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THE IMPACT OF CHILD MARRIAGE ON THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN ECONOMY

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DECLARATION

I, EUPHEMIA NYANTAKYIWAAH ANNOR, Student Number 24049302, hereby declare that this mini-dissertation is my own work, and the results of my own research effort. It has never, on any previous occasion been presented as part or whole to any institution or board for the award of any degree.

I further declare that secondary information used has been duly acknowledged in the work. I am responsible for any error, whatever the nature, in this work.

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ABSTRACT

Child marriage is a cultural and religious practice amongst people of different ethnicities and religious factions. The practice is particularly prevalent in the poorer parts of Africa and Asia. What is the link between poverty and child marriage and why is the practice more prevalent in poorer regions?

For many years, researchers and activists have focused on the human rights aspects of child marriage and have offered the view that poverty fuels child marriage. This paper looks at the relationship between poverty and child marriage from a different angle: that child marriage feminises poverty and decreases the economic participation of women in sub-Saharan Africa, leading to economic stagnation in the region.

This paper focuses on the seven countries within sub-Saharan Africa with the highest incidents of child marriage and explores the education levels, economic participation and social capital of women in these countries, in order to establish whether or not child marriage influences poverty.

The research offered in this paper clearly shows that child marriage is one of the many causes of poverty. I conclude this paper by recommending that law makers and activists consider the economic impact of child marriage in the agenda to eradicate poverty in sub-Saharan Africa.

KEY TERMS

- Child Marriage
- Early Marriage
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Sub-Saharan African economy
- Poverty
- Niger
- Chad
- Mali
- Guinea
- Central African Republic
- Ethiopia
- Burkina Faso

ACRONYMS

(“**GDP**”) – Gross Domestic Product

(“**UNICEF**”) - United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund

(“**ICRW**”) - Centre for Research on Women

(“**CRC**”) - Convention on the Rights of the Child

(“**UDHR**”) - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

(“**HIV/AIDS**”) – Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

(“**HPV**”) - Human Papilloma Virus

(“**BMI**”) - Business Monitor International

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Problem

The sub-Saharan African region is one of the poorest regions in the world. Poverty eradication in Africa (and sub-Saharan Africa particularly) remains the greatest obstacle to the African (and in fact, the international) socio-economic development agenda.¹

The purpose of this paper (which word I will use interchangeably with the term “dissertation”) is to focus on child marriage as one of the multidimensional faces of poverty and to explore the intimate link between child marriage and poverty, and whether or not the curbing of child marriage in sub-Saharan Africa will assist in the fight to eradicate poverty in the region. In this paper, the terms “child marriage” and “early marriage” will be used interchangeably to denote marriage of a girl below the age of 18 years.

According to the World Bank,² about 46% (forty-six percent) of sub-Saharan Africans live below the poverty line, i.e. under \$1.25 a day. Research shows that in some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, over 70% (seventy percent) of girls are married before their 18th (eighteenth) birthday.³

Many girls who are married early are typically married to much older men. This means that many girls who are victims of child marriage are more likely to bear children early, often (in the case of much younger girls below the age of 15 years) before their bodies are fully developed for childbearing. Such girl children abandon their education in order to take on the role of wife, mother and homemaker, which

¹ <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20160524-0> (accessed 8 March 2017).

² <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/10/16/africa-gains-in-health-education-but-numbers-of-poor-grow> (accessed 8 March 2017).

³ Walker, J (2012) “Early Marriage in Africa – Trends, Harmful Effects and Interventions” *African Journal on Reproductive Health* 16(2):231.

usually also results in a loss of a childhood experience (for example friendship with other young children) for the girl child.⁴

Child marriage violates a girl's right to education, economic participation and to sexual and reproductive health. This paper will focus on the effect of such violations on the economy of sub-Saharan Africa. At this point, it is prudent for me to acknowledge that there is no such term in mainstream academia known as the "sub-Saharan African Economy". Throughout this paper, this term is used to refer to the collective economy of sub-Saharan Africa, on the premise that the economy of one country in sub-Saharan Africa impacts the economy of its neighbours. Accordingly, in such a study, one cannot look at the singular economy of the affected countries within the region without having cognizance of the influence of such economies on those around them.

Child marriage hinders a girl child's social and economic development and preserves the feminisation of poverty. Developmental research offers the feminisation of poverty as one of the multidimensional factors obstructing the fight against poverty. Educated women have a greater chance of escaping poverty and have a higher chance of economic participation. In a region which has more than half of its youth and work force (ages between 15 and 65) consisting of women, a lack of participation by women in the economy of the region has a direct impact on the economic growth of the region.⁵

Furthermore, as educated women are more likely to ensure that their children are educated,⁶ the number of uneducated female population in the region will also negatively affect the education of future youth (both male and female), which will have a direct impact on the economic growth of the region.

Finally, sexual and reproductive health issues suffered by girls who are victims of child marriages means high infant and maternal mortality rates. High maternal

⁴ <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/why-does-it-happen/> (accessed 8 March 2017).

⁵ *Supra.*

⁶ *Supra.*

mortality rates have an effect on the region's workforce. A low number of workforce causes economic stagnation⁷.

1.2 Problem Statement

The aim of this dissertation is to focus on the impact on child marriage on the economy of sub-Saharan Africa and to explore the close links between poverty and child marriage. This dissertation seeks to determine whether child marriage is a contributing factor to poverty and whether the reduction of child marriage in the sub-Saharan African region could assist in the efforts to eliminate poverty in the region.

1.3 Research Questions

This dissertation seeks to answer the following question: How does child marriage contribute to the overall economy of sub-Saharan Africa?

In answering the above question, I will seek to answer the following questions:

1. How does child marriage affect the education of the child bride?
2. How does the lack of education of girls in sub-Saharan Africa impact on their ability to contribute meaningfully in the economy?
3. How does the lack of education and, lack of meaning economic participation, of girls impact the economy of sub-Saharan Africa?

In addition, I will then look at the percentage of women forming part of the sub-Saharan African population, the number of women who enter the workforce, and the factors preventing women in this region from entering the workforce, in order to answer the main research question.

⁷ <https://www.icrw.org/child-marriage-facts-and-figures/> (accessed 8 March 2017).

1.4 Methodology

This dissertation will adopt/use desktop research methodology, i.e. exploratory, analytical and comparative in nature, looking at the link between child marriages from a new angle. This new angle is the angle of seeing child marriage as an agent which may fuel poverty, rather than child marriage being a symptom of poverty.

Many have offered the view that poverty fuels child marriage but rarely do we look at child marriage as a tool which defeats the aims of eradicating poverty in the region as a whole.

Many children (most notably young girls) are forced into early marriage in sub-Saharan Africa. Awareness has been raised by many organisations on the harmful consequences of child marriage and its harmful consequences to the children involved. When one looks at sub-Saharan Africa, the region is also one of the poorest in the world.

1.5 Dissertation Structure

This paper will be divided into five chapters. This first chapter incorporates the methodology and literature review. The second chapter will look at child marriage in the sub-Saharan African region and the factors driving this practice. The third chapter will look at the percentage of women entering the sub-Saharan African workforce. The fourth chapter will explore the theories of poverty as advanced by the World Bank and many authors in the field and how these theories can be applied to child marriage. Finally, this paper will end with a conclusion and a recommendation to include the curbing of child marriage in the agenda for eradicating poverty.

1.6 Literature Review

Child marriage is defined as marriage carried out before the age of 18 (eighteen) years.⁸ This definition of child marriage only takes into account the number of years which such child has existed on earth, and is not influenced by other factors determining maturity. Although there are cases of young boys being married in the sub-Saharan African region before the age of 18 (eighteen) years, this article focuses on child marriage as it relates to young girls in the sub-Saharan African region.

Child marriage in young girls is particularly problematic especially in situations involving younger girls under the age of 15 (fifteen) years, when young girls are physiologically, mentally, physically and psychologically not ready for the responsibilities which come with marriage.

