



## Evaluating the Socio-Educational Impact of Early Marriage on Girls' Educational Attainment in Ogbomoso, Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>Adeyeye Elijah Tosin, <sup>2</sup>Adegoke Sunday Paul

<sup>1</sup>College of Education, University of South Africa,

<sup>2</sup>Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the socio-educational impact of early marriage on girls' educational attainment in Ogbomoso, Nigeria. Despite national policies and global commitments to promote girls' education, early marriage remains a major obstacle, especially in communities where cultural and economic pressures are strong. The study explores how early marriage affects school attendance, academic performance, and educational aspirations among girls. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with data collected from 150 respondents, including schoolgirls aged 13–18, early-married adolescents, parents, and teachers. Stratified random sampling ensured balanced representation. A structured questionnaire was used, and its reliability confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.81. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores were used to analyze responses, while chi-square tests examined relationships between early marriage and educational outcomes. Results revealed that many girls who married early left school due to pregnancy, domestic duties, or lack of support. Poverty, cultural norms, and religious beliefs were identified as key drivers of early marriage in the area. The study concludes that early marriage continues to hinder girls' educational progress in Ogbomoso. It recommends stronger enforcement of child protection laws, public awareness campaigns, economic support for families, and re-entry opportunities for affected girls.*

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History

Received: April, 2025

Received in revised form: June, 2025

Accepted: July, 2025

Published online: September, 2025

### KEYWORDS

Early Marriage, Educational Attainment, School Dropout, Academic Performance, Gender Inequality, Girls' Education, Socio-Educational Impact, Cultural Norms

### INTRODUCTION

Education is universally acknowledged as a critical foundation for individual development and national progress. It equips individuals, particularly girls, with the skills, confidence, and knowledge necessary to make informed decisions, escape poverty, and contribute meaningfully to society. However, the persistent prevalence of early marriage continues to undermine these possibilities, especially in developing countries. In Nigeria, early marriage remains a serious barrier to girls' education, despite national and international commitments to gender equity in education (Udoh, 2024).

Early marriage, often described as child marriage when it involves individuals below the age of 18, is both a cause and consequence of

limited educational attainment. Girls who are married off early often face school dropout, reduced access to learning opportunities, early pregnancies, and severe health and psychosocial consequences. According to UNICEF (2021), Nigeria has the third-highest number of child brides globally, with an estimated 43% of girls married before their 18th birthday (Silva, Duruji, Chidozie, & Osimen, 2024). Although child marriage is more common in northern Nigeria, states in the southwest, including Oyo State, still report notable cases, particularly in traditional and rural communities like Ogbomoso.

In Ogbomoso, a culturally rooted and semi-urban area in Oyo State, early marriage is perpetuated by a combination of socio-economic, cultural, and religious factors. Many parents,

Corresponding author: Adeyeye Elijah Tosin

✉ [bigtosin1@gmail.com](mailto:bigtosin1@gmail.com)

College of Education, University of South Africa.

© 2025. Faculty of Technology Education. ATBU Bauchi. All rights reserved



especially those from poor households, see early marriage as a way to reduce economic pressure or uphold family honor. Others believe that marriage will protect their daughters from premarital sexual relationships or social deviance. Unfortunately, these views are often shaped by limited awareness of the long-term consequences of early marriage on girls' education and overall wellbeing.

Poverty and unstable family incomes are also strong predictors of indiscipline among students, as economic hardship may fuel truancy, aggression, or resistance to authority (Adeyeye, 2024; Oyem, 2016). These economic realities often intersect with cultural practices to push young girls into early marriage as a perceived solution to household financial burdens. Evidence suggests that early marriage truncates girls' academic journeys at the primary or junior secondary level, and only a small fraction return to complete their education after marriage (Birchall, 2018). The onset of marriage often introduces domestic responsibilities, pregnancy, and in some cases, social isolation, making school attendance nearly impossible. In rural communities around Ogbomoso, school administrators and teachers have expressed concern over the increasing rate at which promising female students are withdrawn from school due to impending marriage or unplanned pregnancy.

