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**FACULTY OF ARTS**  
**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

*EFFECTS OF CHILD MARRIAGE ON GIRLS' RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN  
MASVINGO DISTRICT*

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**EFFECTS OF CHILD MARRIAGE ON GIRLS' RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN  
MASVINGO DISTRICT**

**Submitted by Moreblessing Zimuto, Registration Number R144231Y**, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Development Studies

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## DECLARATION

I Moreblessing Zimuto, Registration Number R144231Y do hereby declare that this entire research is a product of my own work. It has been submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors Degree in Development Studies, in the Faculty of Arts at Midlands State University.

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my beloved mother Matrída Peura, my uncle Stephen Zimuto and my brother Blessing T. Zimuto for their unwavering support, love, care and prayers, which made it possible for me to be where I am. To my beautiful daughter-in-law Shylet Tsodzo and my lovely nephew Kupakwashe Paymore Zimuto for providing a reason to my study.

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of child marriage on girl's educational rights. The study managed to look at the factors that have contributed to child marriages. In as much, the researcher also looked at how these causes of child marriage have been an obstacle to girl's attainment of education hence suppressing their education rights. The study also looked at the effects of child marriages on girl's education rights; these include poor academic performance, sexual harassment, stigmatization and discrimination, violence and failure to proceed with education. The researcher used local leaders in identifying victims of child marriage in Masvingo District in the Nemamwa Community under the chieftainship of Fortune Charumbira and she managed to do fifteen interviews. The research centered on the survivors of child marriage, as the researcher believed that they could provide real lived experiences of the effects of child marriages on the girl's education rights. The researcher used qualitative approach, as she believed that it would produce meaningful piece of scholarly work. The study however concludes by recommending the strategies that needs to be put in place to do alleviate the challenges of child marriage and to cope with the effects of child marriage on the girl's education rights, promoting education rights among married girls.*

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>AIDS</b>	<b>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</b>
<b>CRC</b>	<b>Convention on the Rights of Children</b>
<b>CSO's</b>	<b>Civil Society Organizations</b>
<b>HRB</b>	<b>Human Rights Bulletin</b>
<b>FDGs</b>	<b>Focused Group Discussions</b>
<b>MoHCW</b>	<b>Ministry of Health and Child Welfare</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organization</b>
<b>ROOTS</b>	<b>Real Opportunities for Transformation Support</b>
<b>SRH</b>	<b>Sexual Reproductive Health</b>
<b>STI</b>	<b>Sexually Transmitted Infections</b>
<b>UDHR</b>	<b>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>
<b>UNCRC</b>	<b>United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children</b>
<b>UNFPA</b>	<b>United Nations Fund for Population Activities,</b>
<b>UNICEF</b>	<b>United Nations Children Fund</b>

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# CHAPTER 1

## PROBLEM AND ITS SETTINGS

### 1.0 Introduction

Child marriage refers to marriage of any person below the age of 18. According to UNICEF (2016), child marriage is a formal marriage or informal union before the age of 18. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of 1989 defines a child as any person who has not reached the age of 18 years. Seemingly, Zimbabwe is experiencing high dropout rates by girls in primary and secondary schools especially in rural areas. According to Real Opportunities for Transformation Support ROOTS (2013), in Zimbabwe child marriages contribute most of all school dropouts.

In 2012, then Minister of Education, Sports and Culture, Lazarus Dokora revealed that about 52% of school dropouts in secondary schools were females also adding that 40 % of all pupils who failed to proceed with their education were females, the failure of the girl child to proceed with education gives birth to child marriages. This eventually result in the girl's education rights being suppressed .Child marriage can be dismissed as exploitive and inhumane in nature because of practices that accompany it; as to be discussed as the research progresses. In Zimbabwe, rural communities and religious groups value marriage of minor girl-children. Early child marriages can be a significant obstacle for women empowerment as this affects their competitiveness in the high paying job market.

## **1.1 Background of study**

According to Lewis (2006), child marriage is a global issue that is violating the education rights of the girl child. Sustainable Development Goals (2015), the practice of child marriage has highly eroded the girl child's education and health; and thus it has impeded development. In Africa, child marriage has been more prominent in the Western and Central Africa, where girls are married at a very tender age; with 37% in East and South Africa respectively.

Malthur et al (2003) is of the view that, the percentage of the rate of child marriage in some of the African countries has been very high. Some of these countries' percentage recordings are: Niger 77%, Chad 71%, and Mozambique 57 percent, West and Central Africa's average is 46% while Eastern and Southern Africa is 36% .The highest prevalence of child marriage rate in Africa is catalyzed by the traditional, cultural and religious beliefs in African countries. UNICEF (2014) postulates that, studies by Human Rights Bulletin (HRB) has shown that on a global scale, 14 million girls are married off young, while 39 thousand are married off on a daily basis.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) has also proven that globally 39 million girls aged 14 -15 in developing countries do not reach secondary education due to several reasons including early marriages. The studies have also shown that Zimbabwe has one of the highest prevalence rates of child marriage. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF), 31 % of the Zimbabwean women entered into child marriage between 2000 and 2011, translating to one in every three girls getting married at the age of 18. In addition, the Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey (ZDHS) (2010), researches has shown that one in four teenagers aged 13-19 years have already started child bearing. All these statistics

vividly show that child marriage affects girls' the education rights, their well-being and future economy.

Seemingly, child marriage tends to affect more girls that live in poverty in rural areas in comparison to those living in urban areas. This further affects their education attainment hence the less educated a girl is, the more she is likely to marry during her childhood. Bajracharya & Amin (2010) further support this same view; child marriages can be best described and analyzed by the application of neo-classical household economic theory. Girls from the poorest 20 % of the households were more than four times as likely to be married or in union before age of 18 than girls from the richest 20% of the households (Amin, 2010). Once the girl child enters into marriage at a tender age, she automatically loses her right to education. Therefore, this tends to disturb their education attainment. Although Zimbabwe has been signatory to a number world conventions on the protection of children like the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), seemingly, there has been a rise in the suppression of children's rights like girls education rights.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

There have been a number of reasons leading to child marriages among girls; these include poverty, religion and culture. However, the key issue is to look at the effects of child marriages on girl's education rights. The research problem focuses much on child marriage and its effects on education rights for girls in Masvingo District. Child marriage has undermined the girl's education rights .This has also led to undermining most of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC).

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

- To examine the root causes of child marriages among school going girls in Masvingo district.
- To determine effects of child marriage on girls rights to education in Masvingo district.
- To make give recommendations to cope the negative effects of child marriages

### **1.4 Significance of Study**

The findings in this study will trigger all stakeholders in the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture to come up with comprehensive programs that will help to let the young girls stay in school and uphold girls' educational rights in all possible ways. In addition, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture will be able to consider the married girls in their education system, despite their marriage .For example, encouraging women to undertake vocational training programs so that they can be able to work for themselves. This will empower the girls with skills that help them to survive through their life's journey; since women have become very critical for essential development to take place.

The health sector that is the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare (MoHCW) will benefit from this study, as it faces health related problems among the young girls in the event of child marriages and teenage pregnancies. Hence, they will need to come up with comprehensive programs in order to educate the girl child about the health consequences of having sex at an early age. The MoHCW will also discover the need to engage itself in more programs which are informative to girls and boys both in school and out of school on health related issues such as STIs , HIV and AIDS , Cervical Cancer and maternal complications so that they realize how they will be endangering themselves by entering in sexual activities and child marriages

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a major role in complementing the government's efforts. This means that this research will help NGOs to work hand in hand with the government in fighting child marriages and its effects on the girl child. Thus they will come in and assist in educating the girl child on the essence of education and upholding her education and health rights. NGOs will also be able to realize how they can come and determine which strategies they can use in order to educate the girl child and ensure her stay in school.

The girl pupils and students are the ones affected with child marriage whilst they are still attaining their education. Therefore, this research will enable them to stand their ground and preserve their education rights. This means through this study, girls shall be able to realize the consequences of child marriage and its implications towards their successful attainment of education. Thus, students and pupils will be able to fight against child marriages.

Furthermore, for development to take place, communities play a vital role in adopting strategies that are developmental to their people. As such, through this research, communities will benefit on the knowledge of the causes and implications of child marriage. This means communities will work together in fighting against child marriages with the help of different stakeholders like NGOs, MoHCW and Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture amongst others. Through this, research families, traditional leaders, local authorities, schools and the community at large will learn to work together and see the importance of teamwork of fighting a common goal.

## **1.5 Chapter breakdown**

- Chapter 2 -Literature review
- Chapter 3- Research methods
- Chapter 4–Data analysis, presentation and discussion

- Chapter 5 –Conclusion and recommendations

### **1.7 Chapter summary**

In conclusion, the discussion above was revealing the problem and its settings, mentioning of the background of study, objectives, theoretical framework as well as the significance of the study.

