

INCIDENCE AND PREVALENCE OF CHILD MARRIAGES IN NORTH KORDOFAN STATE OF SUDAN: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION, HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Child marriage is considered a violation of human rights. The United Nations has called for elimination of the practice by 2030 (Sustainable Development Goal No.5). The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions (I) How many girls are getting married before the end of basic education; (ii) How many know of friends in other schools who are married at the end of primary education; (iii) Does the student support the idea of child marriages; (iv) Based on his/her experience, why do girls want to marry early; (v) Does the student think it is a tradition that should be ended either by law from the government or parents encouraged to stop the practice; and (vi) Are they aware of any of their friends who was married early going through difficulties- during child birth, violence against her, her inability to go back to school- etc.- as a result of child marriage? Data was collected mainly by interviews conducted with basic school students. Both boys and girls were interviewed. An analysis of data from five communities for the students who are in grade five to grade eight showed more than one fifth of the students were engaged or married; and that almost half of them (41.1%) thought it was absolutely suitable to marry during high school, after basic school or even before. In response to the question of why girls wanted to marry early, it was found that the perceived drivers for child marriage included tradition, love, peers pressure, to scape parental control, forced by parents, to improve her economic status, arranged marriage, strict parents and for prestige. However, more than half of subjects perceived that marriage changed girls live for the better. The study also found that 80% perceived that girls are unable to go back to school once they marry before the age of 18; and 68.9% of the students agreed that suffering could happen during child birth, 65.5 per cent of the students thought child marriage could lead to domestic violence and 60 per cent thought it is also a violation of human rights and women rights. To end child marriage, subjects advocated increased community awareness, promotion of girls' education and enforcement of government laws. Recommendations in the study included supporting vulnerable girls and increasing community involvement and engagement.

Keywords: Child marriage, community awareness, education, health, North Kordofan, Sudan, violence against women.