



## CHILD MARRIAGES IN NYAMUZUWE COMMUNITY, ZIMBABWE: PARENTS AND GUARDIANS CONNIVING

Show Chibango<sup>1i</sup>,

Cassim Silumba<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>BA General, Dip in Industrial Relations,  
PGDE, Zimbabwe

<sup>2</sup>BA English and Communication Skills,  
PGDE, Zimbabwe

### Abstract:

Despite strides that have been made in Zimbabwe in uplifting the standard of women and improving their welfare, there still exist dissonances in the level of life in many Zimbabwean women. The poor living standards experienced by women in rural areas are a cause for concern. The level of education, rights deprivation and child marriages are rampant particularly in Nyamuzuwe community in Mutoko District have risen to alarming levels. Of concern in this article is the issue of child marriages that has seen several girls dropping out of school as a result of marriages. What is very disturbing is that parents or guardians of these girls seem to be conniving with perpetrators in the whole process of child marriages. At the end of the day, all the gains Zimbabwe is boasting of in terms of education and improvement of standards of life are just going down the drain. The study was carried out through qualitative method through a phenomenological approach. Snowballing, interviews, observations and focus group discussions were made use of in gathering the data for this article. Presentation is mainly descriptive since the type of data gathered depended much on the experiences and feelings of the people in the society. The study was based on interviews from 5 purposively selected individuals who provided detailed data. Names of individuals in this article are pseudo to protect the identity of the individuals. A number of recommendations were put forward that include all concerned stakeholders to take action to rectify the said problem.

**Keywords:** child marriages, Zimbabwe, children abuse

### 1. Introduction

Child marriage, also known as early marriage, is defined as *“any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, physiologically, and psychologically ready*

---

<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [schibango@gmail.com](mailto:schibango@gmail.com), [cassimsilumba@gmail.com](mailto:cassimsilumba@gmail.com)

to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing" (IPPF, 2007). Child marriage involves either one or both spouses being children and may take place with or without formal registration, and under civil, religious, or customary laws. In many societies and mostly in developing countries, child marriages are used to build or strengthen alliances between families. Sometimes this may even include the betrothal of young children or babies. Child marriage affects both gender but girls are unduly affected as they are the majority of the victims. Their overall development is compromised, leaving them socially secluded with little education, skills and opportunities for employment and self-realization. This leaves child brides more vulnerable to poverty, a cause and consequence of child marriage. Studies on child abuse and the issue of teenagers were carried out by several researchers like Barlow, Davis, McIntosh, Jarett, Mockford and Stewart-Brown (2007); Day and Davis (2006); Kirkpatrick, Barlow, Stewart-Brown and Davis (2007) and there is congruence in their studies in noting that cases of child abuse are proliferating.

There is a minimum marriageable age law in Zimbabwe, under general law of the country which is 16 for girls and 18 for boys but the practice of early marriage continues as customary law, which is also part of the legal system and is followed by personal matters which does not have a minimum age for marriage. The practice of early marriage is in conflict with modernisation and development in society as it seriously undermines a girl child's opportunities in the future because of lack of exposure through education. According to the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, the median age at first marriage in Zimbabwe has been declining from 19 years for women currently aged 45-49 years to 16 years for those aged 15-19 years. Five percent of women aged 15-49 years currently in marriage or union were married before the age 15 (rural 6%, urban 2%). Marriage before age 15 years decreased with education of women and household wealth, and increased with age of woman (ZIMSTATS, 2009).

This study is done after an observation of the trend that has been on going in our teaching practice as teachers based in Mutoko District - Nyamuzuwe community. More girls who were promising in terms of their academic studies failed to make it because of marriages. Efforts to get meaningful explanations from the parents or guardians of the children did not yield much as most of them were proud of marrying off their daughters to noticeable males of the society.

Moreover, the background is emanating from the works of Non-Governmental Organisations such as Plan International Zimbabwe. This Non-Governmental Organisation has been operating in Mutoko for more than 10 years back. They have made efforts in the education of the underprivileged, particularly girls. Unfortunately, after all the work by this Non-Governmental Organisation, some girls left school opting for marriage, obviously not out of their choice. The pressure was coming from parents who were conniving with their in-laws so that they get *lobola* (dowry), all at the expense of the young girls who were manipulated.

