



Assessment of Early Marriage for Girl-Child from Islamic Perspectives in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State

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Abstract

This study examined the assessment of early marriage for girl-child from Islamic perspectives in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised of all parents and Islam Scholars in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State. Purposive sampling technique was used to select eighty-six (86) parents and Islam Scholars as respondents for the study. A self-designed instrument was used for the study. Simple percentages and frequency counts were used for analyzing the data. The study revealed that greater percentage of the respondents indicated that early marriage prevents help free sexual intercourse behavior or immorality; early marriage is healthy and promotes chastity and early marriage provides the opportunity to build a life together, including creating a home, starting a family, and building a career together are some of the prospects of early marriage for the girl-child. The study also revealed that greater percentage of the respondents indicated that early marriage exposes the girl-child to domestic violence in the hands of both her husband and his relations. Early child marriage undermines the freedom and rights of children to live a fulfilled life and early marriage leads to domestic violence that threatens the girl-child's life, health, and happiness. Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend the need for organising regular seminars and workshops to educate and counsel people in the community about how early marriage encumbers the growth and development of a girl-child. The seminars must aim to change the people's worldview to raise their voices against the practice among others.

Keywords: Problem, Prospect, Early Marriage, Girl-Child and Islam Perspective.

Introduction

Marriage or marriage is a bond of two husbands and wives who are united by family members which Has been legalized by religious law and positive state law and the existence of marriage can be realized, of course, based on understanding each partner's conditions

and character. Almost all nations believe marriage is a holy and sacred activity with a good purpose (Kamal, 2024). The desire to have offspring following the dictates of religion and the state is one of the reasons. Besides that, the existence of marriage will provide an understanding that in establishing a sacred bond, the validity of the relationship is needed. Not just living together without official ties or just for the satisfaction of lust. Marriage, under the guidance of Islam law, is aimed at forming a Sakinah, *mawaddah wa Rahmah* family- based on harmony, love and affection (Fauzan et al, 2022). It requires mature readiness in terms of age, economy and mentality. Adequate age will affect the ability to think and solved problems. An established economy will provide comfort in meeting daily needs. Mental readiness will affect the ability of psychological resilience in dealing with issues. Added in Law no. I of 1974 Chapter I and Article I also states that the marriage is an inner and outer bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife to form a happy and eternal family (household) based on belief in the One Almighty God (Kamal, 2024).

Marriage in Islam teachings is a commandment of Allah. Marriage is one of the perfections in the worship of Allah. Marriage is a way to build a family based on Islam sharia, and a way to prosper the world with pious offspring and children who guarantee the continuity of life in the world. Besides that, it is also a form of friendship, getting to know each other, so that the building of society becomes perfect (Pongoliu, 2017). Marriage naturally begins with the existence of lust that God gives to humans as creatures. The passion that is owned is provided to meet biological needs which are the basis of human regeneration. This desire also forms an instinctive attraction between men and women. This attraction gives rise to feelings of love and affection. Islam then regulates how this attraction is directed through lawful and reasonable procedures that do not carry out prohibited actions. Hence, marriage requires conditions that must be prepared per Islam law. These requirements are a way to form a good and lasting union (Kamal, 2024). Marriage in the context of religion undoubtedly has its own legal provisions that apply as a guide and reference. Islam has provided many explanations about the importance of marriage according to Islam teachings. Marriage is a sacred and holy activity that is carried out to build a good household mahligai. Marriage comes from the word "marry" (Setiyanto, 2020). According to language means forming a family with the opposite sex, having sex or having intercourse. The word marriage or *ziwaj* in Arabic means marriage (Suryantoro & Rofiq, 2021). Meanwhile, according to the terms of marriage is a contract between a husband and wife or a man and a woman. The marriage contract stipulated by the Shari'a, gives the meaning that the husband can have fun with his wife's honor or genitals legally (Tantu, 2013).