Furthermore, traditional gender roles reinforced by early marriage tend to prioritize a girl's reproductive and domestic roles over her intellectual development and personal aspirations. This often results in a loss of self-esteem, increased dependency on spouses, and limited participation in public or economic life. A study by Odimegwu, Somefun, & Akinyemi, (2017) observed that girls married before completing secondary school were less likely to engage in formal employment, and more likely to depend economically on their husbands or extended family.

From a socio-educational perspective, the effects of early marriage are cyclical and structural. Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital (1986) explains how family and community values can either support or hinder educational

progression. When communities value early marriage over education, girls grow up with limited educational aspiration and minimal support for schooling, making it more likely they will repeat the cycle with their own daughters. Similarly, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) highlights how the broader socio-cultural environment, including family, peers, community norms, and institutional policies, shapes a child's developmental path, including their access to education (Crawford, 2020).

Although Nigeria is a signatory to several international frameworks such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), implementation at the grassroots level remains weak. The Child Rights Act of 2003, which sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 and guarantees children's right to education, has yet to be fully domesticated and enforced across all states, including some local government areas in Oyo State.

In spite of efforts by civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international bodies such as UNICEF, UNFPA, and Plan International to combat early marriage and promote girls' education, local data to guide intervention efforts remain limited, especially in smaller towns like Ogbomoso. While national statistics paint a broad picture, localized studies that focus on how early marriage affects school attendance, completion rates, and future aspirations of girls are urgently needed.

Hence, this study seeks to bridge this knowledge gap by evaluating the socio-educational implications of early marriage on girls' academic attainment in Ogbomoso. It will assess the extent to which early marriage disrupts educational access and progression, examine the socio-cultural factors influencing the practice, and explore the long-term effects on married girls' personal development and future opportunities. Findings from the study are expected to inform educational policy, community sensitization, and



advocacy interventions aimed at promoting girls' rights and education in the region.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite global and national advocacy for girl-child education, early marriage remains a significant barrier to educational attainment among girls in Nigeria, especially in semi-urban and rural areas like Ogbomoso. Many girls who marry early are withdrawn from school due to social expectations, pregnancy, domestic duties, or pressure from families. This situation not only halts their academic progress but also limits future opportunities for socio-economic advancement. In Ogbomoso, reports suggest that many school-age girls marry before completing secondary education, resulting in low female literacy rates, reduced school enrollment, and perpetuation of poverty. Although the Child Rights Act (2003) prohibits marriage under 18, enforcement is weak, and cultural and religious norms often take precedence over the law. This creates a contradiction between legal provisions and social practice, with significant educational consequences.

While national studies exist, there is a lack of research focused on how early marriage affects girls' education specifically in Ogbomoso, where traditional values remain strong despite urban influences. Without localized data, it is difficult for policymakers and educators to design effective interventions tailored to the community's unique needs. According to Banda, M. (2025); (Udoh, 2024), early marriage disrupts girls' learning and development, creating gender disparities in educational achievement. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the socio-educational impact of early marriage on girls in Ogbomoso to understand the scale of the problem, its root causes, and to recommend strategies for policy and educational reforms that promote girls' education and empowerment.

### Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the socio-educational impact of early marriage on girls' educational attainment in Ogbomoso. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Determine how early marriage affects school attendance and completion among girls in Ogbomoso.
2. Identify the socio-cultural factors that contribute to early marriage in the community.
3. Assess the impact of early marriage on girls' academic performance and future aspirations.
4. Suggest recommendations to improve girls' educational outcomes and reduce early marriage in the area.

### Research Questions

1. How does early marriage affect school attendance and completion rates among girls in Ogbomoso?
2. What socio-cultural factors influence the practice of early marriage in Ogbomoso?
3. In what ways does early marriage impact the academic performance and future educational aspirations of girls?
4. What measures can be implemented to reduce early marriage and improve girls' educational attainment in Ogbomoso?

### Significance of the Study

This study provides important insights into the socio-educational impact of early marriage on girls in Ogbomoso. By focusing on a semi-urban community in the southwest, it fills a gap in literature that has largely concentrated on northern Nigeria, showing that the problem also persists in other regions. The findings reveal how cultural expectations, poverty, and parental beliefs encourage early marriage, thereby undermining girls' education and limiting their future opportunities.