The core aim of this chapter was to lay out an overview of the research and its intentions in solving the related problems.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

Various conventions, treaties and International agreements like the Convention on the Rights of Child, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and United Nations Human Rights Council have tried to define child marriage. Child marriage has been a major global concern, which has attracted the attention of Regional Integrations, Multilateral Institutions, Governments, NGOs and communities in order to curb and reduce its effects.

The rise of the concern has been due to the effects that child marriage has towards girls' education rights deprivation and so impeding development. Despite efforts made by developing countries to do away with child marriage, it has irrevocably remained at its peak. The study intends to lay out the causes of child marriage and its effect on girls' education rights respectively. Child marriage is human rights violations that deprive girls from obtaining their education, enjoying optimal health, bonding with others of their own age, maturing and ultimately choosing their own life partners.

Most of the developing countries are experiencing a high prevalence in child marriage .At least one third of women in the developing world is married as children (Farberor, 2012). Accordingly Malthur et al (2003), percentages of the rate of child marriages in some of the African countries: Niger 77%, Chad 71%, Mozambique 57 percent, West and Central Africa 46%, Eastern and Southern Africa 36% .The high prevalence of child marriage rate in Africa has been because of traditional, cultural and religious beliefs in African countries. Farberor (2012) points out that, about 51 million girls below the age of 18 years are currently married in Africa. This shows how

child marriages are undermining the girl child's education rights. Women have a huge role to play in the development of a country since they virtually seem to be at the heart of their communities. Just as they mother the natural life, women nurture and nurse, the best courses of their respective fraternities' envisioned success. Therefore, this shows the importance of upholding the girls' education rights in societies. Despite the efforts by legislation of many countries and its prohibition by international treaties like the African Charter as well as the United Nations Convention of Human Rights, governments are still experiencing a high prevalence in child marriages. If the current trends of child marriage continue, it is most likely that 140 million girls are going to marry early in the next decade, or nearly 40 000 per day (UNICEF, 2014).

## **2.1.0 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1.1 Socialist Feminism**

The socialist feminism relates with Neo-Marxist social theory; it hence poses questions on the society and power, concept that are not into consideration by liberal feminism. Social feminism blames the state as an agent that acts closely with economic interests that keep women in subordinate positions. This means that women do not have equal opportunities to education, jobs and other social opportunities to develop themselves. The socialist feminism does not view education as a positive aspect of life; rather it views it as a system that brings about the current unfair situation. The socialist feminism theory totally dismisses education as regressive rather than being progressive.

## 2.2 Drivers of Child Marriages

According to Malhotra et al (2011), social and cultural norms as well as several faith based organizations influence the age at which girls marry. These suppress the girl's education rights out rightly. For example, in Zimbabwe, the cultural norms have quite a lot of practice which fuel child marriage, for example the system of *kuzvarira*, *chimutsa mapfihwa* and *chiramu*, where older men marry girls in exchange for food staffs and money so as to relief the girl's family from poverty. To add on, faith based organizations like apostolic sects have been supporting child marriage.

More so, these apostolic sects like Johhane Marange and Johhane Masowe, their doctrine and belief system tend to ignore their children's education welfare .Moreover, even those who marry young girls do not consider sending them back to school. People tend to be ignorant to government's law where one can be incarcerated for marrying a girl under the age of 18.

Tsanga (2003) denotes that, people see laws as imposing values and practices that tend to oppose their own interests, needs, attitudes and convictions; their reactions are generally negative. This is true in the case of the traditional leaders, cultural leaders and leaders of the apostolic sects, where they are acquainted with laws yet they continue marrying under aged girls, thus consequently frustrating the girl child's education plight.

Karam (2015) cemented the above view when he called for the engagement of the faith based organizations and community leaders to help in building support for policies towards elimination of the child marriage. Child marriage is deep rooted in socio -cultural practices and religious beliefs in many communities (Gemighani and Wodon, 2015). Erroneous religious indoctrination defiles the virginity of the seed of education rights. It is of paramount importance to note that

governments have not been doing enough than expected in shunning the practice of child marriages as we continue to see the rise of child marriages and the apostolic sects' persistence on marrying young girls hitherto depriving them of their education rights.

Furthermore, girl child's education is taken for granted. This spurs the girl child in submitting to child marriage at the sacrifice of education. As stated by UNICEF (2005), education is a preventive measure of child marriages, as it holds girls in school thereby delaying marriages. However, in the absence of educational opportunities, girls hurriedly enter into marriage since it will be the only option. Female pupils in Zimbabwe especially in rural areas are most likely to drop out of school and get married, hence being deprived of their major right to education. This limits their education opportunities and academic advantage.

According to the Herald of 17 March 2015, more than 13000 pupils from primary and secondary schools dropped out of school in 2013 owing to early marriages and lack of fees. When girls drop out of school, they become so idle that they think of no other alternative except marriage. Hence, this simply means that lack of education in the life of a girl child disempowers and deflowers her. The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture revealed that about 52% of school dropouts in secondary schools are females and as well, females constitute 40 % of all pupils who failed to proceed with their education. This renders the girl child with no other option than to get married.

The above statistic vividly shows that the girl child has limited opportunities of thriving education. ZIMSTAT survey (2009) has proven that, the less educated a girl is, the more prone she is to child marriages. SAFAIDS survey (2015) reveals that, 33% of the women counterparts aged 20-24 were with no education, while 55% with primary education were married at 18 years, in comparison to 23% of women with secondary and higher education.

More so, families prefer to educate their male child at the expense of the girl child's educational rights. Mawere (2012) argues that high education costs opportunities have been preferred to the male child the expense of girls. Girls are being identified with their gender roles that are to get married and give birth. This shows how girl's education rights are undermined when it comes to education as compared to boys. Girls are given less opportunities to be educated; hence, their educational rights are highly suppressed thereby undermining their ability of decision-making.

The society views girls as child bearers, defining them with their gender roles. According to ZDHS (2012), 60% of the household in Zimbabwe are child headed. This automatically makes girls an already vulnerable group in the society and making them prone to marriages deficient of education. Worse still, 20% of those children are orphans; this perpetuates their vulnerability to child marriage. The *Bantu* tradition esteems that the highest gain a girl child bestows to a family is the *lobola* payment by his husband. It seems as well the fraternity of Zimbabwean culture orients the dignity of a woman on marriage endowed with the price of *lobola*. This further has an effect on the community's perception about the value of educating a girl child. Her failure with educational progress is undermined as long as the hope of *lobola* is possible. Therefore, it must be seen that the girl child's education rights deprivation through early marriages is a major concern on patriarchal societies.

More so, it is very important to mention gender inequality as one of the elements that ignites child marriages within African societies. Sibanda (2013), in Zimbabwe women and girls are a subject to deep-rooted norms, attitudes and behaviors that assign them a second-class citizen as compared to men and boys in the families and society. Giddens (2009), issues of gender inequalities, poverty, and political instability cultural practices and have been noted as some of

the major causes of girl-child marriages in developing countries. This shows how women are defined as unequal to men.

Gender inequality is one of the key drivers of child marriage whereby girls and women are viewed as objects subject to commodification. They are also not able to make their own decisions on who to marry and when to marry. As long as gender inequality is still in existence, it will always stand in the way of eradicating child marriages. In Zimbabwe especially in rural areas, girls are made to believe that their only goal in life is to serve and please their husbands, as soon as she is able to cook, clean and do other duties she already sees herself as a qualified housewife. This means that at a very early age, girls are culturally stimulated to desire marriage; they are spurred to view marriage as their highest achievement.

Culture molds the pedigree of how one defines life and her ambitions. This means that her right as a girl child remains very obscured and unfamiliar in some instances, owing to gender inequality. Therefore, it must be seen that patriarchal culture and gender inequality are the opium of early girl child marriages in Zimbabwe and Africa at large. It is inevitably a challenge that girls in male dominated societies fall prey to early marriages due to the dictates of religious dogma and culture. Culture is regarded as a personal shadow that one can hardly escape from, hitherto making the girl child a victim to premature marriages.

Mathur (2003) stresses that; poverty also plays a critical role in igniting child marriage. In the bible, the book of Proverbs reveals; 'The poor are destroyed by their own poverty'. In Zimbabwe, most families who are living in poverty tend to have high chances of using their daughters as a survival strategy and used to act as tools to shun poverty in their homes. Chinyoka (2011) articulates that, parents want to ensure their financial security through their daughters' *lobola* and in most cases, her marriage to an aged person. Parents will be claiming that they are

acting to save the best interests of the family`s livelihood by making the girl child as a surety to evade poverty.