Marriage is a form of worship ordered by Allah SWT and should not be feared and belittled. Marriage is a form of nature given by Allah to humans which will become the foundation for strengthening Islam society in the future. This noble goal certainly requires careful preparation because marriage will be challenging when implementing a human understanding of Islam teachings. Marriage is an essential aspect of human life. It even becomes a basic need for every normal human being. Without marriage, a person's life will

be imperfect and, more than that, it violates his nature for life in this natural world to multiply. Marriage is seen as a benefit for society because if there is no marriage, humans will indulge in their bestiality, leading to disputes and hostility among humans. Marriage brings together two different types of people from different origins, environments, and sometimes with a background of customs, habits, character, personality, upbringing in the family, education, and other hopes and desires. Therefore, apart from being stipulated in Islam teachings, provisions relating to marriage have also been regulated in state laws and regulations that specifically apply to Indonesian citizens. Marriage is a way of meeting the opposite sex, and God wants to build a household and establish a family institution. Enjoy this meeting in a clean, holy and severe atmosphere, which avoids immoral aspects that are not the basis of marriage (Kamal, 2024).

A report from World Health Organization (2019) revealed that child marriage is a harmful exercise that denies the girl-child the right to make vital judgments about their sexual health and well-being. Likewise, child marriage rips a girl out of school, placing her in a terrible situation with a higher chance of assault, abuse, illness, or death. Onuoha (2021) claims child marriage occurs when parents send their female children away when they are still young so that the bride's money may be utilised to pay for the male children's education. Whereas, Save the Children (2020) points out that child marriage is a defilement of children's rights, a severe form of child abuse, and a violation of human rights laws. It is an act of prejudice to deny a girl the opportunity to choose a partner and enter marriage without their free will and complete approval. It also robs girls of their childhood, well-being, and potential, exposing victims to physical, emotional, and medical dire consequences. Furthermore, child marriage breaches the human rights of a female child and has a detrimental impact on development, gender inequality, and individual, communal, and societal health and well-being (McCleary-Sills et al., 2015). In addition, the United Nations mentioned that child marriage could cut a girl-child life short, increasing the likelihood of poverty being passed down from one generation to the next which implies that child marriage can be seen as an obstacle to the growth and development of a girl. Child marriage is another form of child abuse because it deprives these children of a better future and gives them more responsibilities than they can handle. At the same time, it affects girls' reproductive systems (Opesemowo & Odumosu, 2023).

Opesemowo & Odumosu (2023) contend that cultural practices and religious beliefs have contributed to the practice of child marriage for several generations. Culture is a means of expressing a shared sense of identity, values, and traditions. Conversely, religion is a system of symbols that establishes powerful, pervasive, and enduring attitudes and motivations in people. Child marriage is sometimes driven by religious and cultural beliefs, which govern communal practices which for instance, the fear of premarital sex and pregnancy outside of wedlock makes parents regard marriage as a viable choice for their young daughters to avoid humiliation and as a result, sex and pregnancy before marriage are religious taboos and culturally unacceptable. In addition, underage marriages have become acceptable to protect girls and their family's honour (Opesemowo & Odumosu, 2023). More precisely,

child marriage is sometimes justified by the religious prohibition of premarital sex and births outside of marriage without adequately considering the grave repercussions of such a choice. Therefore, the time of adolescent girls' marriage is highly influenced by their religious views (Amzat, 2019).

Underage marriage has a negative impact, especially regarding health problems caused by marriages carried out during adolescence or not yet recommended for marriage. According to Bate et al (2023), Widyastuti wrote that the negative impacts of young marriage are as follows; Increase the birth rate so that population growth is increasing; In terms of health, young marriage increases infant and maternal mortality rates and complications of pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum. This increases the risk of cervical cancer because sexual intercourse is carried out when the anatomy of the cervical cells is not yet mature. Increases infant morbidity and mortality.; Psychological maturity has not been achieved, so families have difficulty actualizing a quality family; from a social point of view, marriage reduces the freedom of self-development; reducing the opportunity to continue education to a higher level; the existence of conflicts in the family opens up opportunities to seek social escape outside the home, thereby increasing the risk of using alcohol, drugs, and free sex; the high divorce rates. The family's failure to overcome various problems increases the risk of divorce (Fibrianti 2021).