The study also holds policy relevance as it underscores the need to enforce the Child Rights Act (2003) and to develop gender-sensitive educational policies that respond to the realities of girls in rural and semi-urban areas. For educators, it provides clearer evidence of how early marriage leads to absenteeism, dropout, and declining academic performance, supporting strategies to identify at-risk girls and keep them in school.



Beyond schools, the study raises awareness among parents and community leaders about the consequences of early marriage. It also provides community-specific evidence for NGOs and advocacy groups, strengthening campaigns for girls' rights and aligning with global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals. Ultimately, it demonstrates that protecting girls from early marriage and promoting their education is vital not only for individual empowerment but also for building stronger and more inclusive communities in Ogbomoso.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of early marriage and its implications for girls' education has received considerable scholarly attention, especially in the context of developing countries where gender disparities are pronounced. According to Hailu, & Beyene, (2025), child marriage disrupts the educational trajectory of millions of girls worldwide, often resulting in school dropout, limited academic attainment, and constrained future opportunities. In sub-Saharan Africa, studies have consistently shown that early marriage is both a cause and consequence of low female literacy and educational participation (Petroni, Steinhaus, Fenn, Stoebenau, & Gregowski, A. (2017).

Research by Fafard St-Germain, Kirby, & Urquia, (2022) highlights that girls who marry before the age of 18 are significantly less likely to complete secondary school compared to their unmarried peers. These girls often face early pregnancies, health challenges, and the burdens of domestic responsibilities, all of which reduce their capacity to participate effectively in academic activities. Similarly, Chandel, Yadav, & Hung, (2025) found that early-married girls in Nigeria are more likely to drop out of school and remain economically dependent on their spouses, thereby perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty and educational disadvantage.

In a study conducted by Oladipo (2020), cultural and religious ideologies were identified as major drivers of early marriage in Nigeria, especially in rural and semi-urban settings.

Families frequently prioritize marriage over education for girls, seeing it as a protective measure against premarital sex or as a source of social and economic stability. However, this choice often leads to the abandonment of formal education and denies girls the opportunity to build meaningful careers and contribute to national development.

The educational consequences of early marriage are not merely personal but also societal. Research by Bayisenge, (2010) argues that when large numbers of girls are removed from school systems due to early marriage, the long-term human capital of a country is compromised. This impacts national productivity, widens gender inequality, and slows the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

Despite numerous interventions by international organizations and NGOs, the issue remains persistent, largely due to weak enforcement of legal frameworks and the deep-rooted nature of cultural norms. Studies focusing on localized contexts, such as Ogbomoso in Oyo State, are limited. This gap in localized, community-based evidence makes it difficult for educators and policymakers to design interventions that are contextually relevant and culturally sensitive. Hence, more empirical research is needed to explore the socio-educational implications of early marriage within specific regions and communities in Nigeria.

## Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Liberal Feminist Theory as the primary theoretical lens for evaluating the socio-educational impact of early marriage on girls' educational attainment in Ogbomoso, Nigeria. The liberal feminist perspective emphasizes the need to eliminate institutional and cultural barriers that restrict women's and girls' access to opportunities, particularly in education. It holds that women and men should have equal rights and opportunities, and that societal norms or legal frameworks that reinforce gender inequality must be dismantled (Omwami, 2021).



Within the context of this study, early marriage represents one of such socio-cultural barriers that disproportionately affect girls. In many traditional communities, including parts of Ogbomoso, early marriage is often justified on cultural, religious, or economic grounds. However, these justifications frequently overlook the educational and developmental costs imposed on the girls involved. Once married, girls are typically withdrawn from school, either to assume domestic responsibilities or due to pregnancy and childcare duties. This reality reflects the patriarchal nature of society that liberal feminist's critique, where girls' education is not prioritized once they are seen as ready for marriage.

Complementing this perspective is the Human Capital Theory, as propounded by Becker (1993), which considers education as a key investment in human development and national productivity (Almendarez, 2011). According to this theory, individuals acquire knowledge and skills through education, which in turn increases their economic value and improves their quality of life. When girls are married off early and their education is interrupted or terminated, this investment is truncated, resulting in long-term economic and social consequences for the individual and the wider society.