The girl`s family benefit from giving their daughter a hand in marriage by receiving valued goods from the groom or his family as bride price. Cvorovic (2004), the importance of the practice of paying bride price is still common within developing countries, which have unstable economies. Parents contribute much to the arrangement of their daughter`s marriages, giving them to people of their choice and depriving them of their right to education. Parents sometimes feel that a burden has been relieved after they have handed their daughters in marriage. They consider it a cost to raise their own daughters and providing them with their needs, worse still after they get married. Where poverty is acute, marrying off daughters allows parents to reduce family expenses, considering they will need to feed, clothe and educate them to (Filmer and Schody, 2006). This shows to what extent poverty plays a pivotal role in suppression girls` education rights. Girls are culturally given in marriages of appeasing avenging spirits (*Ngozi*) in a custom known as *kuripa ngozi*. Despite, their tender age girls are often the dear price and victims of *kuripa ngozi*. This shows how the girl child is esteemed as a symbol of wealth in developing countries.

In some cases, girls make their own choices to get married at an early age in a bid to escape poverty from their homes and families, and as well as reducing their cost of living. According to Mawere (2012), average of 7 out of 10, girls in Zimbabwe live in extreme poverty and drop out of school because of poverty related issues. In Zimbabwe, the Poverty Datum Level is easily determined by the Family Bread basket peg, which is currently pegged at 600 dollars per month for a family of six. In a country of high unemployment rate, very few families in Zimbabwe earns up to the Bread Basket Level .Therefore, the soaring economic hardships of Zimbabwe

has seen most parents failing to pay school fees for their children since most of the people live a “hand to mouth” livelihood. In the rural areas of Zimbabwe some parents prefer reducing the school fees cost by dropping the girl child`s education in a bid to save the boy child`s education.

Despite the better academic performance by the girl child, families often prefer the success of the boy child education furtherance to the sacrifice of the girl`s education rights. When the girl child drops from school due to economic hardships, she is often allowed to look for a job more often as a house girl even at a tender age of twelve. The wage she is rewarded always caters for the upkeep of her whole family until she gets married. House girls in Zimbabwe are often abused by their madam`s husbands as sex tools in return for monetary favors. Thus, the girl child is often exposed to sexual activity at a very tender age. Denial to these abuses is often met by job expulsion, which the girl child would respond to by falling prey to impulse early child marriage. Around 60 % of all house girls in Zimbabwe are as young as between 12 and 18 which thus expose the girl child both to child labor and premature marriage before she passes her flower of youth to the detriment of her education rights. Therefore, it must be noted that the impoverishment of developing countries contribute much to the scourge of early child marriages globally. In order to fight child marriage in communities, there is need for economic emancipation of communities in order to eradicate poverty, which is a catalyst to early child marriages, a cancer that consumes the girl`s child education rights.

The government of Zimbabwe through its indigenization and empowerment economic policy has encouraged Women empowerment and rights to farms title deeds and poultry projects, equal employment opportunities as well as political representation in parliament and senate, with the view of uplifting the plight and livelihood of women. Communities must also stand their grounds, come together and share the common goal of eradicating child marriages, and uphold



girl's education rights at the expense of child marriage. To achieve this goal, women should be allowed to become the opinion leaders and champion advocates for the nurturing and manuring of girl's child education rights in their societies in all leadership protocols.

### **2.3 Effects of Child Marriages on Participation and Decision Making**

When you give a girl child room for education, you have opened avenues of empowerment in her life. The empowerment Of the girl child increases her participation in decision-making .Wugman et al (2014) suggests that a girl has a voice when she can make decisions about her life and act on it without fear for retribution or violence. Nevertheless, the view of Wugman does not hold much water looking at the situation on the ground relating to child marriage. This is because the girl child education rights are being undermined resulting in the suppression of their voices, hence they cannot be heard. Ignorance among the girl child results in her exclusion from decision making and participation process. This is due to her academic ignorance as prior to lack of education acquaintance and equipping. The child brides are vulnerable in many ways, they are poor and under educated as well as undermined by communities. This places them under the control of their husbands and their in-laws so by crucifying her ability to voice her opinions, plans and aspirations.

In addition, married girls who are out of school have little or no say in decisions that concern their lives, for example, it is hard for a married girl to decide whether to return to school or not .Vogelstein (2013), supports the notion above saying that, the literacy and financial skills are undermined through early marriages. World Bank (2012), by virtue of their low levels of education they are often seen by their husbands and in-laws as incapable of earning or managing

finances and also making financial decisions for the household. More so, if married girls decide to go back to school, they suffer isolation from their colleagues and even friends.

Having fallen prey to the stripping of education rights, women are often regarded as parochial, myopic and unworthy in decision-making process by their male counterparts. In the religious circles, which often perpetrate early girl child marriage such as the apostolic sects, women are not allowed to usurp positions of authority in church. They are encouraged to learn in submission and silence hence dogging their chances of decision making in their religious circles. That is why the claimed churches have very few pastors and bishops of the women caliber despite women contributing to a greater chunk of religious fellowship. Often the church leadership has the mandate of spearheading marital doctrines of the church. Therefore, devoid of women representation on its supreme leadership, the apostolic churches uphold the esteeming of the early child marriages despite the concerns of education rights. Politically, women in Zimbabwe are still lobbying for equal representation in parliament comparable to their male counterparts with gradual little success. However, in Zimbabwe women have been constitutionally bestowed 60 National Assembly representations. Therefore, such little proportional religious, social and political representation reveals how highly women have been excluded from key decision making in the developing countries. UNFPA (2013), in many cases women are unable to speak up against physical and emotional violence, which they experience at the hand of their husbands. More so, there are social norms around girl's education and women's participation in empowerment programs, which tend to undermine girls' rights at both household and community's investment decision-making process.

## **2.4 Effects of Child Marriages on Educational Attainment**

When young girls engage in child marriages, their education attainment is disturbed, hence their education often ceases and they are stopped from acquiring skills and knowledge that will help them sustain the mainstay of their livelihood journey. When a girl marries early, she is more likely to have low levels of education. Nguyen and Wodon (2015), they are of the view that each year of early marriage below 18 years of age, can lead to the decrease in the probability of secondary school completion amongst girls hence decreasing their literacy rate. The data from teacher and parental responses in the household survey on the reason why girls drop out of school, also suggests that child marriage has negative effects on her attainment of education (Nguyen and Wodon 2015).

Each year child marriage reduces the probability of literacy by 5.6 percentages, and the probability of secondary school completion by 6.5 points, with the impact on the probability of having at least some secondary education being slightly larger. According to Mhembere (2011), child marriage robs of the girl child of her rights to attain education. Due to high illiteracy rates on adolescent girls in Zimbabwe, most cases indicate that lack of education also affects the life of babies who are born of uneducated parents, who never know the importance of child immunization and child nutritional support.

School is not only the source of formal and informal education only, but is seen as a space for girls to develop social skills, networks and support systems. All these will allow them to be mobile and involved in community engagement affairs. This keeps the girl child empowered through education. According to UNICEF (2014), girls who get married at a tender age, they are

often removed from the supportive social networks and they are isolated in their marital homes. More so, when girls withdraw from school it lessens their ability to be involved in community and national level discussions and debates and participate in the political process.

Girls who are married at an early age tend to lack knowledge on health related concerns (Semba et al, 2002). Lack of education makes it more difficult for girls to access information on their health and their children. Unlike educated girls; they tend to enquire a lot on health related issues. This view is supported by Smith and Hardhat (2015) who note that, there is a nexus between girl's education and increased health knowledge; educated girls have increased use of their household resources to promote education and health of their children. This means children of less educated mothers are likely to have malnutrition and diagnosed different diseases and they are more likely to die, all because of the academic ignorance of their mothers. Seemingly girls whose mothers are married early, also get married early; this contributes to the cycle of poverty in all generations.

## **2.5 Effects of Child Marriages on Livelihoods**

It is important to note that the ongoing practice of child marriage has impeded Africa's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) number 5, which seeks to eradicate extreme poverty. This include to achieve the universal primary education, to ensure the promotion of gender equality, reduction of child mortality rate, improvement in the maternal health and its service delivery, and to combat HIV/AIDS. When a girl marries at a tender age, because of poverty, she ends up into child labor. This is because of her need to survive; hence, child marriage is rendered a tool of oppression towards girls. This because, once she is into child labor, there will be fewer chances for her to acquire her educational rights. Bruce (2005) stresses

that, child marriages do not only fuel cycle of poverty and lack of opportunity, they strengthen the girl child subordination and forced loyalty nature to their male peers in households. Child marriage influences the participation of females in labor force in multiple ways. Sometimes a girl opts for a low paid job because of poor education attainment.

As discussed above, early marriages disturb young women's attainment of education, which in turn affects their employment opportunities, and the nature of their jobs. Low education attainment impedes the girls' entry into formal employment. Since child marriage is associated with poverty, young mothers as a means of survival are forced to engage in child labor through various ways, for example prostitution and some women's reproductive roles. It is a palatable fact that early child marriages often lead to divorce cases, which further lead to cultural victimization and denigration of the girl child in most patriarchal societies. The rise in divorce cases in Zimbabwe completes the continual cycle of the deprivation of education rights of children among which girls seem highly vulnerable. The growth in the numbers of single parents often cripples the attainment of education even by the girl child in Zimbabwe.