According to Sibagaring, health risks mainly occur to the female partner during pregnancy and childbirth. Pregnancy harms the well-being of an adolescent. Women are not mentally ready to become pregnant, but due to circumstances, women are forced to accept pregnancy with risks. Here are some of the risks of pregnancy and childbirth that can be experienced by adolescents (aged less than 18 years); lack of blood (anemia) during pregnancy has bad consequences for the fetus, such as stunted fetal growth and premature birth; malnutrition during pregnancy can result in stunted biological development and intelligence of the fetus. Babies are born with low body weight; difficulties during childbirth, such as bleeding and prolonged labor; pre-eclampsia and eclampsia can be deadly for both mother and baby; incompatibility between the size of the baby and the width of the pelvis. Usually, this will cause labor to stall; If not terminated by cesarean section, this situation will lead to the death of both the mother and the fetus and Couples who are not ready to accept the pregnancy try to terminate the pregnancy (abortion), which can result in death for the woman (Tampubolon 2021).

It has been established that early marriage does not only have a harmful or negative impact but it may also help the bride to avoid free sexual intercourse behavior. He also added that when they reach old age, they will no longer have young children to look after and they will have their needs fulfilled such as biological, psychological, social, and economic (Bate et al, 2023). Analyzing the negative impact of early marriage shows more than the positive effects. Thus, it is necessary to commit the family, community, and government to reduce the number of child marriages. Child marriage can reduce human resources by cutting off their education. As a result, poverty will increase, and the burden on the state will also

increase (Bate et al, 2023). According to Ibn Shubrumah, religion prohibits early marriage (marriage before attaining the age of puberty). He argues that the essential value of marriage is to satisfy biological desires and to perpetuate offspring. Meanwhile, these two things are not found in children who have not reached puberty. He gives more emphasis on the main purpose of marriage. Ibn Shubromah tries to break away from the confines of the text and understand this problem from the historical, sociological, and cultural aspects that exist. In dealing with the Prophet's marriage to Aisha (who was six years old at the time), Ibn Shubromah considers it a special provision for the Prophet that his ummah cannot imitate (Bate et al, 2023).

Meanwhile, contrary to this, the majority of Islam jurists have legalized early marriage. (Azis 2022) This interpretation is the result of Surat al Thalaq verse 4. Besides, history has recorded that Aisha married the Prophet at a very young age. Similarly, early marriage was common among the Companions. Some scholars state that the permissibility of underage marriage has become a consensus of Islam law experts. In Muhammad Jawad Mughniyah's opinion, scholars agree that reasoning and maturity are conditions for marriage unless the bride's guardian carries it out. The conditions also require that the bride and groom be free from circumstances that make them prohibited from marrying, both because of family relationships and other permanent and temporary relationships. Ibnu Shubromah's discourse is considered weak regarding quality and quantity, so this idea is not considered. The legal construction built by Ibn Shubromah is very weak and vulnerable. In Islam law itself, the Qur'an and As-Sunnah do not clearly and firmly set an age limit for people who get married. They only provide signs, conditions, and guesses about how someone is considered worthy of marriage. This implies that muslims are free to set a minimum age limit for marriage so that the minimum age (Bate et al, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is anchored in Max Weber's theory of social action. Weber's social action theory states that all human actions, or social actions, are informed by the unique experiences, desires, and contexts that every human interacts with. There is no guarantee that a singular social action will be taken by all humans, or by one human over and over again, even in a similar setting. Weber argued that individuals' subjectively meaningful social action constitutes the most fundamental unit of social reality..." (Adeyemi et al, 2023). Max Weber contributed to sociology, a field of study investigating how people interact with one another in a society. Weber was credited with creating social action theory, which examines the actions of people in the context of meanings they assign to them and the relationship these actions have with the actions of others.