14 years of teaching experience and dialoguing with schools girls has shown the researchers that these innocent girls have great plans with their lives as some want to be engineers, others doctors, nurses, lawyers etc. Unfortunately, all these dreams are just

killed by parents and guardians who just want enjoy *lobola* for these girls. This backdrop has created a need for inquiry into the whole issue of child marriage.

## 2. Research question

- Why are parents conniving with perpetrators of child marriages in aggravating the crime?

### 2.1 Sub-questions

- What is the role of parents in child marriages?
- What are the barriers to child marriages stoppages in the selected community?
- What are the perceptions of the community on child marriages?

### 2.2 Objectives of the study

This study intended to achieve the following four objectives:

1. Assess the causes of child marriages in Nyamuzuwe community.
2. Explore the role played by parents in aggravating child marriages in Nyamuzuwe community.
3. Assess the community's perceptions on child marriages.
4. Suggest ways of curbing of child marriages in Nyamuzuwe community.

### 2.3 Statement of the problem

The rampant early child marriages noted in the background to the study has led to pupils' failure to attain their academic qualifications, complete Grade Seven and O' Level courses. Therefore, why do parents and guardians connive with perpetrators of child marriages in aggravating the crime?

## 3. Methodology

This study utilised the qualitative methodology. According to Tewksbury (2009), the qualitative methodology provides an interpretive paradigm which is usually associated with the tactics that offer the opportunity for the research participants' voice, concerns and practices to be heard. Therefore, the research participants' voice, concerns and practices on early child marriages were heard. The parental and guardians' reasons for connivance with perpetrators can best be explained by the parents and guardians themselves rather than the victims or perpetrators. Therefore, interpretive or qualitative paradigm gave the researchers more room to investigate through interviews and conversations with research participants what parents, guardians and school-going girls feel are the reasons why parents are conniving with perpetrators in aggravating early child marriages.

The study was carried out using a phenomenological approach where researchers basically looked at the child marriage phenomenon. Under this approach, qualitative research method was employed in gathering data. There was use of

interviews from a village head, two purposively individuals who were related to the girls who had been married and other two young women who were married when they were still at school. 5 people were used in a Focus Group Discussion that was carried out on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2018. Apart from the interviews, the researchers also used observation method in gathering more data as they noted how those who were married were progressing in life for quite some time.

### **3.1 Population and sampling**

The population for the study included the young secondary school going age girls in Nyamuzuwe cluster and their parents. Since it is not possible to study the whole population, a sample of a few married girls was made use. There was selection of respondents from different locations to get varied data. This study utilised the snowball sampling or chain sampling, chain-referral sampling which is defined by Sharma (2017) as a non-probability sampling technique where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. Thus, the study sample builds up from one source and enough data was gathered that was useful for this research. According to Sharma (2017), this sampling technique is often used in hidden populations which are difficult for researchers to access.

This is normally used for individuals with AIDS/HIV, prostitutes, homeless people, drug addicts etc. So in this case where we are looking into the topic of child marriage- it is an ideal methodology. This methodology is quite helpful when the topic is too sensitive such as child marriages. The researchers began this process by attending a meeting held by one Village Head which they had heard about through their co-worker who resides in the community. The co-worker invited them to attend the village court where one business man was accused of having an affair with a school child. Thus, the process of snowballing began. Etikan, Alkassim and Abubakar (2016) purport that entrée to a group is gained through people one knows and that cascades to know others and through them, entree to new circles is enlarged.

Through this sampling method, the subject was used to locate the hidden population and that saved the researchers' financial and time resources during the sampling process. Snowball sampling method is advantageous in that it does not require a diverse planning and the respondents used are considerably smaller in comparison to other sampling methods (Etikan et al. 2016).

Since snowball sampling does not select units for inclusion in the sample based on random selection, it is impossible to determine the possible sampling error and make generalizations from the sample to the population (Sharma, 2017). As such, the researcher used triangulation to argument the method with purposive sampling which was used to get to the five who were the main respondents in this article. Purposive sampling was also opted for because the researchers wanted to target respondents who had a lot of information.