## **2.6 Effects of Child Marriages on Health**

Child marriages have a negative effect on the girls' health that is physical and mental well-being in a number of ways. According to Le Strat et al (2011), girls who get married at an early age are at a higher risk of malnutrition, isolation and depression .This is because when a girl gets pregnant, she suffers from isolation, depression and malnutrition. This is because of the stress and the experience of neglect from both family members and friends that she experiences in the event of dropping out of school because of pregnancy. Child marriages are often associated with

poor sexual reproductive health. This makes them to be vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and infections.

According to Walker et al (2013), child brides cannot negotiate safe sex with their husbands. This shows how their rights are undermined and they begin to be subject of oppression because of being lack of education. In addition, Raj (2010) further stresses that, married girls have also the tendency of lacking the power to negotiate sexual activities for example the use of contraceptives and birth spacing with their husbands. This is because, by the virtue of being a woman, their voices are highly undermined and they are suppressed, lacking the power of decision making within their homes.

Child brides also are at far greater risk of contracting HIV than their counterparts who marry later. Often they are married to older, more sexually experienced men with whom it is difficult to negotiate safe sexual behaviors, especially when under pressure to bear children. A study conducted in Kenya and Zambia in 2004 shows that married girls aged 15-19 are 75 percent more likely to contract HIV/ AIDs due to sexual exposure, than unmarried girls of the same age. Child brides are at a risk of contracting HIV because they are marrying men who have multiple sexual partners. In most cases child marriages result from men who are aware of HIV/AIDS dangers and they seek younger, virgin brides, who are presumably not infected.

In addition, child brides are less likely to receive proper medication during their pregnancy and delivery as compared to those who give birth later. Lauro and Green (2013) postulates that complications from pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of deaths amongst girls between ages of 15 and 19 years old in poor countries like Zimbabwe. Notably, girls and young brides are at a higher risk of having maternal complications that may result maternal and infant deaths.

UNICEF (2014) discovered that, girls who are below the age of 15 years are five times more likely to die during their pregnancy and childbirth as compared to a woman in her 20s. A young mother who is under 18 years of age, chances that her baby might die in the initial year of life is 60 per cent higher than that of a baby born to a mother who is more than 19 years of age. Early child brides are susceptible to the scourge of breast, cervical and genital cancer due to lack of adequate sanitation, resources and hygiene education. During pregnancy, the child bride is often exposed to traditional herbs (masuwo) which often catalyzes their chances of contracting cancer.

## **2.7 Policy related Copying Strategies**

### **2.7.1 Establishment and Implementation of Laws and Policies**

There is need for the closure of the gap in the Zimbabwe's Law Protection System. This is whereby they do away with corruption in tolerating child marriages and always rule in the best interest of the child as per article 4 of the ACRW. The law should ensure that perpetrators are given a worth sentence towards their offence on the suppression of girls' rights. Laws have a huge role to play in the prevention of child marriages. A number of countries have introduced legal and policy frameworks to help avoid the practice marrying of young girls and supporting the married girls as well. Internationally, efforts have been made to ensure that the girl child has not been deprived of her educational rights at the altars early marriage. The agreements have been made which include, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), The Convention of the Rights of Child (CRC). A strong legal system has a provision of important backdrops for improvements in legal services and changes in social norms.

However, for change to be vivid and transformative, government should prioritize and make it a national importance the issue of child marriage. It is also important to note that laws and policies are supposed to be fortified, implemented, and financed to ensure the prevention of child marriages. The law and policies should revisit the traditional methods of marriage that contradicts with the national law and promotes child marriages. In Zimbabwe the stigma of culture towards girl child marriage has given the police the leverage of accepting bribes on reported cases of child marriages despite the law's stipulation against child marriages.



### **2.7.2 Provision of quality education**

It is important to note that one of the strategies to cope with the effects of child marriages is to provide child brides with education rehabilitation conducive for them. Girls who lack access to quality education are the most vulnerable and are at a greater risk of child marriage. Therefore, increasing the accessibility, quality and safe schooling is the most critical strategy in dealing with child marriage. Married girls need the opportunity to complete their education free of victimization and cultural stigma by their male counterparts. This is because education is the tool that builds knowledge, opportunities and does away with norms and values that undermine the girl child in communities.

It is important for the Ministry of Education to support and encourage married girls to continue with their education in either formal or informal setting such as vocational learning and part time education. Often early-unplanned pregnancy forces the girl child to drop her education studies while the boy lover is legally allowed to continue with studies. There must be an income levy legislation similar to the AIDS levy accrued from all the working class to facilitate free rehabilitation of the girl child's education .As well there must be stern measures taken against the boy child who impregnate another girl child to avoid the impartiality of the law.

### **2.7.3 Provision of youth friendly health services**

Both married and unmarried girls are in need of youth friendly health services to live healthy and safe lives .Many girls in the developing world are in a serious need of Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH), which can endanger them with early marriages and contracting HIV, and STIs. There is need for girls to be imparted with knowledge of their bodies as well as the health care to

be readily available to them. The health services should be youth friendly so that girls are able to access whatever that they need without male judgment and male supervision. If possible sanitary wear should be made free to the girl child and so collectable at health institutions as have become with male condoms.

#### **2.7.4 Educating Communities**

Many families view child marriage as a deeply rooted system, which is part of them, their societies and it is thus embraced as a social norm. Seemingly, child marriage results from gender inequality norms. For change to take place the norms and values that support child marriage should be addressed and revisited through the inclusion of the family and the community at large to raise awareness against child marriage and its harmful consequences. This will help change the attitude and reduce the agreements of marrying young girls. Furthermore, boys and men have a critical role to play in efforts to end child marriages. This is because men have power in decision making in many communities; hence, there is need for them to view girls in a better way. Gender based education should be introduced in the school curriculum to nourish the boy child with better perception toward the girl child. Religious and traditional leaders have the potential to play a key role in advocating against child marriages and changing community attitudes. This means that the members of apostolic sects and traditional and cultural leaders need to be concertized about the evil and sin of early girl child marriage and its harm to the life of future mothers.

The traditional and apostolic sect leaders should be allowed to partake in organized gender based workshops and Cultural studies to endow them with pride in preserving the girl child's educational rights. They must also participate in the advocating of the protection of girls'

educational rights as well. It must be assimilated into the minds of our religious and traditional leaders that culture is dynamic hence it is only them that should be the fathers of siring a culture that is tandem with uplifting the role of the girl child and her education rights gains.

## **2.8 Chapter summary**

This chapter dealt with the theoretical framework, the causes of child marriages and the effects of child marriages. The strategies that are helpful in dealing with child marriage were looked at in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

According to Kotari (2004), research methodology is a way of systematically solving a research problem. This chapter gives knowledge on the research methodology that the researcher used in this research. The researcher used qualitative research method, which was mainly explanatory in nature. The researcher used interviews, focused group discussions and observations for collecting data. The researcher also used secondary sources during the research; these include newspapers, textbooks and scholarly articles.

#### **3.2 Target population**

In carrying this research, the researcher worked with victims of child marriages as they explored their experiences of the effects of child marriage on their education rights. In addition, other findings and recordings were obtained from religious leaders and traditional leaders. The identification of girls in child marriages was done by the help of local leaders who are already familiar with areas and families in Masvingo district in Nemamwa community under chief Fortune Charumbira.

#### **3.3 Research design and sample size**

Uwe (2004) is of the view that, research design is a plan that enables the collection and analyzing evidence, this will make it possible for the investigator to ask whatever questions that she wills.

Troche (2005) articulates that, research design cements the research project together. With qualitative research, the researcher managed to access the thoughts and feelings of participants, thereby managing to understand the depth of their experiences. The researcher worked with 15 girls who are survivors of child marriages, 5 religious leaders and 5 local traditional leaders. Punch (1998), the idea that sampling size is of much importance because one cannot study everyone, everywhere and doing everything. This means that one cannot make use of the whole population but needs a certain number of people to work with. The researcher got assistance from the Headman Sani in locating married girls in Nemamwa.

### **3.4 Data collection instruments**

The researcher used primary data collection tool during the research. This helped the researcher to obtain firsthand information from the participants. This further enabled the researcher to critically analyze collected data making use of the facts that she has evidence of.

#### **3.4.1 Interviews**

The researcher made use of semi-structured interviews. These enabled the researcher to assess whether the respondents were being honest with their responses through their facial expressions and body language. More questions and ideas developed as the interviews progressed with participants. Welman and Kruger (2001) is of the view that, semi structured interviews facilitate adaptability of formulations of questions and terminology that suits the background of the interviewees. The researcher also made use of an interview guide; this helped her to direct the conversations to the participants towards issues and topics that she wanted to collect. Also direct questioning and personal interviewing of the participants enabled the researcher to capture data

from the illiterate targeted group since most of the girls in child marriages have low education attainment.