Social action is action taken with account taken of the past, present or future actions, behaviour, and attitudes of others. Social action is not action in isolation. A solitary act of meditation, for example, is not social action (Oyedokun & Emmanuel, 2016.). Conversely, a group of people together does not constitute social action unless they start interacting. Social action involves meaningful comprehension of the social action of others. So, social

action is confined to situations where the actor's behaviour is meaningfully related to behaviour of others (Oyedokun & Emmanuel, 2016.). Social action theory began with the work of Max Weber. In *Economy and Society* (Weber, 1922; 1978), Weber defines action that is social as actions to which the 'acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behaviour be it overt or covert, omission or acquiescence. Action is "social" insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of other and is thereby oriented in its course' (Oyedokun & Emmanuel, 2016.).

Meanwhile, this theory is related to this study on the basis that the subjective meaning attached to girl-child marriage by society is rooted in their cultural universe to ascribe meanings to their social action. These meanings are connected to their belief system that provides a frame of justification for their action. It might be somewhat arbitrary to ascribe meanings to social actions outside the cultural expressions of the people who consider child marriage an appropriate social action. The meanings perpetrators of girl-child marriage attach to their beliefs make the act a complex and problematic social practice which need to be discourage where necessary.

Empirical Studies

A study was conducted by Adeyemi et al (2023) on the causes and challenges associated with girl-child marriage in five (5) wards of Kankara Local Government Area, Katsina State, Northwest Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative method (in-depth interviews) to investigate. Multistage sampling identified twenty (20) child brides of differing marital status who were less than eighteen years at first marriage. From data thematically arranged and subjected to content analysis, our results show that cultural factors, religious reasons, economic considerations, and the need to protect girl-children from unwanted pregnancy and "not socially accepted" practices provide a frame of justification for the practice of girl-child marriages. Results further revealed that girl-child marriages predispose a girl-child to various forms of emotional, social, and psychological trauma that hinder her potential and future. The study concludes that girl-child marriages violate the 1948 Universal Declaration of poor health to engender gender equality, inclusivity, and development. The study recommends intensive enlightenment campaigns and counseling to be deployed in educating both parents and the girl-child in Northern Nigeria on the dangers inherent to the practice of girl-child marriage. Human Rights. The practice hinders the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of eradicating poverty, hunger, discrimination, and discrimination, and poor health to engender gender equality, inclusivity, and development. The study recommends intensive enlightenment campaigns and counseling to be deployed in educating both parents and the girl-child in Northern Nigeria on the dangers inherent to the practice of girl-child marriage. This study examined problem and prospect of early marriage for girl-child in the perspective of Islam in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State.

Another study was conducted by Bate et al (2023) on religious and cultural dialectics in determining early-age marriage. (Case study of the increase in early-age marriage in

Pinrang City from the Maqashid Shariah Perspective). The study used qualitative research. The approach used was socio-juridical. The research was descriptive qualitative. There were two types of data used, namely primary data and secondary data. The technique of data processing used observation, interviews, documentation, triangulation, and data validity tests using credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Furthermore, the data analysis technique used the data reduction technique (data reduction), display (data presentation), and conclusion drawing/verification (concluding). Based on the results of this study, it shows that: first, underage marriage has a negative impact, especially concerning health issues. Second, this result found that approximately 90% of underage marriages in Pinrang Regency were conducted by women, with requests for dispensation of marriage being submitted more by people who live in urban areas compared to rural areas. The negative impact presented in early marriage is more dominant than the positive impact. Based on the Maqasyid shari'ah theory, the practice and potential of early marriage in Pinrang City is contrary to *Hifdzunnafs* for both women and children based on the data that has been described. This study examined problem and prospect of early marriage for girl-child in the perspective of Islam in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State.