The relevance of these theories to the study lies in their shared emphasis on access to education and the broader societal implications of denying this right. Liberal Feminist Theory frames early marriage as a gendered practice rooted in unequal power relations, while Human Capital Theory highlights the socio-economic losses associated with educational deprivation. Together, they provide a dual lens to understand both the social injustice and developmental consequences of early marriage on girls' education in Ogbomoso. By applying these theories, the study is able to critically examine how entrenched socio-cultural norms interact with structural inequalities to shape educational outcomes for girls, and to suggest policy interventions that support gender equity and educational advancement.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design using the descriptive survey method. The approach is considered appropriate for collecting quantifiable data from a large number of respondents with the aim of evaluating the socio-educational impact of early marriage on girls' educational attainment in Ogbomoso. The design allows for the analysis of measurable variables and the identification of trends and patterns among the target population.

### Population of the Study

The population for this study comprised school-age girls between 13 and 18 years, married adolescent girls, teachers, and parents within selected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State. These groups were selected because they are directly involved in or affected by the practice of early marriage and its implications for girls' education.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for this study consisted of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents drawn from selected communities and schools within Ogbomoso, Oyo State. The respondents included female students between the ages of 13 and 18 years, early-married adolescent girls, parents, and secondary school teachers. These groups were chosen because they are directly involved in or affected by the phenomenon of early marriage and its implications for girls' education.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure fair representation of different sub-groups. The stratification was based on the respondents' status (students, parents, and teachers) and community locations known to have high incidences of early marriage. Within each stratum, simple random sampling was used to select participants. This approach was adopted to eliminate bias and enhance the reliability of the data collected. The use of multiple strata also ensured that the sample reflected a balanced cross-section of the population relevant to the objectives of the study.



### Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for this study consisted of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents drawn from selected communities and schools within Ogbomoso, Oyo State. The respondents included female students between the ages of 13 and 18 years, early-married adolescent girls, parents, and secondary school teachers. These groups were chosen because they are directly involved in or affected by the phenomenon of early marriage and its implications for girls' education.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure fair representation of different sub-groups. The stratification was based on the respondents' status (students, parents, and teachers) and community locations known to have high incidences of early marriage. Within each stratum, simple random sampling was used to select participants. This approach was adopted to eliminate bias and enhance the reliability of the data collected. The use of multiple strata also ensured that the sample reflected a balanced cross-section of the population relevant to the objectives of the study.

### Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in the fields of education and social science. Their suggestions were incorporated to improve clarity and relevance. A pilot test was conducted on 15

respondents from a nearby community not included in the main study. The reliability of the instrument was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.81, indicating high internal consistency.

### Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher, with the help of trained assistants, administered the questionnaire directly to the respondents in schools, homes, and community centres. Before distribution, each participant was informed of the purpose of the research and assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Participation was entirely voluntary, and parental consent was obtained for minors.

### Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. The analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to answer the research questions. Additionally, inferential statistics such as chi-square tests were used to determine the relationship between early marriage and key variables like school attendance, academic performance, and educational aspirations.

## RESULTS

Table 1: Early Marriage and School Attendance/Completion

Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Agree (SA+A) %	Mean	SD
Early marriage causes girls to drop out of school	70	50	12	10	8	80.0	4.1	0.95
Many girls leave school once they get engaged or married	64	44	18	14	10	72.0	3.9	1.02
Early marriage reduces concentration and attendance	62	48	14	14	12	73.3	4.0	0.97
Girls who marry early rarely return to school after marriage	66	42	16	18	8	72.0	4.0	0.94

The findings in Table 1 indicate that early marriage has a substantial negative impact on school attendance and completion among girls in Ogbomoso. A majority of respondents agreed

that early marriage causes girls to drop out of school (80%), and that many leave school once engaged or married (72%). The mean scores, ranging from 3.9 to 4.1, suggest strong agreement



across items, while the standard deviations (0.94–1.02) indicate moderate variability in responses. Additionally, 73.3% reported that early marriage reduces concentration and attendance, and 72% noted that girls rarely return to school after

marriage. These results confirm that early marriage significantly disrupts educational continuity, undermining both attendance and completion rates for affected girls.