15 survivors of child marriages were interviewed, 5 religious leaders and 5 local leaders were also interviewed for them to explore the experiences that they go through and their take on the effects of child marriages on girl's education rights. In addition, religious leaders from influential apostolic sects from Johanne Marange and Johanne Masowe were also interviewed, the reason being that these churches encourage their daughters to marry early before they finish their school, depriving them of their educational rights. The researcher was also engaged in door-to-door interviews with the victims of child marriages and their families. This helped the researcher to have an in-depth analysis of the suppression of the girl's education rights through child marriage.

### **3.4.2 Observations**

Observations are a method of data collection, which the researcher used to obtain knowledge on the effects of child marriages on girl's education rights. Observations are a study tool of collecting and evaluative data through using your own way of thinking after observing the environment of study. This method is one of the critical tools used to gather data especially in qualitative research. According to Marshal and Rossmn (1989), observation is the systematic description of events and artifacts on the social setting chosen for study. Observations managed to provide the researcher with non-verbal expressions of feelings of the respondents. The researcher did observations in Masvingo District, Nemamwa under chief Fortune Charumbira where she could merely see the kind of lives that most of the girls are living after abandoning education for their marriages. It was a pity-seeing girls living oppressive lives and not even given

a room for proceeding with their education. This gave the researcher a deeper understanding of what married girls are going through in their marriages .The researcher also took note of body languages and sometimes one could even predict the answer before the respondent could give a response.

### **3.4.3 Focus group discussions**

According to Schilderman (2002), FDGs brings up the spirit of openness through sharing of information. Modell (2007) denotes that, FDGs is a group of similar respondents who engage in a discussion about a specific topic under the direction of an interviewer. During the research, the researcher also employed the focused group discussions and formed four groups of victims of child marriages and each group consisted of five girls. The headmen under chief Charumbira in Masvingo helped the researcher to mobilize the survivors of child marriage in their communities, since they are the ones who know them better. They took interest in helping me to mobilize because the issue of child marriage is also their concern in their communities. The group consisted of a few number of people as the researcher wanted to do away with chaos in the group and to keep the discussions under control.

The researcher facilitated the FDGs because she wanted to get different experiences of girls in child marriage and what they think about losing their educational rights to marriage. Several issues went under discussion in these formulated groups, this gave the participants the copying strategies which they think can help them to re attain their lost educational rights since most of them are regretting on losing their education rights . Punch (1998) added to the the view of Schilderman when he said, FDGs stimulate people in making explicit their views, perceptions, motives, reasons and they are so inexpensive ,flexible ,stimulating data which is rich cumulative

and elaborative. As the research proceeded, the researcher could record the important information.

#### **3.4.4 Document review**

In carrying out this research, the researcher realized that she could not fully depend on primary data only. The researcher however was obliged to make use of desk research analysis through making use of journals, reports and newspapers. This method helped in the in depth analysis of constitutional laws and policies for child protection. This helped in the ratification of cases to the articles of the constitution al treaties that the country is obliged to. This was to compliment primary data to come up with substantial study.

#### **3.5 Ethical considerations**

Saunders et al (2007) stresses that, research ethics refer to the appropriateness of a researcher's behavior in relation to the right of those who will become subjects of the researcher's work. Hence, the researcher followed the ethical considerations to avoid unnecessary impediments to her research.

#### **3.6 Seek Permission**

For a successful research study, one needs to seek permission from the authorities of an area first. This is the first step of familiarize one's self with the area and its residents. In this case, the researcher sought permission from Masvingo Rural District Council and the village head. It is important for the researcher to seek permission first because communities are bound to certain



norms and rules that must not be violated, thus by first seeking permission the researcher was familiarized with the does and don'ts of the community that needs to be respected.

### **3.7 Voluntary**

The participants who took part in this research, they all participated voluntarily. The researcher openly told the participants that the research was of academic purpose, thus not mandated to participate but participate willingly. Participants were allowed to withdraw during the course of the discussions or interviews.

### **3.8 Privacy and confidentiality**

The information of the participants was very crucial; therefore, it was kept with privacy and confidentiality. If need for disclosure of the information, this was to be done with the consent of the participants. The researcher assured the participants that their information was to be very safe for viability of her study. However, other participants were not worried about privacy as they wanted their grievances to be heard.

### **3.9 Limitations**

#### **3.9.1 Time**

The research was carried out in a short period, in less than a week .This made the researcher not to interview the expected number of religious and local leaders in Masvingo Rural District. Although the time was limited, the researcher managed to gather information from available participants.

### **3.10 Chapter Summary**

In summation, this chapter has explored the various methods that were employed by the researcher in gathering information. The researcher employed qualitative research design. In this, she used both secondary and primary data sources. Under primary data, she used interviews, focused group discussions and observations on having a deeper understanding the effects of child marriages on girl's education rights. Secondary sources like textbooks, electronic journals, internet, newspapers and scholarly articles on child marriage were used in complimenting primary data, since primary data alone could not review on what other writers has noted on the effects of child marriages on girls education rights. The researcher also took note of the constraints she articulated during data collection.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter seeks to present, analyze and discuss on the data that the researcher collected during her study. The analysis is on the research objectives of the study that is to examine on the causes of child marriage, explore the effects of child marriage on girl's education rights, and to look at the coping strategies that needs to put in place to deal with the effects of child marriages on girls' educational rights. The data presentation is going to be a thematic approach in nature.

#### **4.1 Causes of child marriage**

##### **Tourism**

The findings and observations has shown that child marriages has been caused by tourism inform of the Great Zimbabwe monuments which has been luring societies to be involved into informal sectors like basketry, pottery making and traditional dancing. These activities has been drawing girls near the areas where they meet up with tourists and partakers of informal activities and at the end of the day girls get involved in sexual activities that leads to child marriage. Also because of the attraction of Nemamwa growth point, under chief Fortune Charumbira in the Masvingo district, girls have been spending more time at the growth point to access urbanity, which brings them tandem with social media and technology. They grope around the Great Zimbabwe Hotel and the Craft Centre selling curious and services. Their interaction in these areas lures them to prostitution, which leads to child marriage, which then suppresses their

education rights. One of the parents shared his concern towards the effects of tourism towards girl's education when he said, *'These tourists have damaged our children's future lives, especially with this nearby growth point. It's actually disturbing their studies as they are more in contact with the male counterparts.'*

#### **4.1.2 Poverty**

The research has shown that poverty is fueling child marriage in the Masvingo district. Parents prefer to marry their daughters at a very tender age so that they can benefit from lobola and use it as a survival strategy. Thus young girls will opt to leave school to ensure food security as well as financial security in their families. Sometimes parents go as far as arranging husbands for their daughters, husbands that they see that are capable of taking care of their families. Most of the time, the husbands are older man. These arrangements force girls to drop their studies at school. When the researcher asked one of the parents whose name was *Mr Bwerinofa (pseudo name)*.

The question was, why did he marry his daughter at an underage permitting her to quit her education? His sentiments were: *'I married my daughter because I regard her as my pension, in as much my pension has to take care of its owner. This means that in times of hunger the same pension must bring food on the table .Every time I inform her that the food is finished, my son in-law responds within a short period.'*

He uttered these words with pleasure and liberation on his face. He felt so pleased that his daughter is married and he has a shoulder to lean on in time of trouble. From the way he respondent, it showed that many times when he is out of food or money in his home ,he is reliant on his son in-law. He does not express sympathy about the implications of marrying his daughter

at the expense of her educational rights. Thus violating article 11 of the African Charter, this states that every child has a right to good quality education.

However, parents are not always the ones who provide a reason for girl's child marriage, but girls feel that they need to be relieved from the bondages of poverty in their homes. The only possible way out for them is to abandon education, and get married. This is most common in child headed families, hence crippling girl's educational rights. One of the respondents, a survivor of child marriage noted that;

*At times you feel like you need to find another alternative to take care of your siblings at home and you will have to drop out from school so that you work towards educating them as well. They need food, clothes and paid for her school fees and someone should be there to provide for them.*

This results in the abandonment to school at the expense of marriage. In supporting these findings one of the survivors of child marriage indicated that;

*I was not chased away from home neither was I pregnant, but things were not all right back home. We depended on begging for food and my school fees and my siblings' was having a backlog. I found a man who wanted to marry me and I accepted his offer to better our standard of living.*

#### **4.1.3 Rape**

The research has also shown that, girls in the Masvingo district has been marrying early, some even getting married at the age of 15 because of they would have been raped. Findings from one respondent reviewed that she got married at the age of 15 in 2017, while she was doing her form

2 at Morgenster High school. According to her explanation, she said: *'My boyfriend came to pick me up after school. He went with me to his house, he forced me to have sex with him and that is where I lost my virginity to him. After that incident, I refused to go back at home in that state that is how I got married to him.'*

As she uttered these words, she almost cried as she realized the chance which she has lost to attain her education. Her actions during the interview shows that she needs another chance to go back to school but there is no one to quench the thirst. The loss of virginity results in girls' refusal to go back to their parent's house because they view themselves as they have lost their pride and dignity. By so doing, they automatically drop out of school, thus losing their right to education.