Recent study was conducted by Hadiati et al (2022) on empirical study in Indonesia of girl child marriage determinants. The following study used data from the 2019 Indonesian Population and Health Survey and the Teenage Reproductive Health Survey to estimate the determinants of child marriage and marital expectations. Multivariate simulations were carried out in order to approximate the association between demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and the following early marriage outcomes: 1) often married or cohabited, 2) married or cohabited before 19 years, 3) married or cohabited before 16 years, 4) self-reported marital age preferences and 5) behaviours that approve female child marriage. Among the child marriage research group, 17 percent reported being married before the age of 19 and 6 percent before 16 years of age (n = 6578, females aged 20-24 at the time of the survey). At approximately 26 years, the average respondent supported marriage, and 5 percent approved of child marriage (n = 8779, unmarried females 15-24). Schooling, wages and media participation have beneficial effects on marriage results, whereas rural residency is a risk factor. There are significant regional differences, reflecting the locations of geographically disparate religious, racial, and social elements. The following study addresses a gap in the knowledge of the Indonesian determinants of child marriage. There seems to be little tolerance for child marriage by girls and young people, suggesting an entry point for systemic interventions that might contribute to lasting progress. Future projects should point to cost-effectiveness factors and assist the government and women activists in understanding programs and strategies that can halt child marriage in Indonesia. Society should prioritize vigorous testing of gender-transformative education and methods for economic improvement. This study examined problem and prospect of early marriage for girl-child in the perspective of Islam in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State.

Razu (2018) also investigated the socioeconomic determinants of early marriage among the women living in rural Bangladesh through empirical cross-sectional research. The data were collected primarily from a sample of 576 ever married women using a semi-structured interview schedule. Results show that more than half of the respondents (58.3%) were early married and the mean age of the first marriage was 16.8. Both in bivariate and multivariate setups, respondents' age, religion, education level, family type, father's occupation and household income were found to be significantly associated with marital age ($p < 0.001$). This study examined problem and prospect of early marriage for girl-child in the perspective of Islam in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State.

Opesemowo, & Odumosu (2023) carried out a study on the sway of early marriage on the girl child education among some ethnic groups in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study aimed to ascertain the impact of child marriage on girl-child education among the ethnic groups, determine the relative contribution of religious belief as a determinant of child marriage on girl-child education among the ethnic groups, and determine the relative contribution of cultural values as determinants of child marriage on the girl-child education among the ethnic groups in Lagos state, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research design while the population comprised all the girls within the Agege area, Lagos State, Nigeria. A sample of 141 married girls was purposively selected based on those who married as teenagers. A questionnaire titled "Impact of Child Marriage on Girl-child Education" was deployed to gather the data. The data were analysed using Chi-square and ANOVA with the mean ($\bar{x} = 2.48$) and standard deviation ($SD = 0.69$) values of the participants. The result revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the religious belief ($F(2, 138) = 7.80, p < 0.05$) of child marriage on girl-child education. Lastly, the findings showed a statistically significant relative contribution of cultural value ($\chi^2 = 24.07; df = 4; p < 0.05$) as a determinant of child marriage in the girl-child education among ethnic groups in Lagos State. The study recommends, among other things, that the Lagos State Government, via health education practitioners should constantly enlighten the public about the jeopardies of encouraging early marriage among girl-child. This study examined problem and prospect of early marriage for girl-child in the perspective of Islam in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State.

Statement of the Problem

Literature revealed that child marriage had become a societal problem in African countries, leading to school dropouts, illegitimate abortions, child abandonment, an increasing number of adolescent prostitutes, the early splintering of marriages, and a mounting rate of sexual transmitted diseases, particularly among girl-child. Scholars have also established that the practice of early marriage is an archaic practice that affects the physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and educational aspects of individuals engaged in it. Additionally, it negatively affects a person's health, child nutrition, adolescent pregnancies, access to education, and even dropping out of school. However, marriage in Islam seems to

be considered as a religious duty as well as a moral safeguard. It also seems to impose certain duties and responsibilities on both husband and wife. A man is responsible for food and shelter for the woman and her general upkeep, while the woman's duty is to satisfy the husband's sexual needs and be obedient. There are debates as to whether Islam promotes child marriage because of various interpretations of certain sections of the Quran. It is against this background that this study examined the assessment of early marriage for girl-child from Islamic perspectives in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State.