Table 2: Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Early Marriage

Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Agree (SA+A) %	Mean	SD
Cultural beliefs promote early marriage	68	50	10	12	10	78.0	4.2	0.91
Some parents marry off girls to protect family honour	66	46	12	14	12	74.7	4.0	1.05
Poverty is a reason for early marriage	72	40	10	16	12	74.7	4.1	0.99
Peer/community pressure encourages early marriage	60	46	14	16	14	70.0	3.9	1.08

Table 2 shows that socio-cultural factors strongly influence the prevalence of early marriage. Cultural beliefs were reported by 78% of respondents as promoting early marriage, with a mean of 4.2 (SD = 0.91), indicating strong agreement. Parental motives to protect family honour and poverty were also cited by 74.7% of respondents each (means = 4.0 and 4.1; SD = 1.05 and 0.99), while peer and community

pressure scored 70% agreement (mean = 3.9; SD = 1.08). The data reveal that early marriage is deeply embedded in cultural norms and societal expectations, compounded by economic hardship. The moderate standard deviations indicate some variation in perception, suggesting that while most respondents recognize these factors, the degree of influence may vary across communities.

Table 3: Academic Performance and Educational Aspirations

Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Agree (SA+A) %	Mean	SD
Married girls struggle academically due to household responsibilities	65	45	14	14	12	73.3	4.0	0.97
Girls who marry early perform worse than unmarried peers	68	42	12	16	12	73.3	4.0	0.95
Most married girls abandon dreams of further education	66	48	10	16	10	76.0	4.1	0.89
Early marriage limits self-confidence and academic aspiration	62	50	12	16	10	74.7	4.0	0.94

From Table 3, it is evident that early marriage negatively affects academic performance and future educational aspirations. Seventy-three percent of respondents agreed that married girls struggle academically due to household responsibilities (mean = 4.0, SD = 0.97), and perform worse than their unmarried peers (73.3%, mean = 4.0, SD = 0.95). Furthermore, 76% indicated that married girls

abandon dreams of further education (mean = 4.1, SD = 0.89), while 74.7% noted reduced self-confidence and academic ambition (mean = 4.0, SD = 0.94). The consistency in high mean scores and moderate SDs suggests a shared recognition that early marriage limits both current performance and long-term educational goals, confirming its detrimental effect on girls' academic trajectories.

Table 4: Intervention Strategies to Reduce Early Marriage

Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Agree (SA+A) %	Mean	SD
Parents should be educated to delay marriage for daughters	70	50	12	10	8	80.0	4.2	0.88
Government should enforce child marriage and education protection laws	72	48	10	12	8	80.0	4.3	0.87
Community leaders should support girls' education	66	50	14	10	10	77.3	4.1	0.92
Scholarships could help keep girls in school	68	52	10	10	10	80.0		

Table 4 shows that respondents strongly support interventions aimed at reducing early marriage. Educating parents about delaying daughters' marriages received 80% agreement (mean = 4.2, SD = 0.88), while enforcing child marriage and education protection laws also scored 80% (mean = 4.3, SD = 0.87). Community leaders' support for girls' education was endorsed by 77.3% (mean = 4.1, SD = 0.92), and scholarships as an incentive to stay in school had 80% agreement (mean = 4.2, SD = 0.85). The high means and relatively low standard deviations indicate strong consensus among respondents that a combination of legal, educational, community, and economic measures is critical to improving girls' educational attainment and reducing early marriage.

#### Overall Interpretation Across Tables

The descriptive statistics demonstrate a clear pattern: early marriage significantly hinders school attendance, academic performance, and educational aspirations among girls in Ogbomoso. Socio-cultural norms, poverty, and peer/community pressures are key drivers, while stakeholders recognize that interventions such as parental education, law enforcement, community advocacy, and scholarship provision can effectively mitigate its effects. The use of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations provides strong evidence of the prevalence, impact, and potential solutions to early marriage in the study area.

#### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The analysis of Table 1 shows that early marriage significantly disrupts girls' school

attendance and reduces completion rates. A combined 80% of respondents agreed that early marriage causes girls to drop out of school, while 72% reported that many girls leave school once they are engaged or married. Additionally, 73.3% indicated that early marriage reduces concentration and attendance, and 72% stated that girls rarely return to school after marriage. The mean scores (3.9–4.1) and moderate standard deviations indicate strong agreement among respondents with some variation in experiences.