### 3.2 Child marriage influence on education

Child marriage frequently interrupts girls' education or deprives them of it altogether. According to Human Rights Watch (2013), "*Drop-out rates due to marriage and pregnancy are very high.*" Some parents keep girls out of school, especially after they have reached puberty because they fear that schooling may expose them to risks of premarital sex and pregnancy that would decrease their chances of getting married or fetching a high dowry upon marriage.

Human Rights Watch (2013) interviewed 15 girls who were married and in school attending alternative education programs. However, the majority of girls with whom we spoke had dropped out of school and said it was difficult for them to continue school after marriage or becoming pregnant. Some of the reasons given by girls were lack of money to pay school fees, the need to care for their children and unavailability of adult classes, or the need to do chores. Others said that their husbands would not allow them to continue school after marriage alleging that they were unfaithful if they insisted on going to school. One girl remarked:

*"My father refused to let me go to school. He said it is a waste of money to educate a girl. He said marriage will bring him respect in the community. Now he has grown up and he cannot get work to support his children and he cannot see girls having some education and get jobs."*

The negative attitude towards school by parents forces them find an alibi of not sending girls to school citing lack of school fees.

According to Human Rights Watch (2013), the same problem of child marriage has been taking a toll in South Sudan with the case of Annette, 15 who was married at 14 and miscarried in her first year of marriage. While Annette's husband said she could go to school when he could afford to send her, he also wants children, which will add to the couple's financial burden and make her return to school difficult.

### 3.3 Child marriages and health

According to Human Rights Watch (2013), early marriage contributes to violations of the right to health. Early marriages put girls at greater risk of dying or ill-health as a result of early pregnancy and childbirth. Their children also face higher mortality rates. These increased risks are not only related to age but also to girls' low levels of education, social and economic status, and lack of access to health related information and services.

Human Rights Watch, (2013) purports that early marriage is a major risk factor for fistula development. This is a devastating childbirth injury which leaves its victims with urine and/or faecal incontinence that causes infection, pain and bad smell, and triggers stigma and breakdown of marriages. This condition may also trigger loss of employment and often poses challenges in family and community life. The risk of obstetric fistula is heightened by young married girls' poor socio-economic status and lack of education and access to appropriate reproductive and maternal health care.

However, studies by Zhou (2012) show that physical immaturity is the key risk for girls under 15 because their pelvises are not fully developed and thus susceptible to obstructed labour-the main cause of fistula. The researchers noted that the scientifically explained health challenges of child marriages contribute to violations of the girl child rights to health (UNESCO).

When a young girl is exposed to sexual activities before her body is fully developed and is not mentally prepared for it, there are psychological effects. These young girls should be protected as enshrined in Article 19 of CRC which provides for the right to protection from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parents, guardian, or any other person. Child marriage has been noted to have negative ripple effects on other rights of the girl child, such as education, and this leads to further problems in future (CRC).

### **3.4 The role of the church in child marriages**

According to Sibanda (2011), child marriages are prevalent among the Johanne Marange Apostolic sect. This is a church commonly known as '*vapostori*' that is believed to constitute approximately 1.2 million members in the country. (This is an African Independent Church where believers are identified by white garments). Hastings (1994) states that Johanne Marange, the church founder, passed away in 1963, leaving 13 widows who were taken over by his son Abel. The African Apostolic Church has gone a long way in addressing Christianity in an African perspective. As an African initiated church, the leadership comprises of Africans. Its songs are expressed in dialect (vernacular) language and are claimed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit. As a Zionist type of church, it puts strong emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. They are distinct in their compulsory shaving of hair by both sexes. Although they strongly believe in polygamy, this practice is eroding the church membership due to AIDS pandemic (Sibanda, 2011).

Regardless of the large following of this church, it carries astonishing weaknesses which are not of concern to its adherents due to their lack of education. To start with, the Holy Spirit is used as an intimidating tool, instilling fear in members not to do certain acts as they are threatened with curses (Sibanda, 2011). The same Holy Spirit is used to validate child marriages as the prophets would have been 'directed' by the Holy Spirit to marry young girls. They also believe that girls should only have minimum schooling. Therefore, as soon as a girl reaches puberty they are married off. Lack of education often disempowers the girls. The researchers' observation is underlined by one parent who pointed out that:

*"The congregations do not question certain harmful practices in the church such as the practice of not taking children to health institutions later on questioning the directed prophets in fear of being cursed. Therefore, the question of marrying or marriage is a non-starter when the Holy Spirit has given one a directive to marry young girls."*

Some members of the Johanne Marange Apostolic sect felt that Nyamuzuwe community has a challenge with cross-generational nature of marriages in the church. This is because young girls cannot stand up for themselves in the marriage to demand safe sex or take part in decisions that affect their health such as child spacing as everything is defined by "Holy Spirit." This concurs with (Siziba Interview 20 January 2018) who feels that the Holy Spirit inculcates fear in members not to do certain acts as they are threatened with curses.