It is a phenomenon in the developed countries that due to education and career choices, more and more women are marrying well into their thirties. However, in sub-Saharan Africa, such is not the case. It is recorded that approximately 40% (forty percent) of women worldwide who married before the age of 18 (eighteen) reside in the sub-Saharan African region.⁹

Early marriage is especially high in the Central Africa and West Africa, with 40% (forty percent) and 49% (forty-nine percent) of young girls under 18 (eighteen) years being married respectively.¹⁰

The table below shows the ranking of the percentage of girls married before the age of 18 (eighteen) in the sub-Saharan African region.¹¹

⁸ Walker, J (n 3 above).

⁹ *Supra* (note 4 above).

¹⁰ Walker, J (n 3 above).

¹¹ Walker, J (n 3 above), 232.

Rank	Country	Percentage (%)
1	Niger	74.5%
2	Chad	71.5%
3	Mali	70.6%
4	Guinea	63.1%
5	Central African Republic	57%
6	Mozambique	55.9%
7	Burkina Faso	51.9%
8	Ethiopia	49.2%
9	Malawi	48.9%
10	Madagascar	48.2%
11	Sierra Leone	47.9%
12	Cameroon	47.2%
13	Eritrea	47%
14	Uganda	46.3%
15	Zambia	41.6%
16	Tanzania	41.1%

Ironically, whilst the purpose of this paper is to explore whether or not child marriage leads to poverty, many researchers rather cite poverty as a risk factor contributing to child marriage. Research shows that anticipated economic gains are the primary reason for young girls being given away to marriage.¹² Girl children from poor homes are susceptible to being victims of child marriage as their families seek to strengthen economic ties and/or rid themselves of more family members to support. It is usually reported that the bride price (payable by prospective husbands to the family of the bride), is usually a driving factor for families to seek to arrange marriages for their daughters at an early age.

Other factors contributing to child marriage are sociological, historical, religious and cultural factors.¹³

¹² Otoo-Oyortey, N & Pobi, S (2003) "Early Marriage and Poverty: Exploring Key Links and Key Policy Issues" 11 *Gender and Development* 42-51.

¹³ Walker, J (n 3 above), 233.

Culturally, in most African countries, a woman's worth is measured by whether or not the woman is married. As such, the temptation for families to arrange marriages for their daughters is rife in communities where families may not have enough money to educate these young girls and fear that being idle would lead the girls to promiscuity which may result in pregnancy out of wed-lock. As most African cultures are of the view that a woman's worth is in marriage and not education, where a choice needs to be made as to who to educate, rural African families generally choose to educate the boys, who are seen as future breadwinners of the family.

Religious teachings are also sometimes used by families to justify early marriages, as are historical factors.¹⁴

Historically, research shows that where a girl's mother was a child bride herself, the probability that the girl will also become a child bride is higher than that of a girl whose mother was not a child bride.¹⁵

Factors such as war are also cited as risk factors of child marriage.¹⁶

Research on the harmful effects of child marriage on victims of child marriage in the sub-Saharan African region usually looks at the psychological, physiological, health and educational impairment of young girls attributable to child marriage.¹⁷

Girls who marry before their bodies are ready for childbearing may become victims of reproductive health complications during childbearing. Children born to girl mothers are also more at risk of neonatal diseases.¹⁸ Pregnant young girls also contribute to the high maternal and foetal mortality rates in the region.¹⁹

¹⁴ For example, Christianity and Islam both teach chastity in women. It can be argued that parents seek to marry off their daughters early so to protect their chastity.

¹⁵ www.girlsnotbrides.org (accessed 8 March 2015).

¹⁶ Walker, J (n 3 above), 235.

¹⁷ Walker, J (n 3 above) 231 and Otoo-Oyortey, N & Pobi, S (n 12 above).

¹⁸ Walker, J (n 3 above), 239.

¹⁹ Walker, J (n 3 above), 240.

Child marriage also has a harmful effect on the education of young girls, and therefore their economic participation in the region. Girls who marry early are susceptible to not completing their education. In the event that such girls stay in school, they mostly do not achieve their highest potential due to child bearing and the stresses that come with marriage responsibilities.

The harmful effect of child marriage on the education of young girls, is perhaps the most detrimental as it has an effect on the economy of the region as a whole. Girls who are not educated cannot participate in the economy of their communities, and as such, the more girls that are married, the greater the chances of economic stagnation.

According to research conducted by Global Finance Magazine based on data collected between the period of 2009 and 2013²⁰, the sub-Saharan African region is the poorest region in the world, based on Gross Domestic Product (“GDP”).²¹

The poorest countries in the sub-Saharan Africa region are listed to be Niger, Mali and Central African Republic, based on GDP.²² When one looks at the Table above, Niger, Central African Republic and Mali are the top 3 (three) countries in the sub-Saharan African region with the highest percentage of child marriage. With the exception of Chad, the top 10 (ten) sub-Saharan African countries with the highest percentage of child marriage are amongst the top 20 (twenty) poorest countries in the world, based on GDP.²³

Apart from war and genocide, the only other common trait shared by poorer sub-Saharan African countries is the high percentage of child marriage. Does this show that child marriage may be a contributing factor to poverty?

²⁰ <https://www.gfmag.com/global-data/economic-data/the-poorest-countries-in-the-world> (accessed 8 May 2015).

²¹ *Supra.*

²² *Supra.*

²³ *Supra.*

I will use the theories of poverty, as advanced by the World Bank,²⁴ to determine whether or not child marriage may be a contributing factor to poverty.

Due to the multidimensional facet of poverty, there is not one theory of poverty. Poverty is characterised by both economic and social factors,²⁵ which factors are inexplicably linked. This makes it difficult to determine one cause of poverty. The World Bank has offered that the causes of poverty may be classified in three ways.²⁶ The three factors are discussed below.

According to the World Bank,²⁷ The first of the three classifications of poverty is the social process. The social process of poverty includes factors such as economic, political, social (demographic) and situational factors. Examples of social process of poverty includes the distance between an individual and the industrial locations of a country, gender and circumstances which make one gender more susceptible to economic exclusions (such as child marriage) and circumstances which make one culture or race more susceptible to poverty (such as disenfranchise of black persons during apartheid).

The World Bank is of the view that poverty may secondly be classified by level, being international, national and household.²⁸ This second classification shows how the social process of poverty may lead to the overall poverty of a country or a continent. For example, household poverty may be determined by factors such as families being headed by uneducated breadwinners, and if there are many such families in a community, then there will poverty in such communities. The more there are of such communities, the more the economy of a country will stagnate, which will in turn lead to the economic stagnation of a region or continent (if there are many such countries in a region).

²⁴ White, H *et al* (2001), *African Poverty at the Millennium – Causes, Complexities, and Challenges*, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/ The World Bank, xv-xvi.

²⁵ Otoo-Oyortey, N & Pobi, S (n 12 above).

²⁶ White, H *et al* (n 24 above), xvi.

²⁷ White *et al* (n 24 above), xvii.

²⁸ White *et al* (n 24 above), xviii.

Finally, the World Bank offers the third classification of poverty to be either primary or proximate factors. Primary causes of poverty are political and social causes, whereas poor location is determined to be a proximate factor.

It is clear from my discussion above that the three classifications of poverty are linked and each influences how the other has an effect on the economic growth of a region. Social process factors, such as child marriage (which lead to feminisation of poverty) lead to household poverty, which in turn leads to national and international poverty.

As advanced in my discussions above, one of the harmful effects of child marriage is that young girls who are victims of child marriage are prevented from completing their education. This leads to young girls not being well equipped to participate economically in their communities.²⁹ In this way, child marriage is a form of the social process classification of poverty, as it contributes to the feminisation of poverty (i.e., poverty of women). Feminisation of poverty is a phenomenon advanced by Diana Pearce,³⁰ and describes the phenomenon whereby women represent a disproportionate percentage of the world's poor.

The phenomenon is not a consequence of lack of income, but rather the systematic oppression of women so as to deprive them of their capacity to participate in economic institutions.³¹

One may argue that the discussions above clearly indicate that child marriage leads to poverty being given a feminine face in the sub-Saharan African region. The feminisation of poverty as a result of child marriage means that households headed by such disadvantaged women will be poor households, which in turn lead to poverty at a national and international level, in the event that there are more incidents of child marriage.³² Child marriage reduces the future workforce of a country (by virtue of the fact that girls who are unable to gain an education will not

²⁹ *Supra* (n 3 above).