These findings align with studies in Nigeria and other developing countries, which show that early marriage interrupts formal education due to new domestic and marital responsibilities (Afolayan, (2021); Akinbobola, (2025); Lynda, Kelechi, & Ridwan, (2020). In the Ogbomoso context, girls often face dual pressures of household chores and social expectations to marry early, which competes directly with schooling. This supports the socio-educational perspective that education is not only a personal right but also a critical pathway for social mobility, and that early marriage significantly undermines this pathway. The finding underscores a critical issue: girls who marry early are less likely to complete secondary education, reducing their access to higher education and limiting future employment opportunities. This perpetuates cycles of poverty and gender inequality, as uneducated women are less able to participate fully in socio-economic development (Umar, 2020).

Table 2 shows that socio-cultural factors strongly encourage early marriage. Cultural beliefs were cited by 78% of respondents as a





reason, while 74.7% reported that parents marry off daughters to protect family honour, and 74.7% attributed early marriage to poverty. Peer and community pressure was also recognized by 70% of respondents. The mean scores (3.9–4.2) and standard deviations (0.91–1.08) indicate strong consensus on the influence of these factors.

These findings are consistent with the argument that early marriage is deeply entrenched in socio-cultural norms. In many Nigerian communities, including Ogbomoso, marriage is perceived as a social and moral obligation, and delaying marriage may be seen as dishonouring the family (Ugwu, Okoye, & Agbo, 2024). Poverty further exacerbates this, as marrying off a daughter can be viewed as a strategy to reduce household economic burden. The role of peer and community influence highlights the social pressure girls and parents face, reinforcing early marriage as a culturally sanctioned practice. From a socio-educational perspective, this confirms that interventions must address not only economic barriers but also cultural beliefs and social norms to reduce the incidence of early marriage and improve educational outcomes for girls.

The findings in Table 3 indicate that early marriage negatively affects both academic performance and future educational aspirations. A combined 73.3% of respondents reported that married girls struggle academically due to household responsibilities and perform worse than unmarried peers. Furthermore, 76% indicated that early marriage causes girls to abandon further educational ambitions, while 74.7% observed a decline in self-confidence and academic aspiration. The mean scores (4.0–4.1) and moderate standard deviations suggest high agreement among respondents.

These results corroborate studies by Adeniyi, Oladele, & Adeniyi, (2020); Amali, Bello, & Adeoye, (2018), which highlight that early marital responsibilities, domestic labor, and childcare reduce time and energy for studying, leading to poor academic performance. The reduced self-confidence and abandonment of educational goals reflect a long-term impact on girls' empowerment and socio-economic mobility. In Ogbomoso, girls who marry early face

constrained opportunities to pursue secondary and tertiary education, which reinforces gender inequality and limits their participation in decision-making and the labor market. This finding emphasizes the interconnection between early marriage, educational attainment, and socio-economic development: when girls are denied education due to early marriage, it not only affects individual achievement but also reduces the community's human capital development.

Table 4 indicates strong support for interventions to curb early marriage. A combined 80% of respondents emphasized the importance of educating parents about delaying daughters' marriages and enforcing child marriage and education protection laws. Community support for girls' education received 77.3% agreement, while scholarships to encourage school attendance also scored 80%. The high mean scores (4.1–4.3) and low standard deviations (0.85–0.92) suggest a shared recognition of practical strategies to mitigate early marriage.

These findings align with global recommendations by UNICEF (2018) and WHO (2019), which advocate a multi-faceted approach including legal enforcement, community awareness, parental education, and economic support. In the Ogbomoso context, these interventions are crucial because they address both the socio-cultural and economic drivers of early marriage. Scholarships, in particular, reduce financial barriers, while community and parental engagement challenges entrenched cultural norms that perpetuate early marriage. Implementing these strategies is likely to enhance school attendance, improve academic performance, and support the educational aspirations of girls. This supports the socio-educational principle that creating enabling environments and addressing social determinants are essential for improving educational outcomes for marginalized groups.