More so, the research has also shown that even if the rape cases are reported to the police, they are taken for granted. This is because the police with the help of the headman will just ask for the two families from both parties to have an out of court settlement. If the girl and boy love each other they are asked to marry each other. This they do without even considering the age of the girl and the law as well. This has evidence when one of the survivors of child marriage said: *'He was arrested but he later on was released and asked to make peace between ourselves. They asked us that if we love each other we must marry each other.'*

This shows the weakness and porousness of the judiciary system. As long as cases continue to be handled in such a manner by the law, then there will be a continued rise of child marriage cases. As long as the perpetrators go unpunished, girls will always be under threat of rape and the rapists will always see themselves as people who can live above the law.

#### **4.1.4 Lack of interest in school**

The research has also shown that child marriage is caused by girl's lack of interest in education. This is because of the fear they have for teachers and they are lazy to work towards their schoolwork, this drives them out of school. These girls lack support from their parents and guardians to encourage them to attain their education. Worst still, some of these children will be living under the supervision of their grandparents. Their grandparents do not act upon the refusal of their grandchildren to attend school. Thus, parents and guardians disregarding the article 3 of ACRWC, that states that all actions by parents or guardians must serve the best interests of the child with all primary consideration. When girls are out of school, they will think of nothing else than marriage. *Rudo (pseudo name)* clearly pointed out her experience when she said: *'I quit school because I had no interest in school, I did not like teachers and I was afraid of being beaten. I did not get mentorship and encouragement from my grandmother to go back to school. Therefore, because I had nothing to do at home I decided to get married.'*

#### **4.1.5 Religious and traditional beliefs**

The research has seen that religious and traditional beliefs have been a driving force of child marriages in Masvingo district. This is because; the religious leaders together with parents have been organizing children's marriages whilst they are still young. This is because they have the belief that a girl must not continue staying under her parents at the age of 16 she will be old enough to get married. To support this finding, one of the religious leaders responded that: *"What does it benefit us to keep these girls in our homes? They are always roaming around here failing to get married, they need to get married and have their own lives."*

More so, traditionally, they believe in the family trends and limitations, which they describe as more spiritual. They believe that if your aunts and sisters were married at a certain age, then you do not have to exceed that age too. If you do, then they will have to consult traditional leaders to hear if there is any problem with their daughter that has been delaying her to be married. One of the headmen supported this when he said: *'If my daughter delays to get married, I will definitely consult the spiritualists so that I know what the matter is.'*

In addition, we have the cultural stigma that marrying an underage is sweet if not a cure to HIV contraction. There is a phobia that children are free from STIs and are sweet. Therefore, that mentality has been a pushing strategy to child marriage and deflowering them and robbing them their education rights. Poverty has been also a pre requisite of child marriage in the Masvingo district giving families an option of marrying their daughters to shun away poverty in their homes. Rape cases have left young girls with no option than to force themselves in unwanted marriages

The view of traditional leaders towards education in relation to child marriage is very myopic and negative. This shows that the government has a role to play to change the mentality of the so-called traditional leaders. This has to be through capacity building and empowerment programs that will equip them with knowledge on the importance of education. This shows that the concern of parents is to see their children entering into marriage than seeing them proceeding with their education.



## 4.2 Effects of child marriage on girl's education rights

### 4.2.1 Failure to proceed with attainment of education

The practice of child marriages in the Masvingo district has affected the attainment of education among girls. For married girls; their homes are not conducive to support their education as they will be confined to their duties, taking care of their families as married women. They are expected to feed families, which they are married to, and to take care of the elderly. Thus, the families will be dependent and looking up to them. In addition, the in-laws love to see their daughter in law at home attending to her gender roles as expected by the society. To support this finding, *Mr Mandivenga (pseudo name)* who had his son married to an under aged girl said:

*We are always grateful for the daughter in law which my son brought us here because to us we have found a mother to take care of us and bring dignity in the home. As you can see that am living with disability, I have also found someone to take care of me.*

Mr Mandivenga gave these sentiments with joy showing the happiness in him that at least he has a daughter in-law at home to relief him with work. Seemingly, he does not have intentions to send her go back to school despite her age. Most of their in-laws do not allow their daughter in-laws to go back to school because of the fear that they will meet up with some young boys at school and get in some relationships with them. This was evidenced by Mr Mandivenga's response when he went further to say: *'I will not allow this age to go back to school whilst she is married. She cannot run many tasks at the same time. This age is trick, you send her back to school she ends up being involved in relationships with young buys there.'*

This constrains girl's education rights in Masvingo district, as they are discouraged from attaining their education. The research has also shown that the husbands tend to be reluctant on taking responsibilities of taking care of their own families .They even look up to their young wives to do all the responsibilities of taking care of their families.

In addition, the failure of married girls to proceed with their education has been because of their husbands and other extended families to keep their promises to send back the child bride at school. They will be always procrastinating on the issue. Families in rural areas lose interest in educating married girl is, as they will view child marriage as an object that relief their finances towards fees payment. They provide various reasons in avoiding the provision of the girl's education rights, for example Rudo (psuedo name) said: *'At the early stages of my marriage, I was promised to be send back to school by my father and my father in law but up to now am still sitting at home.'*

#### **4.2.2Poor academic performance**

The research has shown that some survivors of child marriages in Masvingo district have the privilege to carry on with their education whilst they are in their marriages. The girl's parents would decide to afford their daughter the opportunity to continue with her education at the comfort of her marriage. Sometimes, the in-laws would have refused to pay their daughter in law's fees. However, in the case that they procced with their education, they tend to have poor academic performance. There are quite some reasons for poor academic performance of married girls. One of the reasons is that, married girls divide attention between education and their family roles and chores. Married girls put fewer efforts on their education as they have many duties to take care of both at school and at their homes.

Married girls are expected to carry out duties at home; school has its own demands that need to be met. At the end of the day, she is forced to compromise between the two. One of the respondents uttered that she dropped out of school when her performance at school discouraged her. Her school attendances were poor, some of the times she was recorded absent and missed her lessons. The reason being that before attending school she should attend to chores and other gender roles as expected by her in-laws back home.

Furthermore, it is important to note that poor academic performance of married girls in school has been caused by the discrimination and stigmatization that they face at school. This is because other girls are advised by their parents not to play or associate with married girls at school because the communities label them as “prostitutes”. This shows how unwelcoming and unfriendly the schooling environment is towards married girls. A survivor of child marriage Sthabile (pseudo name) supported this when she said:

*I do not enjoy school because I am stigmatized and discriminated from both, students and teachers. They do not care about my education welfare, and I am always shouted and laughed at school, also students and their parents do not like me at all.*

This shows that their colleagues in the school environment and the society view married girls as failures. This makes married school going girls to have a negative attitude towards education .To add on, this exclusion leaves married girls without academic discussions and groups to work with. They are laughed at, mocked and discriminated by their colleagues; this discourages their working performance at school hence decreasing their academic performance. Mr Karikoga, who is a teacher at Chirichoga High School, commented on that point and he said:

*It's a good idea to send back married girls to school, but sometimes you would find out that a formal school like this one does not provide a comfortable environment for them looking at the challenges that they face from their colleagues and other external forces which disturbs their academic performance, you see?*

### **4.2.3 Sexual Harassment**

The research has shown that married girls when they decide to take on their studies, that is going back to school, they face challenges of sexual harassment from their male counterparts from school and at home. These include teachers, headmen, shopkeepers from growth points, kombi drivers and their conductors as well. This is because they take advantage that they have already lost their virginity and as the researcher highlighted in the above discussion that, married girls they are labeled as prostitutes. All these behaviors from the communities, they negatively affect girl's education rights. This is because these girls will be forced into sexual relationships while they are at school yet they will be already married. Thus affecting her psychologically hence disturbs her studies.

One of the survivors of child marriage even reported that she is facing sexual harassments from her teachers and fellow male students as well. This comes verbally and forcing them into relationships, if they refuse to comply they are threatened. This is because their assumptions are that, since the girl is a survivor of child marriage, she is knows everything as long as sex is concerned. Male students have been forcing and enticing married girls into having sex and speaking dirty and vulgar languages. When they refuse, they tend to be verbally harassed and face a hostile behavior from the male students. All challenges they face at school make them

develop a negative attitude towards school and decide to quit thus losing their educational rights.