³⁰ Pearce, D (1978) "The Feminization of Poverty: Women, Work and Welfare" *Urban and Social Change Review* 11:28-36.

³¹ *Supra*, 11:33.

³² *Supra* (n 4 above).

be able to participate in the economic activities of a country). This also means that these countries have lost future economic role players, thereby increasing the risk of economic stagnation in the country.

The World Bank reports that countries with stagnated economies report low levels of GDP.³³

³³ White, H *et al* (n 24 above) 10.

CHAPTER TWO - CHILD MARRIAGE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

2.1 Introduction

According to the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), over 700 (seven hundred million) of women in the world were married before their 18th (eighteenth) birthday.³⁴ This figure makes child marriage a global problem. UNICEF reports that the regions in the world with the highest prevalence of child marriage are south Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, with Bangladesh and Niger having the highest rates of child marriage in the world.³⁵ As this dissertation focuses on child marriage in the sub-Saharan African region, not much shall be presented regarding the situation in Bangladesh (although economic data from Bangladesh will be presented to support the research questions posed above, as the dissertation progresses).

The definition of child marriage, as accepted by the international community, is a marriage carried out before the age of 18 (eighteen).³⁶ However, in some sub-Saharan African countries, the legal age for marriage for girls is 15 (fifteen) years of age.³⁷ This could perhaps serve as an explanation for sub-Saharan Africa's high child marriage incidents rates in research conducted by the international community. Out of the top 6 (six) sub-Saharan African countries with the highest rates of child marriage, only Niger has a legal marriage age for females at 15. The remaining 5 (five) countries all have 18 (eighteen) set as the legal age for marriage for females.³⁸ However, research shows that even in the

³⁴ UNICEF (2014), *Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects*

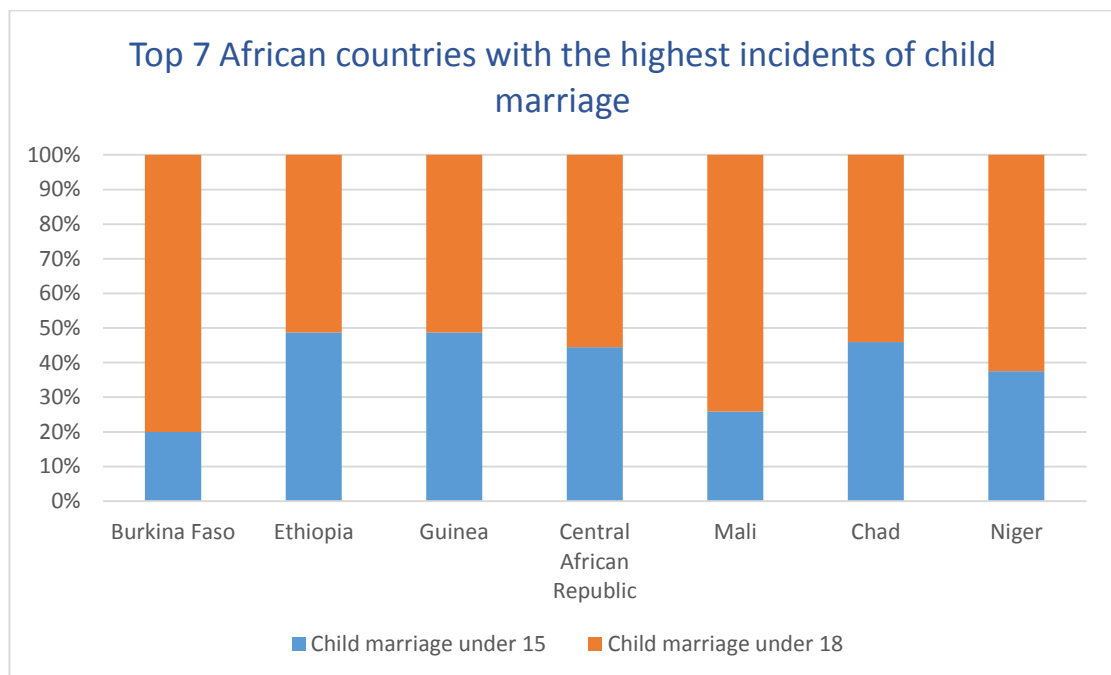
³⁵ *Supra*.

³⁶ Walker, J (n 3 above), 231-

³⁷ https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/niger_1420.html (accessed 8 May 2015). Niger does not appear to have a civil code on marriage. However, UNICEF cites its legal age of marriage for girls to be 15 years. In Cameroon, Article 52-1 of the Civil Status Registration (Ordinance No.81-02) states that girls younger than 15 years cannot get married without the consent of the president. This means that girls 15 years and above can get married.

³⁸ According to <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/chad>, accessed on 11 June 2016, In 2015, the government of Chad changed the legal age of marriage for females from 15 to 18 years, in an attempt to decrease the high incidents of child marriage in the country. It is important to note that the UNICEF report in n 1 above was compiled before 2015.

sub-Saharan African countries where the legal age for females to marry is 15 (fifteen) years of age, the rate of girl children who marry before the age of 15 (fifteen) years is still alarmingly high. The graph below shows the percentages of girls marrying before the ages of 15 (fifteen) and 18 (eighteen) respectively (in all child marriage occurrences) in the top 7 (seven) sub-Saharan African countries with the highest rate of child marriage.³⁹



As can be seen from the graph above, In the case of Niger (the sub-Saharan African country with the highest rate of child marriage and which has a legal marriage age for girls set at 15 years), roughly 39% (thirty-nine percent) of all child marriage occurrence involve girls married before the age of 15 (fifteen) years old.

It is clear from the graph above that the legal age for marriage does little to curb child marriage in the sub-Saharan African region. If the law cannot curb child marriage (through prescribing a minimum legal age), then what can be done to curb child marriage? In order to answer this question, one must look at the reasons behind this practice and why it is so prevalent in certain regions. Many have advanced religion, culture (and tradition), gender inequality, lack of education, insecurity and poverty (ironic, as this dissertation seeks to explore

³⁹ UNICEF, (n 34 above).

whether or not child marriage causes poverty) as the main drivers behind child marriage.⁴⁰ Below, I explore each of these drivers in detail.

2.2 Religion as a Contributing Factor to Child Marriage

With the exception of Central African Republic, all the countries listed above as the top 7 (seven) sub-Saharan African countries with the highest rates of child marriage have Islam as their dominant religion. Although research shows that no one religion is associated with child marriage, it is clear that it is not a coincidence that the rate of child marriage is highest in countries which have Islam as the dominant religion.⁴¹

Other countries, such as Bangladesh and Afghanistan, which record high incidents of child marriage, also identify as primarily Islamic countries. Research shows that the religion of Islam condones child marriage, and the Holy Quran defends child marriage.⁴² It is well documented that the Prophet Mohammed married his wife Aisha when she was just 9 (nine) years of age.⁴³

Research detailing the incidents of child marriage in Islamic countries is abundant. In 2009, Fox News reported⁴⁴ the case of a young Islam girl who was just 2 (two) years old when her father promised her in marriage to a man in his 30s (thirties). At the age of 9 (nine), this young girl was married off to her older suitor, and was then sent to live with him at the age of 11 (eleven). Fox News reported that although the man promised to not consummate the marriage until the girl was physiologically ready, he did not keep to his word and proceeded to rape his young wife every night until she ran away.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ www.girlsnotbrides.org (accessed 11 June 2016). Words in brackets are my emphasis.

⁴¹ This is not to say that Islam condones the child molestation which goes hand in hand with child marriage. In fact, some research show that Islam forbids the consummation of a marriage between a child and an adult until the child is physiologically ready for such consummation. However, Islam literature (Sahih Bukhari, n 8 below) record that the Prophet Mohammed married a 9 (nine) year old girl and this has been cited by the Islam religion as a valid reason for child marriage.

⁴² Sahih Bukhari (5), book 58, 234 <http://www.muslim.org/islam/aisha-age.htm> (accessed 7 June 2017).

⁴³ Sahih Bukhari, (n 42 above).