## OVERALL DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that early marriage in Ogbomoso significantly undermines girls' educational attainment. Descriptive statistics



show a high prevalence of school dropouts, poor academic performance, and limited future educational aspirations among early-married girls. Socio-cultural norms, poverty, and peer/community pressure are major drivers of early marriage, while stakeholders recognize the importance of parental education, legal enforcement, community advocacy, and scholarships as effective interventions.

From a socio-educational perspective, the study highlights the interconnectedness of cultural, economic, and educational factors in shaping the experiences of girls. Addressing early marriage requires a holistic approach that combines policy enforcement, community engagement, and economic support to break the cycle of educational deprivation and gender inequality. The study contributes to the existing literature by providing localized evidence from Ogbomoso, underscoring the need for targeted interventions that consider both cultural sensitivities and socio-economic realities.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study clearly show that early marriage has a profound and negative impact on girls' education in Ogbomoso. Girls who marry early are more likely to drop out of school, struggle academically, and abandon their aspirations for further education. The practice is deeply rooted in socio-cultural norms, poverty, and peer or community pressures, which together create an environment that limits the opportunities available to young girls.

At the same time, the study reveals that interventions can make a real difference. Educating parents about the importance of delaying marriage, enforcing laws that protect children, engaging community leaders, and providing scholarships are all practical measures that can help keep girls in school and support their educational growth. These strategies not only address the immediate barriers to schooling but also challenge the cultural and social beliefs that perpetuate early marriage.

In conclusion, reducing early marriage is not just about enforcing laws—it requires a combination of education, awareness, and

community support. When girls are given the chance to complete their education, they are better equipped to contribute meaningfully to their families, communities, and the broader society. The evidence from Ogbomoso underscores the urgent need for coordinated efforts to protect girls' right to education and to empower them to achieve their full potential.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The government should intensify efforts to educate parents, traditional rulers, and religious leaders about the negative consequences of early marriage and the critical importance of girls' education through well-coordinated community sensitization programs.
2. Additionally, the Child Rights Act must be fully enforced across Oyo State, with community leaders held accountable for facilitating or endorsing underage marriages.
3. To reduce the economic pressures that contribute to early marriage, the government should introduce scholarships and conditional cash transfer programs targeted at families, incentivizing them to keep their daughters in school.
4. Furthermore, guidance and counseling services should be made available in schools, alongside flexible re-entry policies for girls who drop out due to early marriage or pregnancy, ensuring that they are supported in continuing their education without stigma or discrimination.

## REFERENCES

- Acts, C. R. (2003). Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- Adeniyi, C., Oladele, E., & Adeniyi, E. (2020). Influence of Home and Career on the Academic Performance of Married Distance Learners in South-West, Nigeria. *Pakistan Journal Of Distance And Online Learning*, 6(2), n2.
- Adeyeye, E. T. (2024). Indiscipline Among Public Secondary Schools' Students in