Interviewing a survivor of child marriage at Gwengavi Secondary School, she said:

*We come here expecting a better environment than that which is at home, but when we come here, boys in our school start to bother us for sexual relationship. When communicating, they use dirty language, even our male teachers; sometimes the way they interact with us sometimes is ill mannered. They use vulgar languages. If you report it to the senior teachers, they start blaming me, so I decide to keep all this to myself.*

Furthermore, although married girls face all these challenges in the school environment, they do not report to their senior teachers or headmaster. This is because of fear that those in charge might not believe them and assume that is married girls' behavior. This way, most married girls have been burying sexual harassment incidents as they view it as painful and shameful to tell anyone. The way other students are treated, is imbalanced to how married girls are treated. This affects married girls education rights because the treatment that they are given makes them lose interest in education hence affecting their academic performance as well.

Married girls are sexually harassed in their homes by their husbands. They tend to lose their sexual rights in their homes when their husbands force them into sex. This leads to poor child spacing, which further increases responsibilities of married further suppressing their educational rights. This is because they will not find time to continue with their education at all. She will rather concentrate on educating her children than educating herself. Interviewing *Anna (pseudo name)* a survivor of child marriage, married at the age of 14, currently she is 17 years old, now she has two children and she is currently pregnant .After asking her whether she is interested to go back to school, she answered;

*I wish I could go back to school like my colleagues, but the problem is that I cannot proceed with my education due to the kids that I have, more over I am pregnant right now. Even if I go back to school, who will feed, clothe and pay their school fees? I also know that my husband will not agree with that.*

Seemingly, married girls do not realize they are being abused, they just perceive it as normal but yet affecting them psychologically hence undermining their education rights. Even if they are abused, they do not report the cases of abuse to the police, thus psychologically disturbing her academic performance.

#### **4.2.4 Limited access to formal education**

The research has proven that married girls have limited access to formal education in Masvingo district. This is because some of the school heads has been denying married girls' access to be enrolled at their schools. This is because they have been labelled as 'mischievous and prostitutes' as well, just like the rest of the society does. By so doing, they will be trying to protect their girl learners so that they are not exposed to the behaviors of married girls. This has been evidenced by the response of a senior teacher in one of the schools in the Masvingo district when he said: *'We are so much afraid to enroll survivors of child marriage into our school because we fear that due to their experience that they have concerning sexual relationships, they might influence and pollute the brains of these innocent children.'*

This vividly shows how schools in rural areas are crippling married girl's educational rights. In addition, a survivor of child marriage that was denied enrollment at the school, she fully supported that they have been experiencing lack of access to formal education, as formal schools

will be rejecting them. She commented that: *'I once looked for a form 3 place at Morgenster High School and they refused saying that they do not enroll married girls.'*

This has resulted married girls to resort to extra lessons sometimes with unqualified teachers in the communities, night schools and private colleges. Making use of unqualified teachers has negative effects on girls' educational rights because they are not delivered quality and proper education. Night schools has its own negative effects towards girl's education rights as well, this is because it has limited time such that the teacher might not be able to exhaust his/her lesson properly, hence undermining girls education rights. In addition, night schools are not safe for girls especially in rural areas .This leads to other girls not to even resort to night school at all and views seating back home as better. Private schools are not affordable as they are very expensive and in some cases far away. Because of that, most girls do not opt for colleges, as they are expensive; hence, they chose to be home than to be at school thus suppressing girl's education rights.

#### **4.2.5 Violence**

Gender norms that undermine women and girls are also fueling gender-based violence against married girls. Child brides experience emotional and physical violence in their homes. This is because some misunderstandings that concur between them and other family members. Families are not able to accept that their young girls are already into sexual relationships, so as a result they might view them negatively resulting in emotional and physical violence between the two parties. Child brides also suffer emotional violence, experience isolation and depression because of child marriage.

More so, there is a scenario where married girls suffer violence from their female counterparts for example sister in-laws and mother in-laws, as mentioned by the African feminism theory. Violence among the child bride and her husband's relatives is caused by jealous amongst each other. The husband relatives will have the mentality that the girl came to disadvantage other family members, as they will not be able to enjoy privileges as they used to. Worst still when the girl has resumed her studies, they are do not like it when their relative use his finances on girl's education expenses. Violence in families affects the child's school attendance, performance as well as physical health. Due to this violence, some of the child brides cease to go to school in a bid to promote peace. This was evidenced by *Vaviro (pseudo name)* who responded and said:

*My husband's relatives did not want to go back to school. They required it as a loss of money. This caused a lot of violence between us; I would be beaten and shouted at .I ended up quitting my education for the sake of peace in the family. That is how I quitted school although my husband desired me to be educated; it benefitted me nothing because I was not putting efforts in my studies because of what was transpiring.*

#### **4.2.6 Deprivation of traditional culture**

The research has shown that the girl child has not been receiving proper traditional and cultural education in their societies . Hence because of that they have been engaging in child marriages then depriving them of their education rights. It was of paramount importance that the then Ministry of Education Sports and Culture should have helped the girl child with traditional education, which was to help her preserve her education rights. Traditional education is important as it provides the girl child with the traditional knowledge system which can nurture a sound family and society unity. One of the elders in the community cemented this by saying,



*‘The problem with today’s girls is that, they do not seem to be receiving traditional education for mentorship as it used to be during our days.’*

More so, child marriage has deprived the survivors of child marriage’s education rights and also traditional education which help the girls to improve on their chores and character of humanity which nurture catalysts of principles which sustain relationships. The Shona culture prohibited a girl to get married before she was fully traditionally educated; going to rivers with elder women for education was the then order of the day. This same concept should be kept to improve education rights. This view has been supported by one of the leaders in the Nemamwa community when she said,

*The government has to do something to provide cultural education to girls so that these girls stay in school. Such education is taken for granted at home, so the Ministry of Sports, Arts and Culture should work together with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education for the provision of such education for girls.*

#### **4.3.0 Strategies to deal with the child**

##### **4.3.1 Educating Communities**

Many families and communities view child marriage as a deeply rooted system, which is part of them and their generations. Although sometimes it appears as normal, the system is often driven by gender inequality norms .For change to take place, the norms and values that support child marriages should be addressed and revisited through the inclusion of the families and the communities at large to raise awareness against child marriages and its harmful consequences

towards suppressing education rights. This will help change the attitude and reduce the agreements of marrying young girls by family elders and traditional leaders.

Furthermore, boys and men have a critical role to play in efforts to end child marriages. This is because men have power in decision making of communities; hence, there is need for them to view girls in a better way. Religious leaders and traditional leaders have the potential to play a key role in advocating against child marriages and changing community attitudes. There is need for capacity building for traditional leaders like chiefs, headman etc. They also need to be equipped on the essence of girl child education. This is because from the discussion the researcher discovered that one of the religious leaders dismissed the term “rights” from his contexts. His view was that girl child is not a necessity as long as he is concerned. To him, girls are of less importance; this shows how patriarchal he is as a leader in nature. This was vividly evidenced by his response when he said: *‘Why would you want to make life for girls so easy? Rights! Rights! Rights! Rights! What for?’*

As he uttered these words, he spoke with authority and the response was very harsh showing that he totally dismisses girls education rights especially to those already married as he is of the view that they cannot continue with their education because already they have families to run. His response was self-explanatory that he does not understand the importance of education rights; hence, there is need for capacity building for traditional leaders to be equipped with knowledge. This will be helpful in their communities for development to take place.

#### **4.3.2 Provision of youth friendly health services**

Both married and unmarried girls are in need of youth friendly health services to live healthy and safe lives. Many girls in the developing world are in a serious need of SRH, which can help them

avoid child marriages and contracting HIV and STIs. There is need for girls to be imparted knowledge concerning their health as well as the health care corners to be readily available to them like youth friendly corners. These help girls to be able to access whatever that they need without judgment and male supervisors. In addition, these married girls should be taught on the use of contraceptive to avoid poor child spacing. They need to know their SRH rights as they lose their sexual rights in their homes. One of the leaders said: *‘All meetings done in the community should be utilized. So as to reach out and educate youths on issues that affect them. On dipping points, clinics, schools and all meetings held in the community.’*

#### **4.3.3 Strengthening the judiciary towards handling child marriage cases**

There is need for the closure of the gap in the Zimbabwe’s Law Protection System in protecting the girl child. The government should be non-tolerant to all forms of corruption handling child marriages cases and always rule in the best interest of the child as per article 4 of the ACRW. There is need for capacity building towards the police ,magistrates and judges in ways that they should be handling rape cases and child marriage .This is because ,these cases concern the future of the child. In addition, the perpetrator should be given a worth sentence towards his case. Quite a number of the survivors of child marriage complained that the way their cases are not handled well by the police, the rape cases and gender based violence. As the other one complained and said, *‘Every time I am emotionally abused and physical abused by my husband, I run to the police but they always say go back home and come back after you are beaten up.’*

This vividly shows the incompetence of the legal system and this need to be revisited and corrected. Laws have a huge role to play in the prevention of child marriages. This shows how the government has been violating Article 4 of the United Nations Convention of Child’s Rights

which states that all state parties should undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative and cultural rights and other measures for the implementation of children's rights, it also promised to be undertake measures in its all capacity to use available frameworks and resources. A strong legal system has a provision of important backdrops for improvements in legal services and changes in social norms.