According to Sibanda (2011), the growth of the Johanne Marange Apostolic sect can also be explained as an expression of the despondency of the people at the economic circumstances which often leads people especially the poor to seek solace through religion. Since the beginning of the year 2017 when the Zimbabwean Government started talking about elections, its senior officials have been visible at the church's gatherings where they were telling them to vote for ruling party-ZANU-PF come election time. Therefore, it appears that the fact the police and government turn a blind eye on this church's undesirable practices such as child marriage is not by default but is a strategy meant to avoid estranging their electorate.

### **3.5 Culture and marriage**

According to Sibanda (2011), chiefs are the gatekeepers and custodians of custom and tradition. The question that arises is whether the 'tradition' of early marriages is something that society should propagate in view of the negative effects of the practice on the girl child as well as human rights standards that prohibit marriage under the age of 18. Should not tradition evolve and do away with aspects that are harmful to children and the girl child in particular?

The practice of paying *lobola* (dowry) is seen as positive in African culture. However, it is deeply embedded on the patriarchal structure that feminist commentators argue oppresses women. The patriarchal structure through culture is also viewed to be one of the causes for child marriages. Why then, despite the negatives mentioned, is it still being practiced? *Lobola* is considered as a means of establishing relationships between the groups of people and once established it creates a network of rights and obligations. The woman on whose behalf *lobola* (dowry) is paid is bound to stay in the relationship because any decision of hers to move from such a relationship disturbs a whole network of obligations and duties (Sibanda, 2011). The consequences of *lobola* are far more serious in relation to child marriages where a child may be threatened from leaving an abusive husband because he paid *lobola*. The perceived financial gains to be reaped from payment of *lobola* also encourage parents to marry off their children at an early age. In this study, the role played by the parents and guardians as members of the patriarchal structure of the society was scrutinised so as to ascertain their connivance with perpetrators of child marriages in Nyamuzuwe community.

### 3.6 Zimbabwean Law

Section 81 of the Zimbabwean Constitution says that every child - boy and girl, under the age of eighteen years, has the right-to be protected from economic and sexual exploitation, child labour, maltreatment, neglect or any form of abuse. Section 26 further argues that no marriage is entered into without the free and full consent of the intending spouses and that children are not pledged in marriage.

The practice of child marriages is one reflection of society's negative attitude towards women revealing the fact that important decisions such as marriage, choice of partner, and women's sexuality are all controlled by others from an early age until old age. The main problem is from our constitution that enshrines customary marriage. The state has the responsibility of changing customary practices that are not in congruency with human rights standards. Legal reform whilst useful is not always effective because people do not easily give up on customs and traditions.

In Zimbabwe, the minimum marriageable age for girls is sixteen and eighteen for boys. This law is clearly discriminatory. Why should it be tolerated for a girl to be married at 16 when she is the one who is mostly at risk of the consequences of early marriage? (Section 86, Constitution of Zimbabwe). In terms of the law, no boy under the age of eighteen years and no girl under the age of sixteen years shall be capable of contracting a valid marriage except with the written permission of the Minister of Justice, which he may grant in any particular case in which he considers such marriage desirable.

In Zimbabwe, protection against child marriages is only extended to boys in the Marriage Act. This provision of setting the minimum age of marriage at 18 for boys exposes girls to manipulation. Customary marriage is recognised under the Customary Marriages Act but does not provide for a minimum marriage age for either boys or girls (Section 26, Constitution of Zimbabwe).

