative step.

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

**The NGOs should write shadow reports on the country's compliance or commitment with its International treaty body obligations** like CEDAW and CRC showing how the government is faring when it comes to reducing child marriages for assessment of the efforts being made in eradicating the practice. Further they should assess the role of customary and religious laws that condone child marriage and promote dialogue with traditional and religious leaders to identify practical ways to reduce child marriage.



**It is recommended that sensitizations on the issue of child marriages be increased.**

Government through the Ministry of health and social welfare, the ministry of Community development gender and children affairs as well as the different organizations working on children rights and the police may conduct programs concerning early marriage and HIV/AIDS infections especially by addressing the factors which contribute to early marriage and also involving teenagers in decision making that can change community mind set to abandon that practice. The aim of the campaigns will be to end child marriages in Zimbabwe in general and Mutasa in particular by showing that it is detrimental to the health and wellbeing of the girl child. This maybe a better approach rather than litigation as it attempts to change the attitudes and mindset of the community.

**The various NGOs in Zimbabwe should be encouraged to coalesce into a strong, coordinated structure to unite to run the campaign to end child marriage.** Non -governmental organizations

can influence the adoption of alternative perspectives on the issue of child marriages in Mutasa through internal discourse. They may be viewed as outsiders, but they can still influence culture by engaging in their own internal discourse thereby enabling participation in one culture to point to similar processes elsewhere in other cultures. NGOs can also support the rights of children and women who are involved in child marriages by encouraging them to challenge the prevailing status quo or perceptions whilst at the same time avoiding overt interference because this will undermine the credibility of internal actors. This is a strategy that can be used to deal with the case of Johanne Marange Apostolic sects in Mutasa because they are a much closed group that doesn't take kindly to external interference especially when these challenge their beliefs.

NGOs can also initiate cross cultural dialogue to exchange insights and strategies of internal discourse. Cross cultural dialogue can seek to promote universality by highlighting moral and

philosophical commonalities of human cultures and experiences. Sharing insights and ideas or experiences will over time help to mediate cultural and contextual differences and thereby produce common standards on the principle of the best interests of the child. The best way to combat the norms of cultural relativity is to challenge its basis in the consciousness of the relevant people and in this case those in child marriages.

**Support Anti- Child Marriage Programs.** Studies have shown that there are many programs or charities that are advocating for the end to child marriages but they seem to be a bit less effective and the reason being lack of financial support. These programs need financial support to keep going and so as to make an effective impact on the communities. NGOs like Development Aid from People to People has been working in Mutasa District launching child marriages campaigns but this hasn't been of much positive impact to reduce the child marriage in the community this is because they are selecting the wards to visit because there is no financial resources to launch the campaigns in all the wards. Therefore the government and other stakeholders should assist financially such programs that are advocating for an end in child marriages so as to combat the problem.

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

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

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

**Sponsoring a girl child in the areas that are affected by child marriages** can be a long standing way of supporting the unprivileged to break the cycle of poverty that makes most of the population vulnerable to early marriages. Donating a small amount of money each month to girls in Mutasa community with charities like Plan International can help combat poverty and make them less vulnerable to child marriage. Through des research the researcher came to understanding that poverty is also another factor hindering the girl children's education in Mutasa therefore this study also suggest that sponsorship can also be in a way of paying the school fees for the children who are not able to pay their school fees. This will therefore reduce the illiteracy rate of the community and also the girls will have guidance on the bright future of their lives and avoid child marriage and to map her own path in life.

# **APPENDIX A**

## **QUESTIONNAIRE**

My name is Adolf Mutandwa, I am studying Development Studies at Midlands State University. I have designed this questionnaire to carry out a study on the effects of child marriages on young girls in Mutasa District The information obtained is only for academic purposes and will also be treated with great confidentiality.

1 Which village do you come from?

.....

2 What are the causes of child marriages in Mutasa District?

.....

.....

.....

3 Which age group is most affected by child marriages?

.....

.....

4 What are the challenges being faced by young mothers in child marriages?

.....

.....

5 How do you view the issue of child marriages in your community?

.....

.....

6 What do you think can be done to prevent child marriages in Mutasa District?

.....

**APPENDIX B**  
**Interview Questions Guide**

1. How old are you?
- 2 .Which village do you come from?
3. What are the causes of child marriages in Mutasa District?
- 4 Which age group is most affected by the issue of child marriage?
5. What are the challenges being faced by young mothers in child marriages?
6. How do you view the issue of child marriages in your community?
7. What do you think can be done to prevent child marriages in Mutasa District?

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