⁴⁴ <http://insider.foxnews.com/2015/02/05/new-guide-tells-women-how-live-under-isis>, accessed 11 June 2016.

⁴⁵ *Supra*.

It is prudent to point out that although Islamic laws allow child marriage, it is generally prohibited in Islam for the husbands of young brides to consummate the marriage until the young bride is physiologically ready for sexual intercourse.⁴⁶ However, the story above highlights the fact that this prohibition is not usually heeded.

In 2009, a Yemen bill introduced to curb child marriage was criticised by the Islamic public in the country as being anti-Islamic.⁴⁷ This criticism led to the bill being withdrawn. In 2014, the same resistance was experienced by the Pakistani government when it sought to introduce legislation banning child marriage.⁴⁸ The Council of Islamic Ideology in Pakistan labelled the legislation “anti-Islamic” and “blasphemous” and lobbied for the legislation to be withdrawn.⁴⁹

All Islamic states, regardless of location in the world, follow the teachings of the Quran and the prophet Mohammed. Looking at the discussion above regarding the Islamic view and teachings on child marriage, one can begin to comprehend why child marriage in sub-Saharan African Islamic countries is widespread. Also, notwithstanding the fact that the legal age for marriage for some of these countries is 15 (fifteen) years of age, perhaps the teachings that the esteemed and holy Prophet Mohammed married a 9 (nine) year old girl could account for the high percentage of child marriage below 15 (fifteen) years in these countries.

⁴⁶ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28250471>, accessed 11 June 2016 and <http://www.muslim.org/islam/aisha-age.htm> (accessed 7 June 2017).

⁴⁷ <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/yemen/>, accessed 11 June 2016.

⁴⁸ Ng, K *Pakistan Bill Aiming to Ban Child Marriages Shot Down as 'Anti-Islamic' and 'Blasphemous'*, *The Independent*, 16 January 2016.

⁴⁹ Ng, K (n 48 above).

2.3 Gender Inequality as a Contributing Factor to Child Marriage

Research shows that although there are many factors contributing to child marriage, most of the time young girls are married off because they are girls. In many countries where child marriage is practiced (for example Niger), girls are not as valued as boys.⁵⁰ This view is a bit at odds with the fact that girls are deemed as commodities and marrying them off to older and wealthy men is sometimes seen as an economic transaction to the family of the girls.⁵¹

Furthermore, regions with high incidents of child marriage are usually patriarchal societies which are often driven by value systems which seek to control how a girl develops. This kind of control usually take the form of controlling how a girl dresses, how a girl is expected to behave based on predetermined social values (influenced by patriarchal social teachings) and the level of education deemed appropriate for girls.⁵²

In many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, girls who have relationships outside of marriage, who aim to achieve a higher degree of academic education or those who delay marriage are seen as unusual as they do not conform to the standards set for girls in these patriarchal societies.⁵³ The norm is for girls to value marriage above all else. Many of such countries and societies do not consider a female as having reached adulthood or being mature until such female has married (although ironically these same communities see menstruation as maturity enough for a girl to get married).⁵⁴ This is not generally the case for boys in such communities. Males are often expected to achieve and take care of the family, allowing them the option to pursue activities (such as career progression and academic achievement) which the society deems will benefit the goal of a man (to provide for the family).

⁵⁰ In article on <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27619295>, accessed 11 June 2016, a young woman from Niger shares her story on child marriage in Niger and proclaims that Niger is no place for women to dream.

⁵¹ http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/why-does-it-happen/#_ftn1, accessed 11 June 2016.

⁵² UNICEF (n 34 above).

⁵³ <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/why-does-it-happen/>, accessed 11 June 2016.

⁵⁴ *Supra*.

For most young girls in sub-Saharan Africa, a woman's purpose in life is to get married and procreate. This is the standard set by their communities. Any activities which could be seen or interpreted as hindering a girl's chances of getting married is deemed a catastrophe which must be avoided at all costs. The sexuality and virginity of girls is directly related to the marriageability of a female (with females who are seen as promiscuous being less desirable for marriage). As such, families closely monitor the sexuality and virginity of young girls. One way of such monitoring is to marry off a young girl before she gets to the age where she may naturally begin to experiment with her sexuality.

2.4 Culture and Tradition as a Contributing Factor to Child Marriage

Child marriages often occur because of traditional and cultural practices. In the sub-Saharan African countries listed above,⁵⁵ the practice still takes place by virtue of the fact that it has been so for many years. As I have mentioned above,⁵⁶ in some sub-Saharan African countries, menstruation is deemed to be the time when a female is deemed ready to bear children and therefore become a wife. This view is held in many sub-Saharan African countries despite the fact that medical research shows that girls under the age of 15 (fifteen) are not physiologically ready to bear children, and despite the many instances of pregnant young brides developing certain medical conditions as a result of bearing children whilst below the age of 15 (fifteen).⁵⁷

In many sub-Saharan African countries (and in all 7 of my research countries), once a female reaches menstruation, many communities perform certain rights, which are traditionally prerequisites for child marriage.⁵⁸ For example, in southern Ethiopia, female genital mutilation is intimately linked to child marriage. For many in southern Ethiopia, female genital mutilation is the ritual which begins the process of ushering a young girl into womanhood, with

⁵⁵ <http://www.irinnews.org/report/75932/niger-where-childhood-ends-marriage-bed>, accessed 11 June 2016.

⁵⁶ *Supra* (page 13).

⁵⁷ *Supra*, (n 40).

⁵⁸ Walker, J (n 3 above), 233.

marriage then being seen as the final step to complete this process of introducing a young girl to womanhood.

As I mentioned above, many communities in the research countries have traditional rituals marking the beginning of womanhood, and these rituals and traditions contribute to the high incidents of child marriage in the region.

2.5 Poverty and Lack of Education as Drivers of Child Marriage

Although the aim of this dissertation is to explore the impact of child marriage on the sub-Saharan African region, it cannot be denied that acute poverty in the region continues to influence the high rates of child marriage in the region.

According to the International Centre for Research on Women (“ICRW”), girls living in poorer households are twice as likely to enter into child marriage as those living in high income households.⁵⁹

Research shows that even in countries such as the research countries, which have high incidents of child marriage, child marriage is most prominent in poorer communities than in richer communities.⁶⁰ It has been advanced by researchers that poverty fuels child marriage because the prospects of a family receiving some form of compensation for the marriage of their girl child is more tempting to poorer families than to richer families.⁶¹ In sub-Saharan Africa, the family of the bride usually receives a bride price from the prospective husband’s family. This is a custom which permeates throughout the sub-Saharan African region, even in countries where the rate of child marriage is low.⁶²

⁵⁹ <http://www.icrw.org/child-marriage-facts-and-figures>, accessed 11 June 2016.

⁶⁰ *Supra*.

⁶¹ *Supra* (n 58).

⁶² For example, in Ghana and South Africa where incidents of child marriage is lower than those of the subject countries in this dissertation, a bride price is usually paid to the bride’s family during marriage ceremonies. In Ghana, the Akans call it *Eti Nsa* and in South Africa, it is referred to as *lobola* in the black community.

According to UNICEF,⁶³ in Ethiopia, girls in the rural areas have a 75% (seventy-five percent) chance of getting married before the age of 18 (eighteen), as opposed to the 24% (twenty-four percent) chance of those in the capital of Addis Ababa. This again prove that where poverty is less (or perhaps urbanisation is more?) the rate of child marriage is not as high as where poverty is rife.

2.6 Conclusion

My discussion in this chapter 2 highlights the fact that there are many contributing factors to child marriage. Some of these contributing factors, such as religion and tradition (custom) make it harder for child marriage to be eradicated due to the sensitivity of these contributing factors. Furthermore, as government officials and other key members of society who have the capacity to make a difference (such as priests and traditional leaders) more than often share the same beliefs and customs as those perpetuating child marriage, it is understandable that the agenda to curb child marriage may not be high on the list of such influential persons (due to the fact that they perhaps do not see the harm in practices which have been in place since time immemorial).

As the agenda to curb poverty gets more important on the international developmental agenda, poverty and lack of education as contributing factors to child marriage may begin to lessen. However, this is not to say that the practice will become less popular, as one cannot underestimate the allegiance people feel towards their religious and cultural practices.