However, for change to be vivid and transformative, governments should prioritize and make it a national importance the issue of child marriage. It is also important to note that laws and policies are supposed to be cemented, implemented, and financed to ensure the prevention of child marriages. The law and policies should revisit the traditional methods of marriage, which contradicts with the national law and promotes child marriages. Traditional leaders should also be taught on how they should handle child marriages and rape cases in their communities because sometimes they do not even report cases to the police but rather they handle them on their own .At the end of the day the perpetrator will be asked to pay fine inform of goats or chicken just like that

#### **4.3.4 Provision of quality education**

It is important to note that one of the strategies to cope with the effects of child marriages is to provide child brides with education conducive for them. Girls who lack access to quality education are the most vulnerable and are at a greater risk of child marriage. Therefore, increasing the accessibility, quality and safe schooling is the most critical strategy in dealing with married girl's education rights. Married girls must be given the opportunity to complete their education without any disturbances and interferences from the community, teachers and students.

The school environment should also be safe to conduct her studies, without feeling out of place. This is because education is the tool that builds knowledge, opportunities and does away with norms and values that undermine the girl child in communities. It is important for the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education and the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture to work together supporting and encouraging married girls to continue with their education in either formal or informal setting such as vocational learning and part time education.

### **Chapter Summary**

The above presented chapter was presenting the findings of this research. It has managed to link the objectives of the research with the findings that are, the causes of child marriage the effects of child marriages on girls education rights and the strategies that can be implemented to deal with the effects of child marriage.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter concludes this research project. The conclusion is going to show in line with the main objectives of the study. Recommendations are also to be included in this chapter, which the researcher views as important to the community. The researcher is going to be presenting recommendations which some of the survivors of child marriages and traditional leaders requested.

#### **5.1 Conclusion**

This study was able to layout the causes of child marriages and the effects of child marriages on girl's education rights. In addition, the strategies to deal with the effects of child marriage were highlighted in this research. The issue of child marriage is a pertinent issue that has been affecting girl's education rights in Masvingo District.

The first objective of this research was to explore the causes of child marriage on girl's education rights. The second objective was looking at the effects of child marriages on girl's education rights. The researcher found out that there are many implications that child marriage has on girl's education rights. This has seen married girls denied access to enrolment at formal schools. This is because the school authorities will be viewing them as objects of negative influence towards other students. Also, survivors of child marriage when they finalize on going back to school, they

tend to be survivors of discrimination and stigmatization. They are sidelined because they are labeled as prostitutes in the community as they would have been involved in sexual relationships. More so, parents do not like to see their children interacting or playing with the survivors of child marriages at school. The research also has it that, married girls who are granted the privilege to go back to school face challenges of late attendances and absentees at school. This is because, they have their gender roles and families to take care of, and this however has a negative impact on girl's education rights. Loss of sexual rights and violence has been the order in the lives of married girls.

The research also managed to look at the strategies that can be put in place to deal with the effects of child marriages on girl's education rights. Some of the strategies were drawn from the observations and some were suggested by opinion leaders in Masvingo district, in Nemamwa under the chieftainship of Chief Fortune Charumbira. One of the strategies was to educate communities on how to deal with the effects of child marriages. Communities need to be taught on how to treat survivors of child marriage in their communities to shun away with stigmatization and discrimination in schools. There is also need to strengthen the judiciary system, as there have been poor law enforcement in Masvingo district as child marriage is concerned. There is also need to ensure quality education and provision of youth friendly services to address SRH problem.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

- There is need to make it compulsory that every girl child whether married or not to attain her education, be education oriented, increasing her interaction with other students to sustain her education rights.

- Religious leaders and traditional leaders must be empowered with knowledge on the effects of child marriage so that they stand firm against all tools that eliminate the practice of child marriage. This in turn will help them to empower parents and communities on the effects of child marriage.
- Developing support groups for married girls in communities led by teachers and other survivors of child marriages who made it in their education and were successful in life. In addition, providing tutorial support for married girls who are facing academic challenges will be helpful. Letting-married girls meeting such people will encourage them to go back to school and starting working had with their education.
- Formulation of rules and regulations in local communities advocating against the practice of child marriage and promotion of married girls' formal education rights. This will enable to bridge the loopholes national law policies and local traditional practices also promoting the constitutional provisions and the education policies. For this to become reality there is need for strict monitoring of the implementations. There is need to educate communities, local leaders, churches and families.
- Conduction of awareness campaigns and discussion forums of the consequences of child marriages on practical terms, these will enable young girls to have knowledge on the consequences of child marriage. These should involve schoolteachers, school heads, community health workers, local authorities, religious and traditional leaders and NGOs. At household level, parents especially the father, is the key stakeholder in the local initiative to campaign against child marriage. Giving awards for the most active in challenging the practice of child marriage will results in attitudinal change.



- Organizing projects that addresses issues in line with child marriage and survivors of child marriage's formal schooling at local level .This will however require a collaborative and integrated effort of the government, community, local schools and NGOs in order to fight against the major barriers to girl's formal education.
- Come up with income generating projects for parents who are failing to send their daughters to school due to poverty. Making married girls to participate in such projects will help them go back to school.
- Expansion of vocational training programs at community level and the provision of life skill trainings on education rights, health and dressmaking. These increase employment opportunities in the domestic spheres.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Interview Questions**

I am Moreblessing Zimuto, studying at Midlands State University doing Development Studies. I am undertaking a research on the effects of child marriages on girl's education rights. During the session of this interview I will be writing and recording some aspects that are useful for this research. I assure you privacy and confidentiality to whatever is going to be discussed in this conversation, no names are to be used throughout this interview.

#### **Questions: Conceptualizing child marriages a questionnaire for parents.**

1. Who is a girl child?

Respondent

When do you consider that a child has matured into an adult?

2. How do you value girl's education rights?

Respondent

3. What decision would you take when a girl child gets pregnant whilst at school?

Respondent

4. Do you think it is relevant to send back a married girl to school?

Respondent

5. What do you think should be the government's policy towards girl child education?

Respondent

6. How must the extended family assist in the rehabilitation of survivors of child marriage?

Respondent

7. What is your view on the interaction of the survivors of child marriage and other school-going girls in school?

Respondent

8. Which stage of education do you desire your child to reach?

Respondent

9. What role do you play to ensure your girl education rights?

Respondent

10. Are education rights for girl child development?

Respondent



## **Appendix 2**

### **Interview Questions**

I am Moreblessing Zimuto, studying at Midlands State University doing Development Studies. I am undertaking a research on the effects of child marriages on girl's education rights. During the session of this interview I will be writing and recording some aspects that are useful for this research. I assure you privacy and confidentiality to whatever is going to be discussed in this conversation, no names are to be used throughout this interview.

### **Interview Questions for child brides**

1. How old are you?  
Respondent
2. Who is your role model and why?  
Respondent
3. Did you go to school?  
Respondent
4. Where did you attend school?  
Respondent
5. How far did you go you with your studies?  
Respondent
6. Why did you drop your studies?  
Respondent
7. What were your education aspirations?  
Respondent

8. Would you like to go back to school?

If yes/no, who do you think can assist you and why?

9. Do you think violation of education rights determine a girl child's life success.

10. How was your life after school?

If bad, why?

11. Which religion do you belong to?

12. What is the highest level of education is allowed by your religion?

13. Was your case ever reported to the police?

14. How old is your husband

## **Appendix 3**

### **Interview Questions**

I am Moreblessing Zimuto, studying at Midlands State University doing Development Studies. I am undertaking a research on the effects of child marriages on girl's education rights. During the session of this interview I will be writing and recording some aspects that are useful for this research. I assure you privacy and confidentiality to whatever is going to be discussed in this conversation, no names are to be used throughout this interview.

#### **Interview questions for traditional and religious leaders.**

1. Who is a child according to your culture or religion?  
Respondent
2. What do you understand by violation of education rights?  
Respondent
3. What girl boy proportional percentage do you give to education rights violation?  
Respondent
4. In your own view what is the most contributory factor of girl education right violation?  
Respondent
5. What remedies do you think should be taken by the family and the society to avoid Undermining education right to school?  
Respondent
6. What effects have you noticed that are caused by early marriages towards girl's education in your community?  
Respondent
7. As an opinion leader what have you been doing to curb child marriages?

Respondent

8. Do you see it as a good idea for married girls to go back to school whilst they are in their marriages?

Respondent

9. Who do you think should be responsible for the fees?

Respondent

10. Have you ever reported any child marriage case to the police?

Respondent