Whilst it appears that the legal framework to protect the girl child from child marriages in Zimbabwe exists, a problem lies in the Customary Marriages Act which does not provide a minimum marriageable age and has, therefore, been abused. There have been calls from the women's movement in Zimbabwe for the government to harmonize the marriage laws in the country in order to rectify the discrepancies. Cde. Oppah Muchinguri was quoted in *The Herald* 26 June 2007 as saying that there is need to harmonize marriage laws in order to protect women from unfair treatment as there is no uniformity in the current legislation. As the then Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development Minister Cde. Oppah Muchinguri said women were being treated differently because of the dual legal system. Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association has also been advocating for harmonization of marriage laws in the constitutional making process that the country is currently undergoing (*The Herald* 26 June 2007).

The researchers noted that this problem is further compounded by the fact that the family is the custodian of culture and some cultural practices such as the payment of *lobola* (dowry) often expose the girl child to other harmful cultural practices such as child marriage. Culture continues to be the most dominant force. Culture evolves and is



dynamic, but certain aspects of culture have largely failed to die away. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the cultural practice of paying *lobola* (dowry) is still going strong despite outcries that the practice treats women as commodities in the market place. The consequences of this practice include that women's labour is transferred to that of her husband's family. The man gets exclusive sexual rights and can expect children to be born to perpetuate the family line. In some societies, the number of cattle paid should correspond with the number of children that the woman is expected to have.

#### 4. Findings

We found out that a 15 year old girl was impregnated in the community and the village head advised the family to take the case to police but they refused citing that they knew each other with their in-law despite the child being a minor. The case was reported to the police and the village head wanted consent from the parents to pursue the case only to be shut down,

*"Who are you and is it your child?"*

There is more burden to the family if they retrieve the child from the aspiring husband as their daughter will continue to bear more children at their home. The community believes marriage is an achievement and immediate solution to problems of lack of finances to educate their children. The Village Head cited a case of one woman who was asked why her daughter was at home without going to school after Ordinary Level and the response she gave was that she had no money and would rather have her married to someone as she had grown up.

Through snowballing sampling method, the researchers noted that the community felt that Childline do not take precautionary measures to prevent early child marriages but they want to take action after the child has been abused. The community also felt that the organisation is quick to urge parents to go and report to the police yet it is the parents who are conniving with the perpetrators of child marriages.

Our findings concur with another shocking incident of Helen (16) who stays in a village near Juba. Helen married at 15 and said she would have chosen school over marriage but her family was unable to afford school fees. She was in labour for five days before having a caesarean section. Her son was 8 months old when this study was carried out. (Human Rights Watch, 2013)

In another story again by Human Rights Watch (2013) in South Sudan, a girl whose dreams to becoming a professional nurse was shattered because her uncle thought that she was too old to go for school. According to Human Rights Watch (2013), at the age of 14 she was forced to leave school and marry a man whom Aceh described as old, grey haired and a polygamist with several children. Upon begging her uncle to allow her to continue her education, he refused saying that girls were born so that people can eat and all he wanted was to get his dowry. The man paid 75 cows for Aceh

which customarily signified that the marriage had taken place. Efforts to resist were met with several and severe beatings from her male cousins who accused her of dishonouring her family and forced her to go to the man's house. The researchers noted that in South Sudan men view women as food that awaited devouring, a practise which undermined the rights of women in selecting their own marriage partners.

The researchers noted that girls are abused physically and emotionally as they are forced to marry men whom they hardly know or love. The researchers' reflection is underlined by one school girl who pointed out that:

*"The parents assume that people like teachers are models in their community and if their child is married by such people, their families become well up. So they end up covering up such affairs and can go to the extent of sending the abused girl-child to relatives elsewhere so that child protection and police have no one to ask when they are informed about such cases."*

Some school girls felt that Nyamuzuwe community has a challenge with people who are supposed to be viewed as role models who constantly sexually abuse school girls as their parents' lack of knowledge affects them. Instead of educating their daughters so that the disease of early child marriages is terminated, they shun them from going to school. This concurs with Gombe (2011) who purports that the consequences of *lobola* (dowry) are far more serious in relation to child marriages where a child may be threatened from leaving an abusive husband because he paid *lobola*. The perceived financial gains to be reaped from payment of *lobola* also encourage parents to marry off their children at an early age.

According to the village head, there are cultural and traditional beliefs that help in aggravating the issue as the community believes that if one sleeps with a girl that person should marry the girl despite age. Notably, the children of nowadays are being exposed to indecent pictures, films and stories through internet and cell phones which makes some in the quest to experiment. In the event that girls are seen with boys after hours that amounts to challenges as they are forced to marry. The community is empowered to force marriages even if the lovers are immature and young to marry. On the same note, the village head cited that culturally, the community has no boundaries on marriages. Anyone could marry anyone without regarding age and this creates a great loophole of age boundaries in marriages. Sadly, when it comes to marrying younger person, a man is unquestionable but women are discouraged and labelled by the society. The researchers observed that generally there were a handful of incidents where older women marry younger men but uncountable incidences where older men marry younger women in society

#### **4.1 Factors causing child marriages**

The researchers noted that some factors causing child marriages were related to the economic and social situation the affected families were caught in. The respondents sometimes were affected by their poverty such that they succumbed to their daughters'

quest for marriages to older people before they were mature enough. The researchers probed the respondents why they just marry off their daughters at early ages instead of waiting for them to finish school and get married when they are mature enough to become mothers. The researchers' observation is underlined by one parent who pointed out that:

*"The community is suffering from lack of finances to send their children to school as they strongly rely on farming in their gardens. With the shifting of the raining seasons, the community is failing to supply a lot of produce to Mbare Musika in Harare so those closer to the streams and rivers are looking for cheap labour which makes most parents suffer as they are failing to get enough money to feed the family later on to send their daughters to school."*

Some parents felt that that Nyamuzuwe community has a challenge with 'A' Level schools as there is only one A' Level school which is a boarding school which mostly cater for residents from Harare as their economic status does not permit them to send their children to attain further education after completing Ordinary Level. To them, school fees are too much as the only A' Level school provides boarding facilities and day boarders pay above three hundred US dollars which is not affordable to the rural folks. This leaves them with no option but to marry off their daughters to what are thought to be well off people in the community. Such findings made the researchers to conclude that government through Members of Parliament are also playing a role in conniving with parents to aggravate early child marriages as the adopted Education Act of 1987 focuses on the provision of compulsory and unimpeded progression of primary education and made a restricted cycle of a 2-year Advanced Level which is progressed on merit and is based on set pass grades or selection criteria (The Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO, The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, and Ministry of Higher Education and Technology, 2001:10). It appeared to the researchers that the Educational policy adopted caters only for the masses as cited by Colclough, Lofstedt, Manduvi-Moyo, Maravanyika and Ngwata (1990:36) when they quoted the then Minister of Education- Dr D. B. Mutumbuka who emphasised that, *"education should be mass-based in order to serve the development needs of the masses."* Henceforth, the individual needs are not a priority and that leaves parents and guardians with no option but to marry off their daughters when school fees become a challenge.

Besides holding the economic and social situations responsible for the aggravated child marriages in the community, the researcher discovered that there was lack of child security as most of the children married off came from extended families or divorced families. Failure by children to secure accommodation and community embracement after the death of their parents was all about; extended families' background and the traditional *"sara pavana"* (care taker parents) culture. The researchers noted that it was the community's responsibility to accommodate, embrace and educate the children who would have been left by parents as a result of death. Thorough monitoring of deceased parents' children by the watchful eye of the

community may see the reduction of early child marriages. In demonstrating this observation, one parent asserted that:

*“Proper monitoring procedures of the deceased parents’ children should be devised as they are often neglected and they are exposed to canning men who usually take advantage of these young girls. Care taker parents should not be exposed these children by ill-treating them, depriving them of food and clothes to wear as they will end up opting for early marriages.”*

These findings are in agreement with Nyawaranda (1990) findings when he highlights effects of extended families as one of the factors causing early child marriages as noted above.

In addition to the factors cited above, the researchers noted that the community had a tendency of thriving to maintain community relationships despite a wrong done to one family’s children by their neighbour. Instead of trying by all means to protect and guide jealously their kids, some parents protect their tribe, family and friendship. There was one school girl who lamented at the idea of the protecting one’s tribe, family and friendship at the expense of the abused child because the parents would be trying to avoid labelling. She remarked that:

*“I highly regard the notion of maintaining community relationship especially when a child has been abused by her uncle, her family neighbour. It does not portray a good picture of family love when a girl is forced to live the rest of her life with a man who has once abused her because the family needs to maintain community relationships. At times to them reporting the perpetrators to the police would strain their relationships with the whole village and that also force them to negotiate lobola with the perpetrators who are quick to agree and pay a meagre token which the parents would gladly accept. This leaves most abused children traumatized with no option but to be married to elderly members in the community.”*

The effects of maintaining community relationship at the expense of justice against early child marriage perpetrators has traumatic and health problems to the victims which Source cited that early marriage contributes to violations of the right to health as it puts girls at greater risk of dying or ill-health as a result of early pregnancy and childbirth. Reporting of cases of child sexual abuse should be done so that the rule of law nets all perpetrators to avoid child marriages.

The researchers noted that some children are already sexually active at the tender ages of 13-14. This exposes them to early pregnancies and some opt to elope on their own leaving the parents with no option but to let go as it would be their burden to go and collect a pregnant daughter who would add another mouth which would want to be fed.

## 4.2 Conclusion to the findings

It has been noted that there is a lot of work that needs to be done to solve child marriages in Nyamuzuwe community and in Zimbabwe as a whole. As such this study came up with five major conclusions that were based on the researcher's findings which originated from the sub-problems. First, the researchers concluded that child marriages affects education as most girls are deprived off this right by their parents, husbands and community as it has been noted that school fees, need to care for children and labelling were used as scapegoats. Therefore, child marriages have a direct effect on education as some parents opt to educate the boy-child at the expense of the girl-child.

The researchers also concluded that the church plays a strong negative influence on child marriage prevention as some church leaders claim that the Holy Spirit speaks to them and directs them to marry or marry off young girls to elderly people in the community. Thirdly, in the same vein, Zimbabwean culture gives room to the patriarchy to use *lobola* (dowry) in exchange of women which ultimately empowers elderly rich men to misuse this tradition to marry young immature girls.

Fourthly, the researchers noted that Zimbabwean culture has great loopholes of age boundaries in marriages as it does not have boundaries set on marriages. The child marriages perpetrators take advantage of this loophole to marry young girls in society.

Lastly, the researchers concluded that the need to maintain community relationships has violated justice that should prevail against early child marriages victims.

## 4.3 Recommendations

Having come up with a number of reasons why parents and guardians connive with perpetrators to aggravate early child marriages from the Nyamuzuwe community in Zimbabwe, it is plausible enough to suggest some of the following as solutions to the problem.

The government should re-introduce Adult Education particularly for the parents so that they realise the importance of observing rights for the girl-child for this practice of child marriages to stop. Although, it might be very difficult to educate the parents since the community has a lot of people who are illiterate on the basis of war of liberation that was ripe in the region. The liberation war has seen the destruction and closure of several schools but thirty-eight years after attaining independence mind set should change. Those who have managed to go through the alimentary canal of the education system are no longer residents in Nyamuzuwe as they migrate to the capital city - Harare. Therefore, carrying out community workshops and adult education lessons may yield positive results.

At the same time, the police should uphold the law without giving parents the consent rights to make decisions on behalf of the abused girl-child. It has been noted that police cannot act when there are no cases that have been reported to them. So whenever cases are reported to the police, swift investigations should be done and perpetrators should be dealt with accordingly. The police efforts should set example

towards the would-be perpetrators of such atrocious crimes so that child marriages are limited or completely wiped out.

Moreover, empowering women through education should be strongly advocated for by all members of the society. This could be done through awareness campaigns as was once done in 2015 by Vharazipi (a well-known Zimbabwean artist). The awareness campaign was sponsored by a NGO, Plan International, who help in assisting reducing early marriages and other developmental projects in the district. At the same time, more Non-Governmental Organisations should take the initiative to help reduce early child marriages across the country.

Innovative ways including dialogue and awareness raising can be done to change customs since culture, customs and traditions are never static in any society. These should be transformed by many influences and value systems. Upholding human rights norms can therefore impact and help to reinforce aspects of culture and tradition that are positive, undermining those that contribute to violence against women and infringement of their human rights such as child marriages. The transformative nature of culture indeed suggests that values and norms on human rights can be internalised in different societies in the same manner as have other values been internalised over a period of time to become what are described as “traditional cultural practices”.

There is also need to harmonize marriage laws in order to protect women from unfair treatment so that there is uniformity in legislation. This means that Customary Marriages Act should include a provision of the minimum marriageable age so that it is not prone to abused by greedy men who are ready to pounce on tender and young school going girls.

This is another call for all parents and stakeholders to come together and work in harmony to fight the challenge that has doomed a lot of young girls. The scourge of our culture needs to be revisited so that attempts may be made to rectify the problem. The police department, government and schools particularly teachers who are seen as role models of the society should continue preaching a gospel of anti- child marriages as they are respected members of the society.

#### **4.4 Areas recommended for further reading by other researchers**

In connection with child marriages, it is recommended that the scourge of the Zimbabwean culture needs to be revisited so that attempts may be made to rectify the problem. Another factor that aroused interest in this study is the changing culture and its effects on marriages.

#### **References**

1. Barlow, J., Davis, H., McIntosh, E., Jarrett, P., Mockford, C and Stewart-Brown, S., (2007): Role of Home Visiting in Improving Parenting and Health in Families at Risk of Abuse and Neglect: Results of a Multicentre Randomized Controlled Trial and Economic Evaluation. *Archives of Diseases in Childhood*, 92: 229 - 233.

2. Colclough, C., Lofstedt, J-I., Manduvi, Moyo, J., Maravanyika, O. E and Ngwata, W. S (1990) Education in Zimbabwe: Issues of Quantity and Quality. *Education Division Documents*, 50, SIDA.
3. Convention on the Right of the Child. Article 1
4. Convention on the Right of the Child. Article 19.1
5. Day, C and Davis, H., (2006): The Effectiveness and Quality of Routine Child and Adolescent Mental Health Care Outreach Clinics. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 45: 439 - 452.
6. Etikan, I., Alkassim, R and Abubakar, S., (2016) Comparison of Snowball Sampling and Sequential Sampling Technique. *Biometrics and Biostatistics International Journal*. 3(1):55.
7. Gombe, J, M. (2011). *Tsika Dzavashona*. College Press: Harare.
8. Hastings, A. (1994). *The Church in Africa*. New York: Oxford Press.
9. Human Rights Watch. (2013). Child Marriage: South Sudan.
10. Kirkpatrick, S., Barlow, J., Stewart -Brown, S and Davis, H., (2007): Working in Partnership: user Perceptions of Intensive Home Visiting. *Child Abuse Review*, 16: 32 - 46.
11. Nyawaranda, V. (1990). *Ndiani Acharima Gura*. College Press: Harare
12. Sharma, G (2017) Pros and Cons of different Sampling Techniques, *International Journal of Applied Research*. 3(7): 749-752
13. The Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO, The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, and Ministry of Higher Education and Technology, (2001) The Developments in Education: The Education System at the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. *UNESCO International Bureau of Education, Zimbabwe*.
14. Herald 26 June 2007
15. Zhou, M. (2012). *Risks of child marriages*. Unpublished.
16. Sibanda, M (2011). *Married too soon: Child marriage in Zimbabwe*. The Research Advocate Unit.
17. Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTATS) (2009), Zimbabwe Multiple Indicator Monitoring Survey (MIMS) 117
18. Zimbabwe' Constitution of 2013. [constituteproject.org](http://constituteproject.org).
19. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2018/feb/10/10-million-child-brides-each-year-charity-warns>. Accessed 10/02/2018.
20. <http://baobabtales.wordpress.com/2018/01/12/some-facts-about-marriage-in-zimbabwe>, Accessed 12/01/2018
21. [http://www.zimdiaspora.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=4070:betty-makoni-launch](http://www.zimdiaspora.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4070:betty-makoni-launch). Accessed: 03/01/2018
22. [http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/sep27\\_2010.html#hes-protest-against-apostolic-sect-abuses-girls&catid=38:traveltips&Itemid=18](http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/sep27_2010.html#hes-protest-against-apostolic-sect-abuses-girls&catid=38:traveltips&Itemid=18), Accessed on 23/01/2018
23. <http://www.newsday.co.zw/article/2011-04-01-chiefs-defend-girlchild-marriages>. Accessed 07/02/2018

24. IPPF (2007) *Ending Child Marriage: A guide for Policy Action*, Available on <http://www.ippf.org/NR/rdonlyres/8415A7E9-0833-4500-AE53-9AA09F1A56D8/0/endchildmarriage.pdf>, Accessed 17/01/2018.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Social Sciences Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).