Purposes of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to examine the assessment of early marriage for girl-child from Islamic perspectives in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State: Implications for female science teachers. Specifically, the study is set to:

- i. determine the prospects of early marriage for the girl-child in the perspective of Islam in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State.
- ii. identify the problems of early marriage for the girl-child in the perspective of Islam in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State.

Research Questions

The following were the research questions for this study:

- i. What are the prospects of early marriage for the girl-child in the perspective of Islam in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State?
- ii. What are the problems of early marriage for the girl-child in the perspective of Islam in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The goal of descriptive survey research design is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. Descriptive survey research design is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened. Therefore, observation and survey tools are often used to gather data (Nassaji, 2015). The population comprised of all parents and Islam Scholars in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State. The researchers decided to use Wadata Area Makurdi Metropolis because it has high concentration of Hausas who are predominantly Moslems by religion. Purposive sampling technique was used to select eighty-six (86) parents and Islam Scholars as respondents for the study. A self-designed instrument was used for the study. Simple percentages and frequency counts were used for analyzing the data.

Results

Research question 1: What are the prospects of early marriage for the girl-child in the perspective of Islam in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State?

Table 1: Prospects of Early Marriage for Girl-Child in the Perspective of Islam

S/N	Items	N	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Remark
1	Early marriage prevents help free sexual intercourse behavior or immorality.	86	54(63%)	32(37%)	Agree
2	Early marriage is healthy and promotes chastity	86	61(71%)	25(29%)	Agree
3	Early marriage gives couples the opportunity to understand life early	86	49(57%)	37(43%)	Agree
4	Early marriage helps couples to build their careers and finances together, leading to greater financial stability in the long term	86	73(85%)	13(15%)	Agree
	Early marriage helps couples share similar goals and ambitions, allowing them to work together towards a common future.	86	68(69%)	18(31%)	Agree
	Couples who marry young shares similar experiences and milestones, including first jobs, first homes, and first children.	86	59(85%)	13(15%)	Agree
	Early marriage offers the chance for couples to develop strong problem-solving skills and resilience, as couples navigate the ups and downs of married life.	86	68(69%)	18(31%)	Agree
	Early marriage provides the opportunity for couples to build a life together, including creating a home, starting a family, and building a career together.	86	73(85%)	23(27%)	Agree

Source: Field Work, 2024.

Results in table 1 revealed that 63% of the respondents agree that early marriage prevents help free sexual intercourse behavior or immorality. 71% of the respondents also agree that early marriage is healthy and promotes chastity while 85% of the respondents equally agree that early marriage provides the opportunity to build a life together, including creating a home, starting a family, and building a career together. This implies that early marriage has some benefits attached as indicated above.

Research question 2: What are the problems of early marriage for girl-child in the perspective of Islam in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State?

Table 2: Problems of Early Marriage for Girl-Child in the Perspective of Islam in Makurdi

S/N	Items	N	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Remark
1	Early marriage exposes the girl-child to domestic violence in the hands of both her husband and his relations.	86	75(87%)	11(13%)	Agree
2	Girls who marry early are more likely to be abused sexually, physically and emotionally.	86	68(79%)	18(21%)	Agree
3	Early child marriage undermines the freedom and rights of children to live a fulfilled life.	86	59(85%)	13(15%)	Agree
4	Early marriage leads to domestic violence that threatens the girl-child's life, health, and happiness.	86	60(70%)	26(30%)	Agree

Source: Field Work, 2024.

Results in table 2 revealed that 87% of the respondents agree that early marriage exposes the girl-child to domestic violence in the hands of both her husband and his relations. 85% of the respondents also agree that early child marriage undermines the freedom and rights of children to live a fulfilled life. 70% of the respondents equally agree that early marriage leads to domestic violence that threatens the girl-child's life, health, and happiness. This implies that the respondents are not ignorant of the problems confronting of early marriage for the girl-child.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question one stated that, what are the prospects of early marriage for girl-child in the perspective of Islam in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State? The study revealed that greater percentage of the respondents indicated that early marriage prevents help free sexual intercourse behavior or immorality; early marriage is healthy and promotes chastity and early marriage provides the opportunity to build a life together, including creating a home, starting a family, and building a career together are some of the prospects of early marriage for the girl-child. The finding of this study is in line with the findings of Bate et al (2023) who reported that early marriage does not only have a harmful or negative impact but there are still positive aspects that can be observed from these marriages which include the t it may help the couples to avoid free sexual intercourse behavior. He also added that when they reach old age, they will no longer have young children to look after and they will have their needs fulfilled such as biological, psychological, social, and economic. Barkati (2023) also reported that early marriage provides the opportunity for couples to build a life together, including creating a home, starting a family, and building a career together.

Research Question one stated that, what are the problems of early marriage for girl-child in the perspective of Islam in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State? The study revealed that greater percentage of the respondents indicated that early marriage exposes the girl-child to domestic violence in the hands of both her husband and his relations. Early child marriage undermines the freedom and rights of children to live a fulfilled life and early marriage leads to domestic violence that threatens the girl-child's life, health, and happiness. The finding of this study is in line with the findings of Adeyemi et al (2023), who reported that child marriage exposes the girl-child to domestic violence in the hands of both her husband and his relations, constituting both physical and psychological trauma and that notably, girls who marry early are more likely to be abused sexually, physically, and emotionally. Nadda et al (2018) reported that early child marriage undermines the freedom and rights of children to live a fulfilled life. This is because girl-child marriage leads to domestic violence that threatens the girl child's life, health, and happiness.

Conclusion

The practice of early marriage for the girl-child constitutes an affront to the rights and freedom of a girl-child and reduces her prospect for upward mobility. The broader consequence for society is that it prevents the growth of an inclusive society. At an interpersonal level, it affects the ability of a girl-child to interact with peers of the same age and socialize outside the family unit (Adeyemi et al, 2023). At personal levels, it excludes the right of a girl-child to choose her life partner. As a consequence of the practice, girl-child marriage leads to the exclusion of girls from their families, friends, communities, and significant others, with severe consequences for their physical and psychological well-being. Indeed, studies have established that girlchild marriage negatively affects the health and future of a girl-child and imposes substantial economic costs at the national level, with significant consequences for development and prosperity (Osakinle and Tayo-Olajubutu 2017; UNICEF 2021). It is most likely that in the context of the constraining experiences of a girl-child, she is most likely to experience depression and anxiety that could culminate into suicidal ideation that eventuates into suicide (Adeyemi et al, 2023).

The study revealed that greater percentage of the respondents indicated that early marriage prevents help free sexual intercourse behavior or immorality; early marriage is healthy and promotes chastity and early marriage provides the opportunity to build a life together, including creating a home, starting a family, and building a career together are some of the prospects of early marriage for the girl-child. The stud also revealed that greater percentage of the respondents indicated that early marriage exposes the girl-child to domestic violence in the hands of both her husband and his relations. Early child marriage undermines the freedom and rights of children to live a fulfilled life and early marriage leads to domestic violence that threatens the girl-child's life, health, and happiness.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is need for organising regular seminars and workshops to educate and counsel people in the communities in the Benue, North-Central, Nigeria about how girl-child marriage encumbers the growth and development of a girl-child. The seminars must aim to change the people's worldview to raise their voices against the practice.
2. There should be enlightenment campaign to educate the girl-child to resist the attempt to marry her off to a marriage without her consent.
3. There is need to organize vocational training for girls in various crafts which will help reduce girls' tendency to become economically dependent, even when they marry as adults.
4. There is need to educate the parents and the girls on the negative consequences of child marriage will help to discourage them from accepting it.

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