Perhaps, once there is enough research to showcase the economic impact of child marriage and its link to the struggles to eradicate poverty, the international (and domestic) efforts to curb child marriage would be doubled. Child marriage has so far stayed of the radar of international development agenda (taking up place in more mainstream human rights activities). Will the international community sit up once the economic cost of child marriage becomes clearer?

⁶³ *Supra* (n 3).

It is clear from my discussion above that existing poverty contributes to the survival of child marriage. However, the aim of this paper is to explore whether child marriage in turn perpetuate the cycle of poverty.

In the next chapter, I discuss the consequences of child marriage (such as lack of education for girls, bigger families due to early procreation, non-participation of women in the labour force) and how these consequences impact on the economy.

CHAPTER THREE – THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD MARRIAGE

3.1 Introduction

Research shows that child marriage has many adverse consequences.⁶⁴ According to research, child marriage affects a girl's education, minimizes her economic prospects, steals her childhood and could predispose a girl to poor health and abuse.⁶⁵ For many girls, child marriage means leaving school, losing friends and taking over the role of a wife and mother at a very young age.⁶⁶

Child marriage affects the global initiative to curb poverty by effectively perpetuating the cycle of poverty. As discussed above, girls who marry early are at a higher risk of not finishing school and participating in the formal employment sector of a country.⁶⁷ According to UNICEF, the poorest countries in the world have the highest rate of child marriage, with the poorest girls within the poorest communities in such countries being the most vulnerable.⁶⁸

Girls from poor families whose families see them as liabilities often marry them off to remove the burden of having to care for such girl children. As such, bright girls who have the abilities and capabilities of finishing school and participating in the economy are often prevented from doing so because of child marriage.⁶⁹ Research shows that child marriage does not only affect the girl bride, but also the society within which this practice occurs.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Otoo-Oyorley, N & Pobi, S (n 12 above).

⁶⁵ <https://iwhc.org/resources/facts-child-marriage> (accessed 20 June 2016).

⁶⁶ Otoo-Oyorley, *Supra*.

⁶⁷ *Supra* (n 1 above.)

⁶⁸ Parsons J *et al* (2015) "Economic Impact of Child Marriage: A Review of the Literature" *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 13.3, 12-22.

⁶⁹ *Supra*, (n 55), 13.

⁷⁰ Kyari GV and Ayodele J (2014) "The Socio-Economic effect of Early Marriage in North Western Nigeria" *The Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 5.14, 582-592.

According to Research, girls who marry early are likely to have more children than those who marry late.⁷¹ However, such girls are also likely to lose their lives and their children during childbirth, due to their bodies not being physiologically ready for childbearing.⁷² Although there seems to be a discrepancy between the view that women who marry early generally have more children and the view that women who marry early lose more children than those who do not, the general agreement between researchers is that early marriage contributes to the population growth of a country, leading to more social economic pressures for such countries.⁷³ This increase in social economic pressures, such as the need for more hospitals, schools and labour opportunities can be quite burdensome on an already burdened economy. In this way, child marriage perpetuates the cycle of poverty and makes it difficult to curb poverty in those areas where the practice is prevalent.

The reason for child marriage leading to excessive population growth could be that women who marry early have more fertile years ahead of them than those who do not. The fact that victims of child marriage are usually less educated and more vulnerable than those who marry as adults (due to academic achievement) means that victims of child marriage usually have less control over family planning and are subject to the wants of their much older husbands.⁷⁴

When researchers consider the effects of child marriage, the main themes are usually the abuse of the human rights of the child, the harmful effects of child marriage on the girl bride, and the harmful effect of child marriage on the family and society as whole.⁷⁵ With regard to the girl child, the most harmful consequence of child marriage relates to the health, education, economic participation, social decision making and social vulnerability of the girl bride.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Walker, J (2012) "Early Marriage in Africa – Trends, Harmful Effects and Interventions" *African Journal on Reproductive Health* 16(2):231.

⁷² *Supra*, (n3 above).

⁷³ *Supra*, (n3 above).

⁷⁴ Kyari and Ayodele, 588.

⁷⁵ Otoo-Oyortey, N & Pobi, S (n 12 above).

⁷⁶ <http://unicef.in/Whatwedo/30/Child-Marriage> (accessed 25 June 2016).

In this chapter, I will explore each of the harmful effects of child marriage mentioned above, and consider the impact of each consequence on the economy of the 3 (three) sub-Saharan African countries with the highest incidents of child marriage, being Niger, Chad and Mali.

3.2 Child Marriage as a Human Rights Abuse

Child marriage is a serious breach of various rights afforded to the girl child in various international instruments and treaties and domestic laws.⁷⁷ Despite the fact that child marriage is illegal in both Mali, Niger and Chad and contravenes international instruments, child marriage still occurs for the reasons discussed in chapter 2 (two) above. For many victims of child marriage, there is often a factor of force and coercion.⁷⁸ Many girls who are victims of child marriage are not in a position to defend themselves or go against the will of their family. Mostly, these girls live in communities rife with gender inequality and which do not place much value on a girl's right to equality.⁷⁹ In this way, child marriage abuses the right of a girl to equality, as entrenched in international instruments and domestic laws.⁸⁰

If viewed from the context of force and coercion, then child marriage should be seen as forced marriage, as the girls involved usually do not give their consent, or such consent is considered unnecessary and irrelevant.⁸¹ In this way, child marriage is an abuse of a girl's right to dignity. Even in instances where a girl consents to child marriage, one can argue that in such situations, the young girl

⁷⁷ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) provides that marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending parties. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) prohibits the betrothal and the marriage of a child and calls on all member states to take all necessary action, including the promulgation of domestic legislation, to determine a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory. The African Children's Charter (1990/1991) prohibits child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys. Furthermore, in Niger, Mali and Chad, the age of marriage for girls is 18 (eighteen) years. Notwithstanding their domestic laws and the fact that these countries subscribe to these international laws, child marriage is still rife in Niger, Mali and Chad.

⁷⁸ <http://iheu.org/child-marriage-violation-human-rights> (accessed 25 June 2016).

⁷⁹ Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

⁸⁰ *Supra*, (n 20). The constitutions of Niger, Chad and Mali all afford the right to equality, education and health.

⁸¹ *Supra*, (n 20).

often lacks the education to understand the gravity of such decision, or is often a victim of long term conditioning and grooming by traditional and religious fanatics who believe such marriage to be customary.⁸²

As discussed above, oftentimes financial constraints force families to give their young daughters in marriage to much older men. These financial constraints are not only on the part of the family of the girl, but even the older husband who anticipates that a young wife could add to his family and work on farms and other informal labour settings. In most cases, it is believed that a man having a larger family would contribute to his wealth, as more people will then work for the man in the form of manual labour. However, most young brides who work in such situations are in most cases not compensated. This lack of compensation has led researchers and human rights activists to conclude that child marriage can be seen as a form of child slavery.⁸³

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child (“CRC”),⁸⁴ amongst other international instruments, protect the right of a child to education, to be free from slavery, to good health and to an adequate standard of living. As I have discussed, child marriage abuses many of these rights. In addition, the The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa⁸⁵ seeks to protect the rights of women against discrimination. Article 6 of the Maputo Protocol specifically tries to curb child marriage by setting a minimum marriage age of 18 years.

⁸² *Supra*

⁸³ *Supra*, It is important to point out here that the practice of child marriage in this way also contravenes many international law instruments such as the UDHR, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the International Convention on the Right of the Child, all of which prohibit slavery and recognise slavery as a form of human rights abuse.

⁸⁴ 2 September 1990. Each of the preambles of the constitutions of Chad, Niger and Mali respectively reaffirms its dedication to the UDHR.

⁸⁵ Maputo, 11 January 2013.

3.3 Health Consequence of Child Marriage

Niger, Mali and Chad have all signed and ratified the CRC and have, in their constitutions, affirmed their dedication to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).⁸⁶ All 3 (three) countries are members of the African Union and subscribe to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights⁸⁷ and the African Children's Charter.⁸⁸ All these international instruments provide for the right to adequate healthcare and the right to live a reasonably healthy life.

According to Nour, child marriage affects the health of the girl child in many ways.⁸⁹ Health issues such as ("HIV/AIDS" and other sexually transmitted diseases, high mortality of mother and child and obstetric fistulas (due to child bearing by girls whose bodies are not physically ready for child bearing) are areas of concern when addressing the issue of child marriage.⁹⁰

Although one of the main factors contributing to child marriage is the desire to preserve a girl's chastity and prevent sexual promiscuity (in order to prevent pre-marital sexual relations, unwanted pregnancies and contracting sexually transmitted infections), research shows that child marriage harms the girl child by making her more vulnerable to contracting sexually transmitted diseases.⁹¹ As young girls are often married to older men who are more sexually experienced and who may have many partners (and who may be living with sexually transmitted diseases already), the risk for contracting such diseases become higher for child brides. Furthermore, child brides are vulnerable and usually do not have the education or negotiating power to discuss safer health practices and negotiate the use of protective mechanisms during sexual intercourse.⁹² In sub-Saharan Africa, HIV/AIDS is prevalent and is a leading

⁸⁶ The preamble for the constitution of all 3 (three) countries affirm their commitment and dedication to the upholding the principles entrenched in the UDHR and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

⁸⁷ <http://www.un.org/en/index.html> (accessed 25 June 2016).

⁸⁸ <http://www.au.int/> (accessed 25 June 2016).

⁸⁹ Nour, MN (2006) "Health Consequences of Child Marriage in Africa" *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 12.11, 1644-1649.

⁹⁰ *Supra*, (n 34) 1645.

⁹¹ *Supra* (n 7 above).

⁹² *Supra* (n 34) 1646.

contributor of death in the region. Research shows that in sub-Saharan Africa, married women have a 50% (fifty percentage) higher chance of contracting HIV/AIDS than their unmarried counterparts. Globally, women are more susceptible to contract HIV/AIDS than men are, with the most infection incidents occurring between the 14 (fourteen) to 24 (twenty-four) years' age group.⁹³

Other sexually transmitted infections such as the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) are also a concern as the virus can lead to the development of cervical cancer in women.⁹⁴ According to Research,⁹⁵ HPV infections have become endemic to sub-Saharan Africa. Research⁹⁶ shows that in Mali, cervical cancer is the most common cancer in women and is responsible for the second highest deaths resulting from cancer.

Research⁹⁷ shows that girls who give birth below the age of 15 have a higher chance of developing gynaecological conditions such as obstetric fistula, as a result of their bodies not being ready to handle the stresses of childbirth.

3.4 Lack of Education and Economic Participation

Perhaps the most well documented⁹⁸ consequence of child marriage is the effects the practice has on the education of young girls. In this regard, education does not only refer to formal education but also the social skills which a girl acquires as a result of attending an educational institution.

As discussed above,⁹⁹ child marriage occurs mostly in communities and countries where girls are not as valued as boys. In a blog posted on the website of the activist group Girls Not Brides,¹⁰⁰ a young girl by name of Fevelyn (from

⁹³ *Supra* (n 34), 1646.

⁹⁴ *Supra* (n 34), 1648.

⁹⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK2279/> (accessed 8 March 2017).

⁹⁶ *Supra* (n 95 above).

⁹⁷ *Supra* (n 95 above).

⁹⁸ Walker, J (n 3 above) 231 and Otoo-Oyortey, N & Pobi, S (n 12 above).

⁹⁹ Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/break-the-cycle-less-child-marriage-and-more-access-to-education-for-girls> (accessed 26 June 2016).

Mali) chronicles the plight of child brides in her village and shares an interview she conducted with an older man in her village who had married a 13 (thirteen) year old girl. According to Fevelyn, her own mother was married at the age of 12 (twelve) because her grandfather, her mother's father, did not believe in educating someone else's wife. At just 12 (twelve) years old, Fevelyn's maternal grandfather saw his daughter as someone else's wife. In her interview with the older man who married the 13 (thirteen) year old girl, Fevelyn reports that the man was of the view that he was helping his young bride escape poverty by taking her out of school and marrying her.

Through Fevelyn's story, it is evident that in communities where child marriage occurs, the education of the girl child is not seen as a priority or important. Already starting from this precarious position, child marriage then further derails the education of girl children by taking the minority who are in school out of school.

Often, many young brides are taken to their husband's home where they are expected to fulfil their duties as wives by taking care of the family, bearing children and working on farms to the support their families.¹⁰¹ This means that child brides have to leave school, lose their school friends and settle into a family home. Their childhoods are lost, and they do not develop socially as their peers in school.

Women who do not complete school are financially more dependent on their husbands than those who completed their schooling. As such, in the event of a marriage breakdown or death of a husband, such women are unable to fend for themselves and educate their children, perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

Women who do not complete school are unable to join the formal workforce of their countries and as such, cannot meaningfully participate in the economy.

¹⁰¹ <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/> (accessed 20 June 2016).

According to *Girls Not Brides*,¹⁰² 60% (sixty percent) of child brides have had no formal education.

In addition, Research conducted by the African Union also shows that¹⁰³ women who are educated are more likely to educate their children, which will ensure an educated generation.

3.5 Poverty

According to the International Centre for Research on Women (“ICRW”), poorer girls are more likely to become victims of child marriage, as parents and guardians seek to remove the burden of providing for young girls by giving them away in marriage to older men.¹⁰⁴

Coupled with the fact that girls who marry as children are less likely to have formal education, it means that poor girls will have a hard time ridding themselves of the burden of poverty, as they are unable to work to support themselves. In the event that these girls do work, such work is performed on farms and/or factories of their husbands and are not compensated for such work.¹⁰⁵

The lack of education of child brides leads to no or poor economic participation, which then leads to poverty of the young bride and possibly her children. Poverty is a generational issue which often permeates across generations in a family. Unless a member of such family finds a way to become a meaningful participant in the economy, such poverty will continue to plague the family.¹⁰⁶ Education is usually the key and starting point to begin the eradication of poverty. Child marriage begins in poverty and continues to perpetuate the cycle

¹⁰² *Supra* (n 42).

¹⁰³ <http://www.au.int> (Accessed on 8 March 2016).

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.icrw.org/child-marriage-facts-and-figures> (accessed 11 June 2016).

¹⁰⁵ *Supra* (n 102).

¹⁰⁶ *Supra* (n 102).

of poverty, as a result of the fact that the practice robs the girl bride of an opportunity to equip herself for meaningful economic participation.

3.6 Conclusion

My discussion in this chapter 3 (three) highlights the many undesirable consequences to child marriage. Child marriage robs young girls of their future as a result of its contribution to preventing girls from receiving adequate education. The sad reality is that most times, these girls are those who are the most vulnerable in societies due to their poverty status, and as such, are the ones who will benefit greatly from education and economic emancipation.

As can be seen through my discussion in this chapter 3 (three), child marriage can also lead to the depletion of a country's female workforce as a result of lack of education. The female workforce of a country can also be depleted as a result of death from health issues and concerns which accompany child marriage. In a region which has more young people and more females in its population, child marriage can lead to economic stagnation as a result of the poor or low economic participation of its female population.

Apart from it being a huge human rights crisis and contravening international and domestic laws, child marriage could undermine the efforts of governments and the international community in eradicating poverty, if not curbed.

In the next chapter, I discuss the consequences of child marriage on the economic productivity of women, how child marriage contributes to the feminisation of poverty, which in turn contributes to the overall poverty and economic stagnation of a community or country.

CHAPTER FOUR – CHILD MARRIAGE: THE FEMINISATION OF POVERTY AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

4.1 Introduction

There is an old African saying that if you educate a man, you educate an individual but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation. This saying has become the cornerstone of the campaign against gender inequality and the drive to promote equal education for both men and women on the world developmental agenda. It is ironic that this saying originates in Africa, a continent plagued by patriarchal norms and values and where many women are still oppressed due to cultural and religious practices which threaten the advancement and empowerment of women. Child marriage is one such practice which undermines the empowerment of women in the region.

As discussed throughout the preceding chapter in this dissertation, child marriage results in the child bride having to leave school in order to take on the role of mother and wife. It may be tempting for one to argue that in sub-Saharan Africa, poverty itself keeps children out of school and that many young girls who are married as children were not in school to begin with. However, research shows otherwise.¹⁰⁷ Many interviews and blogs on the website of the activists against child marriage, Girls not Brides, tell the stories of many young girls who have been pulled out of school by their families and/or prospective husbands to marry. According to Human Rights Watch, many girls in sub-Saharan Africa are forced by their families (or by their financial situations) to leave school because of marriage.¹⁰⁸

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 57.4% (fifty-seven point four percent) of young girls in Niger, 76.4% (seventy-six point four percent) of young girls in Mali and 75% (seventy-five percent) of young girls in Chad

¹⁰⁷ *Supra* (n 104).

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/09/ending-child-marriage-africa> (accessed on 26 June 2016).

enrolled for school in the years 2012 to 2015.¹⁰⁹ However, UNICEF reports that of women aged between 15 (fifteen) to 64 (sixty four), only 23.2% (twenty three point two percent) of Nigerian women, 38.8% (thirty eight point eight percent) of Malian women and 42.2% (forty two point two percent) of Chadian women are literate.¹¹⁰ The number of women enrolled in school, and those who actually go on to attain some form of basic education and literacy does not correlate. More women enter institutions of basic education in these countries, and yet very few are literate. It is clear that certain factors are forcing women out of school. The United Nations has identified lack of financial assistance as one of the factors forcing women to leave educational institutions. Activists campaigning against child marriage have offered that child marriage leads to young girls having to leave school because of marriage.¹¹¹

According to Trading Economics, an organisation which compiles census for regions and groups, the population of sub-Saharan Africa consists of 50.1% (fifty point one percent) female.¹¹² What happens to the economy of a region when half the workforce of a region is inadequately educated?

Research shows that gender inequality in respect of education affects a country's economy due to low economic participation by the affected gender.¹¹³ In sub-Saharan Africa, child marriage has led to many girls having to leave school. This leads to lack of education in young girls, rendering such girls (who later become women) unable to join the workforce and contribute to the economy of the region.

According to Klasen,¹¹⁴ there is a direct correlation between gender inequality and economic growth. Furthermore, research shows that lack of education as

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountrystatistics.htm> (accessed on 25 June 2016).

¹¹⁰ *Supra* (n 3).

¹¹¹ *Supra* (n 3).

¹¹² <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/sub-saharan-africa/population-female-percent-of-total-wb-data.html> (accessed 25 June 2016).

¹¹³ Klasen, S (2002) "Low Schooling for Girls, Slower Growth for All? Cross-country Evidence on the Effect of Gender Inequality in Education on Economics" *The World Bank Economic Review Gender* 16:3, 325-373.

¹¹⁴ *Supra* (n 113), 345.

a consequence of child marriage further entrenches and perpetuates the feminisation of poverty.¹¹⁵ Feminisation of poverty is a phenomenon advanced by Diana Pearce,¹¹⁶ and is used to describe the phenomenon whereby women represent a disproportionate percentage of the world's poor.

The phenomenon of feminisation of poverty is not a consequence of lack of income, but rather the systematic oppression of women so as to deprive them of their capacity to participate in economic institutions.¹¹⁷

In this chapter, I discuss the feminisation of poverty in the sub-Saharan Africa region as a result of child marriage, and how this impacts on the human capital contribution, labour force and ultimately the economy of the region.

4.2 Education and Human Capital Contribution

According to Klasen,¹¹⁸ gender inequality in education lowers the human capital of a country. Human capital refers a collection of human resources such as knowledge, talent, skills, abilities, training, experience, wisdom and know-how possessed by a population in a country.¹¹⁹

As discussed above, the victim of child marriage is forced to abandon school in favour of taking care of a family. This means that not only does such a girl lose the opportunity to formal education, but is also isolated from her peers and the social development which comes with engaging with one's peers and from being in an educational institution. Researchers conclude that human capital incorporates social capital and intellectual capital.¹²⁰ Social capital refers to social bonds and relationships and one's ability to assimilate in a social setting.

¹¹⁵ *Supra*.

¹¹⁶ Pearce, D (1978) "The Feminization of Poverty: Women, Work and Welfare" *Urban and Social Change Review* 11:28-36.

¹¹⁷ *Supra* (n 116), 11:33.

¹¹⁸ *Supra* (n 113), 346.

¹¹⁹ Becker, GS (1993) *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press. The term human capital was made popular by the Chicago based economist, Gary Becker, in reference to the personality trait and intelligence possessed by an individual to perform labour to the extent of producing economic value.

¹²⁰ *Supra* (n 20).

Due to the fact that girls who marry as children lose the bond with peers and usually enter into subservient relationships with their husbands where they have little say and no negotiating power, there is no or limited opportunity for victims of child marriage to develop their social capital. These girls, as discussed in chapter 2 of this dissertation, are usually from poor backgrounds and as such, begin life with little to no social influence. In error, most marry older men (usually a bit better off than their parents) with a view of elevating their social status, but due to isolation and loss of power, the opposite is usually attained.

Intellectual capital refers to the knowledge, formal education and know-how that a population acquires through school. This capital correlates directly with the level of education attained by a population. In countries and regions where child marriage is rife, child marriage prevents women from increasing their intellectual capital due to a lack of formal education and training.¹²¹

A diminished human capital in a country directly influences the number and quality of those who participate in the labour force of an economy.

4.3 Uneducated Labour Force and Economic Stagnation

In sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of its population is within the 15 (fifteen) to 64 (sixty-four) year old bracket,¹²² which consists of its workforce. Unfortunately, according to UNICEF,¹²³ the majority of this labour force is illiterate. Although there are many causes for such illiteracy, research shows that the lack of education amongst young girls contributes to illiteracy in this region.

The lack of skilled labour in sub-Saharan Africa as a result of an uneducated workforce contributes to the stagnation of economy growth in many ways. An

¹²¹ *Supra*, n 5.

¹²² <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/sub-saharan-africa/population> (accessed 25 June 2016).

¹²³ *Supra* (n 3 above).

unskilled labour force cannot fully provide the necessary skills needed for an economy to develop. Furthermore, low economic participation means that most of the population are not tax paying individuals and do not contribute to the economic advancement of the economy.

Child marriage ensures that the majority of those who do not participate or meaningfully participate in the economy are women. As discussed above,¹²⁴ although most victims of child marriage work on the farms and other informal employment settings, they are not compensated for such work. As such, such women (although they work and therefore form part of the labour force of the country) do not contribute to the payment tax in their countries.

Another way in which an unskilled workforce prevents economic progression is in the quality of labour skill which a country has to offer to investors. According to Business Monitor International (BMI),¹²⁵ what poses significant risks to businesses looking to invest in sub-Saharan Africa is the unavailability of skilled labour. Due to poverty and inequality (such as child marriage, which lowers the level of education in the female population), the quality of skilled labour in the region is compromised. In a report consisting of 48 sub-Saharan Africa countries, BMI scored Niger, Chad and Mali in the bottom 7 (seven) of the countries in the region with the highest labour market risks. In a score out of 100 (one hundred), with 100 (one hundred) representing a low labour risk, Niger scored 29.6 (twenty-nine point six), Chad scored 28.3 (twenty-eight point three) and Mali scored 30.3 (thirty point three).¹²⁶ It is worth noting that Niger and Chad are in the top 5 (five) countries in sub-Saharan Africa with the highest labour risk profiles.

In the same report,¹²⁷ BMI, reporting on the educational risks of 48 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, scored Niger, Chad and Mali again in the top 7 (seven) countries in the region with the most uneducated work force. In a score out of 100 (one hundred), with 100 (one hundred) denoting most educated, Niger

¹²⁴ Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

¹²⁵ BMI Research (2016), sub-Saharan Africa labour market Risk report, Q1.

¹²⁶ *Supra*, n 18, 7.

¹²⁷ *Supra*, n 18.

scored 2.4 (two point four) for general education, 8.6 (eight point six) for tertiary education and 5.5 (five point five) for overall education risk. Chad scored 4.8 (four point eight) for general education, 6.5 (six point five) for tertiary education and 5.6 (five point six) or overall education risk. Mali scored 8.0 (eight point zero) for general education, 10.1 (ten point one) for tertiary education and 9.0 (nine point zero) for overall education risk. BMI ascribes the low levels of education in the sub-Saharan African region, but rather to poverty and other influencing factors, as with the UNICEF report.¹²⁸

Whilst it is arguable that the high labour risks and low levels of education in the region is influenced by many factors, it is no coincidence that the countries with the highest rates of child marriage performed badly in the BMI report, whilst the countries in sub-Saharan Africa with the lowest rates of child marriage performed well in the BMI study. I have already established earlier on in this dissertation that poverty itself may influence the rate of child marriage in a region, but as I have established, child marriage seems to entrench poverty and perpetuate it.

Research ¹²⁹suggests that education is the surest way out of poverty for those born into poverty.¹³⁰ Without education, poverty is repeated and carries on through families. Child marriage adds to the many factors in sub-Saharan Africa preventing girls in the region from getting adequate education. This practice adds to the feminisation of poverty in that it prevents girl children from building their social networks, prevents them from attaining academic excellence and restricts their ability to gain meaningful employment and contribute to the economic health of the region. In this way, child marriage keeps women poor, thereby feminising poverty in the sub-Saharan African region.

Eventually, in a region with half its workforce being women, the continuation of the practice of child marriage and the continued feminisation of poverty in the region will lead to the majority of its population and workforce being poor and

¹²⁸ *Supra*, n 2.

¹²⁹ Olaniyan, K *Corruption and Human Rights Law in Africa* (2014), 3.

¹³⁰ *Supra*, Klasen.

unable to contribute the development of the economy, which in turn will lead to economic stagnation.

The feminisation of poverty, coupled with the high population growth of the sub-Saharan African region (as a result of high fertility resulting from women having a longer procreating period as a result of early marriage), means that slow economic growth or stagnation will continue in the region.

4.4 Conclusion

My discussion in this chapter 4 (four) highlights the consequence of child marriage, most notably the lack of education for young girls resulting from the practice and ultimately its negative impact on the economy.

As a result of child marriage, already poor women in sub-Saharan Africa become even poorer. Child brides are isolated from friends and peers, removed from school and sometimes subjected to emotional and physical abuse. Coupled with the fact that the region is overrun by patriarchal values, the practice of child marriage systematically oppresses young girls and keep them poor.

As victims of child marriage usually marry much older men, there is also a higher chance that most of these girls may become single mothers in the near future, being saddled with a large family and with no prospects of obtaining formal and lucrative employment.

Ultimately, child marriage feminises poverty, keeping already impoverished women poor. The children of poor women are likely to remain poor, and the more this cycle is repeated, there is an increase in poor households in the community, which ultimately leads to a much poorer community. This in turn has a negative impact on the economy of a country.

Finally, child marriage has a negative impact on the labour force of an economy, thereby decreasing human capital and economic output.

CHAPTER FIVE – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This dissertation set out to answer the following two questions: (1) how does child marriage impact on the education of the child bride; and (2) how does the lack of education in young girls in the sub-Saharan African region impacts on its economy?

From my discussions throughout this dissertation and the views of the many researchers cited in this work, it is clear that child marriage has a negative impact on the education of the child bride. I have extensively discussed the ways in which child marriage prevents young girls from achieving their best in terms of formal education. I discussed how that lack of education impacts the labour force and human capital of an economy, leading to economic stagnation.

I also presented arguments which showed that it is not only formal education which is denied the girl child as a result of child marriage. Child brides are forced to give up interactions with their peers (and as a result are weaned off their childhood which negatively impacts against them as children) to take on the role of mother and wife. This impacts their social development, which then robs them of valuable social capital which they could use to best serve the economy and themselves.

In addition, I discussed how the high population growth associated with child marriage (due to women having a longer fertile period as a result of early marriage and the women's inability to negotiate family planning terms as a result of a patriarchal society) leads to economic stagnation. This is so because the high population growth brought on by child marriage burdens an already burdened region which does not have the resources to cater to a growing population.

In chapter one, I discussed the theories of poverty and how child marriage influences these theories and the link between poverty and child marriage. In light of my discussions in chapter one and chapter 4, it is clear that child marriage as a concept embodies aspects of all 3 (three) factors of causes of poverty, and can be argued that high incidents of child marriage in the Sub-Saharan African region may lead to increased poverty in the region.

In chapter 2, I discussed the contributing factors of child marriage, arguing that religion, culture and poverty and lack of education contribute to the practice of child marriage. I presented that often, child marriage is so entrenched in the culture of a society that it may be difficult to break the practice merely by arguing that it is a human rights abuse. I further offered that certain religious views and practices advanced the course of child marriage.

I discussed the consequences of child marriage in chapter 3. Apart from arguing that child marriage is a human rights abuse, I discussed the effects of child marriage on the education and health of the girl brides and addressed the link between these consequences and the labour force of an economy. I argued that child marriage contributed to population growth as a result of such women having longer child bearing years. Ironically, a girl bearing children at a time when her body is not ready for child bearing have negative effects on the girl bride, rendering a large portion of the labour force of an economy inactive. I discussed the adverse consequences of child marriage on the education of the girl bride and discussed the relationship between lack of education of girls, the labour force and the inevitable economic stagnation which occurs when girls are not educated.

My arguments throughout this dissertation showcases how child marriage, through many avenues, rob young girls of an opportunity to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to the economy of the countries in which they reside. As young girls (who grow into women) are prevented from participating in the economic activities of their countries, these countries lose almost a quarter of its future workforce due to lack of education. This means

that these women have a high probability of becoming unemployed in formal sectors and as such, will have a low participation in the workforce of their countries. Low participation of women in the workforce may lead to economic stagnation of a country, and a region (if there are high incidents of factors which cause economic stagnation in a region).

I discussed research conducted by the African Union which offered that educated women are more likely to educate their children, which will then have the effect of ensuring that subsequent generations are equally educated. Where women are not educated, the probability that their future offspring will be uneducated are high, leading to a high possibility of an uneducated generation. This shows that child marriage does not only lead to no or low economic participation in an economy by women only, but also by their possible future offspring. The danger here is that even male offspring born of such women are at a risk of not being educated and therefore becoming unemployable, which will in turn affect the economic development of the region.

It is very clear from the discussion above that poverty and child marriage fuel each other. It is a case of the egg and the chicken phenomenon. However, what is clear is that high poverty in a region, whatever the cause, leads to low economic participation of the inhabitants of that region. Low economic participation of inhabitants in a region will consequently lead to slow economic growth, which will cause the economy of the region to stagnate.

Per my previous discussions above, the African Union has noted the detrimental effects of the feminisation of poverty on the African continent and has dedicated 2015 as the year to drive women empowerment on the continent, including the education of women and children.

As I have shown throughout this paper, the economic challenges that the Sub-Saharan region faces are multifaceted. However, I propose that child marriage in the Sub-Saharan region be given more attention in the bid to hasten the growth of the economic climate of the sub-Saharan African region. Much has

been said and researched on the harmful effects of child marriage on young girls and their households.

5.2 Recommendations

Much has even been said about its contribution to the feminisation of poverty. However, not much has been said about the contribution of child marriage to economic stagnation. I believe the climate is ripe for this dialogue to begin. As we tackle the human rights abuses which accompany child marriage, it is time to look at the economic depression perpetuated by this very sad and inhumane practice.

I recommend that in conjunction with legislating the minimum age for marriage, policy makers in the sub-Saharan African region and researchers look at engaging religious and traditional leaders in the education against child marriage. Due to the traditional and religious elements of child marriage, one cannot overlook the power of such leaders in curbing the practice.

I further recommend that the damaging effects of child marriage be introduced in the education curriculum of countries within sub-Saharan Africa. In this way, we begin the process of empowering girls to make the right decisions about their future.

Finally, I recommend that policy makers and similar governmental organisations in the sub-Saharan African region engage young girls and their families in their initiatives to end child marriage. By educating the young girls and their families about the close links between child marriage and poverty and the possibility of child marriage aggravating poverty, the girls and their families will finally begin to understand how child marriage can never be an answer to poverty.

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