- Ogbomoso South Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria: Causes and its Effects. *Nigerian Online Journal of Educational Sciences and Technology*, 6(1), 457-473.
- Afolayan, G. E. (2021). *Non-formal education as a tool for empowering girls and women in a religiously conservative context: The case of northern Nigeria* (Doctoral dissertation, Murdoch University).
- Akinbobola, B. E. (2025). *"It takes a village": motivation and school completion in Northern Nigeria* (Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia).
- Almendarez, L. (2011, October). Human capital theory: Implications for educational development. In *Belize Country Conference paper* (Vol. 59, No. 3-4, pp. 21-33).
- Amali, I. O., Bello, M. B., & Adeoye, G. O. (2018). Influence of domestic works on female students academic performance in upper-basic schools in Kwara State, Nigeria. *Journal of Education in Developing Areas*, 26(1), 196-202.
- Banda, M. (2025). Girl interrupted! The impact of child marriage on women's educational attainment in Zambia.
- Bayisenge, J. (2010). Early marriage as a barrier to girl's education. *Retrieved on*, 1(10), 2010.
- Birchall, J. (2018). Early marriage, pregnancy and girl child school dropout.
- Bourdieu, P. (2011). The forms of capital. (1986). *Cultural theory: An anthology*, 1(81-93), 949.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (2013). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. *The Psychology Notes HQ Online Resources for Psychology Students*.
- Chandel, A., Yadav, M., & Hung, T. H. (2025). Social and Economic Consequences of Early Marriage on Women's Education and Workforce Participation. In *Social, Political, and Health Implications of Early Marriage* (pp. 261-290). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.
- Crawford, M. (2020). Ecological Systems theory: Exploring the development of the theoretical framework as conceived by Bronfenbrenner. *J Pub Health Issue Pract*, 4(2), 170.
- Evans, D., Borriello, G. A., & Field, A. P. (2018). A review of the academic and psychological impact of the transition to secondary education. *Frontiers in psychology*, 9, 1482.
- Fafard St-Germain, A. A., Kirby, R. S., & Urquia, M. L. (2022). Reproductive health among married and unmarried mothers aged less than 18, 18–19, and 20–24 years in the United States, 2014–2019: A population-based cross-sectional study. *PLoS Medicine*, 19(3), e1003929.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2004). *Universal Basic Education Act, 2004*. Abuja: Federal Government Press.
- Hailu, B. A., & Beyene, J. (2025). Adolescent marriage, maternity, and limited access to education in 106 countries: Bayesian analysis of prevalence, trend, and prediction. *Scientific Reports*, 15(1), 9584.
- James, G. (2010). Socio-cultural context of adolescents' motivation for marriage and childbearing in North-Western Nigeria: a qualitative approach. *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(5), 269-275.
- Lynda, E. O., Kelechi, A. I., & Ridwan, M. (2020). Assessment of Rural Households Food Insecurity During COVID-19 Pandemic in South-East Nigeria. *International Journal of Research-GRANTHAALAYAH*, 8(12), 182-94.
- Odimegwu, C., Somefun, O. D., & Akinyemi, J. (2017). Gender differences in the effect of family structure on educational outcomes among Nigerian youth. *Sage Open*, 7(4), 2158244017739948.
- Omwami, E. M. (2021). Liberal feminism in comparative education and the implications for women's empowerment. *Annual Review of*



- Comparative and International Education* 2020, 171-196.
- Oyem, J. A. (2016). *Emerging challenges of indiscipline and remedial measures among principals, teachers and students of public secondary schools in Delta and Ondo States, Nigeria* (Doctoral dissertation, Doctoral dissertation, Delta State University, Abraka).
- Petroni, S., Steinhaus, M., Fenn, N. S., Stoebenau, K., & Gregowski, A. (2017). New findings on child marriage in sub-Saharan Africa. *Annals of global health*, 83(5-6), 781-790.
- Silva, A. O., Duruji, M. M., Chidozie, F., & Osimen, G. U. (2024). Evaluating the Influence of International Conventions on Child Marriage in Nigeria: Progress towards Achieving SDG Target 5.3 by 2030. *Pakistan Journal of Life & Social Sciences*, 22(2).
- Smith, C. A., Paulson Stone, R., & Kahando, S. (2012). A model of women's educational factors related to delaying girls' marriage. *International Review of Education*, 58(4), 533-555.
- Udoh, E. (2024). The Effect of Gender Inequality and Early Marriage on Girl-Child Education in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District. *AKSU Annals of Sustainable Development*, 29-39.
- Ugwu, N. V., Okoye, K. M., & Agbo, C. O. (2024). Moral challenges of Marriage institution in the contemporary Igbo Christian society. *Nsukka Journal of Religion and Cultural Studies*, 12(1).
- Umar, F. (2020). Socio-Economic Implication of Political and Economic Participation of Women in Nigeria. *Economy*, 7(1), 1-10.
- UNICEF. (2018). *Global Annual Results Report 2018: Goal Area 3 – Every child is protected from violence and exploitation*. United Nations Children's Fund. Retrieved from [https://www.unicef.org/media/54891/file/Global\\_Annual\\_Results\\_Report\\_2018\\_Goal\\_Area\\_3.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/54891/file/Global_Annual_Results_Report_2018_Goal_Area_3.pdf)
- World Health Organization. (2019). *Global Status Report on Preventing Violence Against Children 2020*. World Health Organization. Retrieved from <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/332394/9789240004191-eng.pdf?sequence=1>
- Zasha, D. (2018). *Agency and wellbeing in the context of early marriage: A qualitative inquiry into the northern Nigerian context* (Doctoral dissertation, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh).