

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN CURBING GIRL MARRIAGES:

A FAMSA CASE STUDY

BY

THAPELO ADUA SALIM

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SUPERVISOR: PROF. DR A. LOMBARD

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DECLARATION

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
RESEARCH PROPOSAL & ETHICS COMMITTEE

Full name: Thapelo Adua Salim
Student Number: 23223732
Degree: MSW (Social Development and Policy)
Title of mini-dissertation: The role of social workers in curbing girl marriages:
a FAMSA case study.

I declare that this mini-dissertation is my own original work. Where secondary material is used, this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with university requirements.

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Signature:

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Date:

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La ilāha illa Anta Subhanaka Inni Kuntu Minadh dhalimin

Rabbi innee limaa anzalta ilayya min khayrin faqeer

Wama tawfeequee illa billahiAAalayhi tawakkaltu wa-ilayhi oneeb

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DEDICATION

- I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, MD Raza Salim, my son, Muhammad-Amir Salim, and my late son, Muhammad-Ashib Salim.

ABSTRACT

The role of social workers in curbing girl marriages: A FAMSA case study

Name: Thapelo Adua Salim

Supervisor: Professor Dr. Antoinette Lombard

Degree: MSW (Social Development and Policy)

Girl marriage has been identified by the United Nations (2015) as a harmful practice and it has been listed as one of the global agendas to be ended by 2030. In South Africa, protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse is not only a basic value, but also an obligation clearly set out in the Bill of Rights as enshrined in the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996). Girl marriage is prevalent in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and the Eastern Cape (Department of Social Development, 2015; Byrne, 2017).

The goal of the study was to explore and describe social workers' role at FAMSA in curbing girl marriages.

The qualitative study had both exploratory and descriptive research goals. It was an applied study and used a case study design. The study population was FAMSA social workers in Gauteng and the Eastern Cape. The sample of the study was selected purposively and included 12 participants. The data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews and data was analysed thematically.

Findings indicate that girls are vulnerable to early marriage owing to socioeconomic conditions, self and peer pressure, patriarchal culture, stereotypes and religion. These incentives result in long-term consequences entailing missed opportunities for development, affecting the girls' and their children's futures. Social workers contribute to curbing girl marriages through life skills education in schools, which empowers girls to become activists claiming their rights. Social workers also engage in awareness campaigns against girl marriage through dialogues, workshops, public meetings and radio talks. The lack of stakeholder co-ordination, partnerships, organisational resources and clear policy guidelines was identified as an obstacle in curtailing girl marriage.

The study concludes that the structural reasons and aftermaths of girl marriage are interconnected and should be collectively addressed through stakeholder coordination, partnerships, resource mobilisation, policy development and implementation.

Recommendations include creating a platform for dialogue among all stakeholders, strengthening existing programmes to include topics on girl marriage, developing a peer education programme in schools and developing policy to end girl marriages.

Key words: Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Families and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSA), girl marriage, social worker, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Girl marriages have been in the spotlight in certain parts of the world (Jongizulu, 2012:5; Mutyaba, 2011:340), including Latin America, Central Asia, South Asia (Svanemyr, Chandra-Mouli, Raj, Travers & Sundaram, 2015:2), Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, South Sudan and Uganda (Mutyaba, 2011:340; Nsingi, 2016:10). The occurrence of girl marriage has also been reported in some parts of Zimbabwe (Rembe, Chabaya, Wadesango & Muhuro, 2011:66) and South Africa (Jongizulu, 2012:24; Mtshali, 2014:51; Nsingi, 2016:23). Research indicates that in the societies concerned, when a girl reaches puberty she is considered ready for marriage and every day an estimated 47 700 girls are married at the age of 17 or younger in these countries (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2016:32).

Girl marriage has been a concern from a global, regional and national point of view. This is evident in the United Nation's *2030 Sustainable Development Agenda*. Goal number five, in particular, focuses on achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, with specific emphasis on ending harmful practices, such as girl marriages (United Nations [UN], 2015:22). The African Union, *Agenda 2063 for the Africa we want*, emphasises that by 2063, Africa is expected to be a people-centred continent that puts children first and has full gender equality (African Union [AU], 2015a:8).

Furthermore, Agenda 2063 also aspires to eliminate barriers to quality health and education for girls, such as harmful social practices like 'girl marriages', by 2063 (AU, 2015a:9). In South Africa, protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse is not only a basic value, but also an obligation clearly set out in the Bill of Rights as enshrined in the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996). A child is defined in section 28(3) of the Bill of Rights and the Children's Act, as anyone under the age of 18 (Children's Act 38 of 2005:12; RSA, 1996).

The Department of Social Development (DSD, 2015) emphasises that having few or limited opportunities for earning a living and lack of employment and education all

make children vulnerable and vulnerability could lead to early or forced marriages. Furthermore, the previous Minister of Social Development, Dlamini, stated the importance of strengthening community involvement in reversing the trend of girl marriages (DSD, 2015). South Africa, as a democratic country, is devoted to honouring international commitments that seek to ensure gender equality and girl empowerment (Jongizulu, 2012:9). The provinces where girl marriages are prevalent are KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and the Eastern Cape (Byrne, 2017; DSD, 2015).

Against this background, the study focused on exploring and determining what the contribution of social workers is in curbing girl marriages. A report by Statistics SA (2016) revealed that 4 664 females between the ages of 12 and 17 in the Eastern Cape in the districts of OR Tambo, Amathole and Buffalo are in a marriage relationship, either legally, customarily or religiously. In Gauteng, City of Tshwane District, the number reported for this age group was 3 928 (Statistics SA, 2016).

In considering the ages of married females as revealed by Statistics SA (2016), it is evident that girl marriage is prevalent in the Eastern Cape and the City of Tshwane. Since research has confirmed the prevalence of early marriages in the Eastern Cape and Gauteng (Byrne, 2017), the study was conducted among social workers employed at the Families and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSA) based in its East London, Mthatha, Stutterheim, and Pretoria offices.

The key concepts of the study are as follows:

- **Girl marriage**

According to UNICEF (2015:12), “Child marriage includes any legal or customary union involving a boy or a girl below the age of eighteen, or any marriage without the free and full consent of both intended spouses”. However, Maphanga (2011:33) defined marriage in the context of traditional child marriage as a practice involving a union of a young girl married to an older man. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 16 explains that “every marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending parties” (UNICEF, 2008:16). In relation to the above definitions, girl marriage is regarded as forced marriage even if consent is given, as any person under the age of 18 cannot give free and full consent. In this study, girl marriage and early marriage are used interchangeably and therefore ‘early marriage’ means ‘girl marriage’.

- **Social worker**

In this study, a social worker is referred to in the capacity of a social protector who safeguards social and human rights of populations at risk, for instance, by protecting children's rights (Patel, 2015:145). As a child protector, a social worker takes immediate action necessary to protect the child at risk from acute harm (Becket, 2007:37).

- **Families and Marriage Society of South Africa**

FAMSA is a registered non-governmental organisation (NGO), which was opened in 1954 in response to a rise in serious social issues, including family violence and alcohol and drug use. FAMSA endeavours to promote social justice for those who are vulnerable. FAMSA social workers are given specialised training to support communities, offering programmes on themes such as youth mentorship, marriage preparation and enrichment, domestic violence and gender-based violence (FAMSA, 2018).

FAMSA's mission is "to preserve the family with preventive and remedial services which build on existing strengths in individuals, couples, groups, communities and enables people to deal with modern day stressors and issues that threaten family life" (FAMSA, 2018). In this study, FAMSA Pretoria, FAMSA Stutterheim, FAMSA Border, which is in the jurisdiction of East London, and Mthatha were used as research sites for the study.

1.2. RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The National Department of Social Development set goals to start embarking on projects to alleviate girl marriages (RSA, 2015a). This was a reminder to social workers that they have a mandate to advocate on behalf of vulnerable or marginalised individuals, including girls, and to influence policy on macro-level (Patel, 2015:346).

The Children's Act 38 of 2005, section 12(2) of the Republic of South Africa, states that "every child has the right not to be subjected to practices which are detrimental to his or her well-being." The Human Development Report (UNDP, 2014:56) contends that a setback in childhood can have serious consequences throughout a person's life, including uncertainties when growing older and the transmission of vulnerability to the next generation. Early marriage leads to vulnerability of girls and their future families,

which results in an intergenerational cycle of poverty and illiteracy. As Becket (2007:5) rightfully says, children depend on adults who care for them to meet their physical needs, as well as their needs for protection, affection and a sense of belonging; however, they are regularly affected by those whom they trust for security, and often treated in ways that may have enduring emotional and psychological outcomes. Girl marriage is one such outcome that requires social work interventions.

Social workers empower girls to be aware of their rights to have a chance to overcome the structural barriers to sustainable social change and gender equality, which could bring about a positive cycle resulting in healthy generations. This study's focus is linked with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number five of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women and girls (UN, 2015).

Girl marriages prevent girls from using opportunities to continue their developmental tasks and fulfil their right to education. These girls' roles as wives require them to carry out domestic duties, thus resulting in school dropout, which in turn contributes to constrained human capital. Hence social worker's contribution in curbing girl marriages was the research focus of the study.

The researcher was interested in this topic in particular because she has been professionally involved with women who married at the early age of 16 years and regretted being married because of barriers that led to unsustainable livelihoods and challenges to cope with problems in their everyday lives. They dropped out of school after marriage, had no experience of any form of employment and had to stay home to take care of children. They had no income and depended on their husbands for survival, resulting in lack of agency and contributing to a disempowered younger generation.

As frontline workers in rendering social services to families and children, social workers have a key role to play in curbing girl marriages. It is envisaged that the study's findings will contribute to policy development and intervention strategies that curb girl marriages.

The **main question** of the study was:

- What is the role of social workers at FAMSA in curbing girl marriages?

The **sub-questions** that informed the research question were:

- What causes the high rate of girl marriages?
- What strategies, services, interventions and programmes do social workers engage in that contribute to bringing an end to girl marriages?
- How do social workers challenge structural causes and influence policies to prevent girl marriages?
- To what extent do social workers educate young girls, their parents and society about the consequences of early marriage?
- How do social workers promote human rights education for young girls at risk of early marriage?

1.3. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research goal and objectives for the study were as follows:

1.3.1. Research goal

The goal of the study was to explore and describe social workers' role at FAMSA in curbing girl marriages.

1.3.2. Research objectives

The objectives of the proposed study were as follows:

- To conceptualise girl marriages within a structural social work theoretical framework.
- To explore strategies, services, interventions and programmes that social workers utilise to end girl marriages.
- To determine how social workers challenge structural causes and influence policies to prevent girl marriages.
- To determine how social workers educate young girls, parents and society about the consequences of early marriage.
- To make recommendations on social workers' role in curbing girl marriages, based on the research findings and conclusions.

1.4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A comprehensive explanation of the research methodology and the ethical considerations for the study will be discussed in Chapter three. The study adopted a qualitative research approach for the purpose of exploring and comprehending the

meaning that social workers at FAMSA attach to girl marriage as a social and human problem (Creswell, 2014:4).

It was an applied research study that intended to address a problem in practice, namely girl marriages (Neuman, 2011:27). The research design that was used in this study was a case study, which was descriptive in nature, to depict, analyse and construe a particular phenomenon, namely girl marriages (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321).

The population for this study was all the social workers in FAMSA Eastern Cape and FAMSA Gauteng. To draw the sample in the Eastern Cape, a stratification sampling method was used in the three FAMSA offices in the region. A purposive sample was drawn for the study (Babbie, 2013:128). The mode of collecting data was face-to-face interviews (Fouché, 2015:112) based on a semi-structured interview schedule. Data was analysed according to themes (Creswell, 2014:261).

1.5. CONTENTS OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The contents of this research report consist of four chapters.

Chapter one presents the introduction and general orientation to the study, the relevant concepts used in the study, the rationale and problem statement, the research questions, goal and objectives of the study, research methodology, and an outline of the research report.

Chapter two focuses on the structural social work approach as a theoretical framework for the study. Furthermore, the chapter includes an in-depth literature review regarding the prevalence of girl marriages, the causes and repercussions of girl marriages, legislative and policy frameworks in South Africa regarding gender equality/ inequality and its relation to girl marriages, and social workers' contribution to mitigating girl marriages.

In **Chapter three**, the focus is on the discussion of the research approach, type of research, research design, research methodology, ethical principles, and the limitations of the study. Furthermore, the empirical findings are presented and discussed.

Chapter four is the final chapter of the research report and it represents the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study. The chapter also highlights the extent to which the goal and objectives of the study have been achieved.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is on providing a literature overview on girl marriages and discuss social workers' role in curbing the practice within a structural social work approach. In the context of this study, social workers have a role to protect the rights of vulnerable populations, including girls (UNDP, 2014:16), and challenge the structural circumstances associated with risks in the milieu of girl marriages.

As a point of departure, the chapter will look into contextualisation of girl marriages within a structural social work approach. The structural causes, such as culture and religion, poverty, constrained parental and societal protection, conflicts and social instability, will be discussed. The following discussion will focus on the implications of girl marriage, which include infringement of human rights and lack of gender equality, constrained human capital, health, domestic violence and divorce.

Next, the legislative and policy framework in the context of girl marriages and the social worker's role in contributing to ending the practice will be outlined. The discussion will include structural causes of early marriage and ways to influence policies to protect the rights of girls by curbing early marriage. Finally the chapter will end with a summary of its content.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR CONTEXTUALISING GIRL MARRIAGE

The structural social work approach was significant to contextualise girl marriages. This theory highlights the 'structuralist-determinist' tradition, which 'views individuals as victims of constructs that cannot be changed' (Hicks & Murray, 2009:89). The approach harnesses a universal method of intervention and engages social workers and service users in extensive communal activities to overcome the source of inequality and coercion (George & Marlowe, 2005:7).

In the context of this study, social workers should mobilise role players, including girls who are at risk, to challenge the causes of girl marriage collectively to promote social justice. The approach connects distinctive obstructions to societal injustices, with the dual purpose to lessen the harmful outcomes for isolated individuals and to promote social change (George & Marlowe, 2005:7). These individuals are particularly girls who are susceptible to early marriage.

The structural social work approach challenges the dominant, social and economic structures of patriarchal norms, imperialism, discrimination and ageism (Hicks & Murray, 2009:86). In this study, the role of social work in confronting the broader social, economic and cultural contexts within which girl marriage is prevalent was explored from a structural social work approach. George and Marlowe (2005:7) state that the fundamental recognition of structural social work lies in the numerous and overlapping methods of oppression that transpire at cultural, personal and structural levels, with each level causing oppression on the others.

Structural social work explores the manner in which imbalance in people's lives is conserved (Weinberg, 2008:3). For instance, the traditional practice of girl marriage may result in gender inequality and this is a platform where social workers can challenge these traditional practices in order to maintain equality for girls. This approach also emphasises that change is dynamic and old forms are replaced by new forms, while conserving some older, sustainable elements (Hicks & Murray, 2009:89). This means that social workers need to challenge structures within which girl marriages is probable, such as practices of early marriage in the Eastern Cape and Gauteng, which are caused by culture, religion and poverty (Jongizulu, 2012:31; UNICEF, 2008:32).

Empowerment through social change, as a principle of the structural social work approach, contributes to a positive client self-image by normalising fears and reactions, thus validating strengths to participate in decision-making (Hicks & Murray, 2009:95). The main concern of girl marriage is the fact that girls often end up in their new homes with more responsibilities, without much authority or decision-making powers, resulting in isolation from their peer groups (UNICEF, 2008:46). They are disempowered to take action and unaware that injustices are done to them, as they accept the conditions in their circumstances. Because of their incompatibility and lack of maturity, they do not view these as long-term problems.

The Human Development Report (UNDP, 2014:1) emphasises that the structural causes of vulnerability leave some people more vulnerable than others. Chambers (2006:15) states that vulnerability refers to "defencelessness, insecurity and exposure to risks, shocks and stress". Further emphasis on structural vulnerability is rooted in individuals' position in society, their gender, race, ethnicity or social status (UNDP,

2014:16). Social workers' contribution in the upliftment and empowerment of girls will lessen their future vulnerabilities, and thus result in empowerment of women, which will contribute to sustainable development for individuals, families and society as a whole.

Empowerment of girls can be achieved through social workers' involvement with the girls and their families by linking them with resources where they can obtain skills that will contribute to their future development, financially and socially. For instance, educating parents about the importance of school completion for girls and informing them about opportunities to obtain funding for higher education will enable them to have careers or be self-employed, which will break the cycle of poverty. Being empowered as a girl will contribute to empowerment of a woman and her offspring, thus forming a positive cycle of empowerment, which will promote sustainable development. In this case, social workers can develop programmes that can be implemented to monitor the sustainability of the empowerment cycle in families and communities.

In a nutshell, the structural social work approach is a framework that social workers can use in their interventions to challenge the vulnerability of girls to early marriage, by determining the underpinning causes thereof and empowering them to gain confidence in embracing their rights to education and decision-making. In doing so, the cycle of oppression can be defeated from different levels and this can empower girls to maintain sustainability in their wellbeing and that of their families. Sustainable individuals and families will have a ripple effect on society as a whole.

2.3. THE CAUSES OF GIRL MARRIAGE

Girl marriage is a cross-cutting matter; it is detrimental to all aspects of a girl's life throughout her lifetime, weakening her personal advancement and that of her kinfolk, society and the nation (Girls Not Brides, 2016a:3). The main causes of girl marriage are culture, religion and poverty, which will be discussed next.

2.3.1. Culture and religion

There are various debates in literature outlining that culture and religion are some of the powerful reasons for child marriage, influenced by impoverishment, limited economic possibilities, illiteracy, gender inequality, and insecurity in the face of conflict (AU, 2015b:10). The indigenous causes of girl marriage, 'Ukuthwala' (marriage by

abduction), 'Wrestling' (determining who the next girl bride will be), 'Telefa' (secret abduction and raping of a girl) and 'Trokosi' (sending a virgin girl to a shrine as penitence for a male family crime) have been, and are still, customs contributing to the propagation of early marriage (Jongizulu, 2012:31; Haaland, 2017:15; Nahamya, 2017:116). Firstly, 'Ukuthwala' is a custom that is common in South Africa, through which the girl child is coerced into marriage without consent (Jongizulu, 2012:31). 'Ukuthwala' is mostly practised in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces (Wadesango, Rembe & Chabaya, 2011:123).

Secondly, the practise of 'Wrestling' has been identified in Uganda in the Karamoja region as a custom that propagates girl marriage (Nahamya, 2017:116). 'Wrestling' determines which girls will be the new brides and results in entrapment and abduction of girls (Haaland, 2017:15; Nahamya, 2017:116), ensuing in early marriage. It is also common among the Pokot tribe in Uganda, where girls are wedded at the age of 12 years upon the family receiving 12 cattle from the groom's family (Haaland, 2017:28; Nahamya, 2017:116).

The traditional practice propagating girl marriage, 'Telefa' is mostly performed in Ethiopia, whereby a male secretly abducts and rapes a girl as young as 13 years to impregnate her in order to claim paternity of the unborn child, which then forces her to be trapped into marriage (AU, 2015b:11).

Lastly, the practice of 'Trokosi' is observed in countries such as Ghana, Benin and Togo (AU, 2015b:11). This entails sending a virgin girl to a shrine as penitence for an actual or suspected crime committed by a male family member (AU, 2015b:11; Howusu, 2015:10). These girls are deemed to be the spouses of the deity (Howusu, 2015:35). However, most girls experiencing 'Trokosi' are forsaken to some extent because their parents cannot provide the items required to liberate them (Howusu, 2015:46) owing to poverty. 'Trokosi' thus increases girl marriages and promotes structural injustice, as they are not given a chance to make decisions, nor are they made aware of the entrapment.

In addition to the cultural practices mentioned above, gender is a factor resulting in girl marriage. Several cultures and traditions classify gender roles played by women and girls, creating an atmosphere in which their rights are challenged in favour of traditional customs that frequently propagate early marriage (Nahamya, 2017:115). In other

communities girls are viewed as having little significance outside their roles as wives, whereas boys are given preference, because of the assurance that they will look after their parents (Delprato, Akyeampong & Dunne, 2017:174). The researcher concludes that this is evidently a fundamental socialisation of gender inequality. The researcher argues that the societal beliefs pertaining to reasons for early marriage for girls do not protect them as children, since the negative consequences of the practice for the girls are realised later in their lives. They experience oppression, gender inequality and exploitation owing to their immaturity, resulting in inability to differentiate between what is right or wrong for their well-being.

This further leads to unfair treatment based on the reasons that elders give when they have to pay dues for parents' mistakes to their deity through marriage. This implies that tradition does not contribute to early marriage in isolation, for the reason that it is influenced by poverty, adding to the hardships bringing about additional reasons for girl marriage (Mtshali, 2014:51).

2.3.2. Poverty

Poverty, which is coupled with economic insecurities, motivates and exacerbates the occurrence of marriage of girls (Kyari & Ayodele, 2014:582; Pelayo, 2015:11). The research findings on the Summary Report for Asia Child Marriage Initiative indicates that girl marriage regularly happens in response to economic uncertainties (Plan International & Coram International, 2015:15). In certain regions, such as South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, families are propelled by poverty to give their daughters in marriage as a strategy for poverty alleviation, hoping that the family's honour will be secured (UNICEF, 2008:32).

In some parts of Africa unemployed parents are driven by poverty to regard girls as financial inconveniences, especially in respect of payment for their education (AU, 2015b:21). They thus see marriage as an ultimate solution to reduce the economic burden on the household. This results in girls dropping out of school, as they are compelled to assume the responsibilities of a wife and mother.

Vulnerable girls sometimes perceive marriage as a way out of their circumstances, such as poverty; yet their spouses are often proportionately underprivileged (AU, 2015b:22), which leads to further entrapment in sustained poverty. It means that their circumstances do not change, but rather worsen. These girls will have children who

will grow up in the same environments, with a high probability of marrying at an early age, thus forming a vicious cycle, which becomes a 'disorganisation of a social environment' (Hicks & Murray, 2009:91).

The propagation of girl marriage weakens global and national agendas (Kyari & Ayodele, 2014:582), such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and National Development Plan 2030, which was developed to prioritise the fight against poverty (UN, 2015:22; RSA, 2012:14). If early marriage for girls is a solution to their financial independence, the question remains to be asked why they still experience poverty across generations within their families. The enduring poverty leads to a challenge where parents do not realise that their belief to wed girls for financial protection leads to ongoing vulnerability, as they still experience poverty after marriage, which limits their protection.

2.3.3. Constrained parental and societal protection

The lack of parental protection of girls leads to increased susceptibility to early marriage. In countries such as Uganda, Kenya and Zambia parents with limited financial resources prioritise the secondary and tertiary education of boys over girls, resulting in the possibility of girls marrying early (Petroni, Steinhaus, Fenn, Stoebenau & Gregowski, 2017:786), as they end up dropping out of school. Some societies believe that marriage defines a female's reputation, preventing her from becoming sexually active before marriage, which is deemed to bring dishonour to the domestic affairs of her family and community (AU, 2015b:10). This results in parental pressure, since they worry that if a girl is not espoused according to societal expectations, she will not be able to marry at all (AU, 2015b:10).

In South Asia, some societies value virginity until marriage, and parents are concerned that suspending marriage of girls may increase the risk of pre-marital sex, prostitution or sexual promiscuity outside marriage, which will ultimately bring disgrace to the family, lessen girls' chances of eligibility to marry and thus increase dowry and economic encumbrance on families (AU, 2015b:30, Pandey, 2017:243; Petroni et al., 2017:786).

Early marriage is believed to guarantee that a girl gets married as a virgin to avoid out-of-wedlock births to safeguard the family's honour (Karam, 2015:62). However, some girls who abscond from child marriages turn to prostitution for survival (AU, 2015b:30).

Both public stigma and limited parental financial support for girls add to the high risk of girl marriage (Petroni, et al., 2017:786).

The researcher concludes that instead of educating girls about the dangers of sex before marriage, parents allow them to be married to avoid societal stigma, resulting in added stressors in the girls' lives. In various African cultures, girl marriage fulfils the reinforcement of tribal connections for the family and the clan (AU, 2015b:11), meaning that the parents and the extended family agree on the marriage of the girl to keep the family legacy.

Furthermore, the AU (2015b:22) points out that in some nations it is not always biological parents who initiate girl marriages. Being orphaned, mainly as a result of parents dying of AIDS, is a major risk factor in areas with an increasing population of girls. In the South Sahara area, in 2015 there were 15.1 million children orphaned by AIDS (AU, 2015b:22). Nigeria has more than two million children who are AIDS orphans, which make girls vulnerable to being wed out of concern that no one else will look after them. In conclusion, the instability of family circumstances puts pressure on parents to wed their girls as an exit from their circumstances.

2.3.4. Conflicts and social instability

Conflicts and social instability have been debated as causes of girl marriage, as girls are coerced to marry men who exert power on them and their families. Certain families in Northern Uganda are reported to have wedded their daughters to soldiers in the military in order to preserve the family's reputation or safeguard the girl and the rest of the family (AU, 2015b:28). This means that the girl and her family will be protected from violence and poverty, as the husband will provide for them financially.

Girl marriages are also common in refugee camps for internally displaced persons in Uganda, Dolo Addo camps in Ethiopia and Dadaab camps in Kenya (AU, 2015b:30). The Women's Refugee Commission (2016:9) confirmed that the Kobe refugee camps in Ethiopia accommodate Somali refugees fleeing from the battles and food crisis. In some instances, this is where rape is a major risk, as a girl is forced to marry her rapist by her family to prevent dishonour to the household or to ensure access to services, as doing this is believed to bring safety to a refugee and the family (AU, 2015b:29). This results in a stagnant marriage before maturity, as decisions are made on the girl's behalf. So in countries where violence is experienced, families see

marriage of their refugee girls as a means of survival and protection by the military husband, despite the girl's lack of self-determination in the marital relationship.

In a summary, girls' self-determination is eroded by different circumstances, resulting in early marriage. Culture and religion are the fundamental causes of girl marriage and the practice is further influenced by other factors such as poverty, societal norms regarding girls' roles, limited parental protection, conflicts and social instability. These factors are intertwined and all result in oppression and discrimination against girls at some point in their lives. For instance, they are forced to leave school after marriage, as they take up the role of being a wife and mother.

Furthermore, the public stigma pertaining to premarital sex puts pressure on families to protect their honour by giving away their daughters in marriage at an early age. Since parents regard marriage as the only option, they are not well informed about other options to consider, such as educating their girls to abstain from sex before marriage. Hence the role of the social worker was explored in this study to explore the causes of girl marriage, because if not tackled, the long-term implications for girls' lives are devastating for their futures.

2.4. IMPLICATIONS OF GIRL MARRIAGE

The implications of girl marriage include increased population, health care costs, and lost opportunities of human development, which become growing burdens on societies (Kyari & Ayodele, 2014:583). These outcomes are, among others, gender inequality, limited access to education, health issues, domestic violence and divorce.

2.4.1. Infringement of human rights and lack of gender equality

The rights of girls are infringed once they experience challenges after marriage. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasises that the fundamental impact of development across all the aspirations and targets of the SDGs can be realised if gender parity and liberation of women and girls are prioritised (UN, 2015:10). This means that the accomplishment of complete human potential and of sustainable growth is impossible if one part of humankind continues to be deprived of its full human rights and prospects.

Article one of the UDHR (UN, 1948) stipulates that all human beings have a right to dignity, freedom and equality. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000, section 8(d) emphasises the restraint of unjust prejudice

on the basis of gender, taking account of any practice, including conventional, customary or religious methods, that undermines the dignity and well-being of the girl child (Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000:8). Green (2012:23) affirms that human rights are central for inclusive human development.

In support, McFarlane, Nava, Gilroy and Maddoux (2016:706) observe that girl marriage is an abuse of human rights and hinders girls' wellbeing. The girl is deprived of her elementary right to free and full consent to marry at full age, as enshrined in Article 16 of the UDHR (UN, 1948). Ame (2013:155) shifts the argument of human rights abuse to the level of broader society, stating that a girl's marriage propagates an imbalanced society and escalates female susceptibility, incapability and worthlessness, resulting in lack of dignity.

The traditional practices of 'Telefa', 'Trokosi', 'Ukuthwala', 'Ukuhlala Ebhentshini' and 'Wrestling', are fundamental challenges to gender equality, as they involve marriage of young girls (cf. AU, 2015b:11; Commission for Gender Equality, 2013:36; Howusu, 2015:46; Jongizulu, 2012:12; Nahamya, 2017:116). Svanemyr, Chandra-Mouli, Christiansen and Mbizvo (2012:1) point out the gender aspect and regard marriage of girls under the age of 18 years as gender discrimination.

When a girl is given in marriage, she is discriminated against on the basis of age and gender and this often leads to violence against the girl wife (UNICEF, 2008:34). Girl marriage has been associated with harmful practices that aggravate gender inequalities and is perceived as a symptom of gender imbalance that is entirely embedded in socio-economic and political structures (Maluleke, 2012:12).

Gender equality is an element of broad equal opportunity strategies for women and girls (Yurdakul & Kortweg, 2013:206). UNICEF (2008:3) states that one in three girls is married before the age of 18. Early marriage is frequently reported to have a greater impact on girls than on boys (Sabbe, Temmerman, Brems & Leye, 2014:174). According to Sabbe et al. (2014:174), girls forced into marriage are more likely to be faced with intimate partner violence, sexual abuse and rape. Jongizulu (2012:5) views girl marriage as a practice that fortifies gender inequality problems, leading to education dropout of a girl, affecting her decision-making capacities and human

development. The study explored how social workers contribute to human rights education for young girls at risk of early marriage.

2.4.2. Constrained human capital

Lack of education is both a risk and aftermath of girl marriage (Mc Cleary-Sills, Hammer, Parsons & Klugman, 2015:71). Mc Cleary-Sills et al. (2015:71) state that education connotes empowerment of females, strategic development and financial security. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Article 29(a) concurs that education should be focused on the advancement of children's dispositions, capacities, psychological and physical abilities to enable them to reach their fullest potential (UN, 1989:9).

The 2030 NDP mentions that the educational barriers girls encounter should be tackled holistically (RSA, 2012:36). Midgley (2014:92) emphasises that the preliminary means of sustaining human capital of young people is the attainment of knowledge through formal schooling. Education nurtures the capabilities and preferences of young people, thus increasing their chance of witnessing their development and practising their rights (O'Hearn, 2009:11).

The advancement of human capital is fundamental in broadening people's choices and prospects to live the kind of life that they choose to live for themselves (Patel, 2015:24). In this regard, the role of social workers was explored to promote self-determination of these girls. The Constitution of the South African Republic, section (29) reinforces the rights to education for both adults and children (RSA, 1996:1257).

However, in terms of early marriage, girls are denied these privileges owing to structural barriers. Girl marriage, as a barrier, extends the cycle of illiteracy and poverty for girls (Svanemyr et al., 2012:1). It means that they leave school at an early age, and in doing so limit their opportunity to learn and acquire skills that would enable them to find employment (Svanemyr et al., 2012:2). Ame (2013:155) elaborates that dropping out of school because of early marriage limits the girl's chances to establish social relations, resulting in lowered social status and constrained success.

The long-term continuation of girl marriage is disadvantageous (AU, 2015b:24), as it can affect the next generation negatively, with consequences resulting in denial of schooling, as illiterate young mothers are particularly likely to have children who will

also discontinue their schooling, marry at an early age and repeat the cycle of poverty and illiteracy (AU, 2015b:24).

These negative consequences give rise to loss of self-reliance, with enduring effects on their choices and standard of living (Gangoli, McCarry & Razak 2009:427). The outcomes of girl marriages restrain girls' human capital acquisition and results in premature motherhood, leading to an inter-generational cycle of poverty and deprivation (Sekri & Debnath, 2014:1670).

2.4.3. Health consequences

The early marriage of girls puts them at higher risk of health consequences. Kyari and Ayodele (2014:584) emphasise that early marriage is a global problem that undermines international development goals to achieve more educated, healthier and stable populations. According to Reid and Shams (2013:618), girl marriage is coupled with an excessive fertility rate, frequent pregnancy, and scarcity of education concerning reproductive well-being.

The definition of reproductive health given by the World Health Organisation (WHO), (2017:5) is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, as it tackles reproductive progression at all junctures of life. Reproductive health therefore denotes that people are able to have an accountable, sustaining and safe sex life and that they have the competency to have children and the autonomy to determine how often to do so (RSA, 2015b:18; WHO,2017:5).

In relation to this study, girls do not have the experience required to maintain reproductive wellbeing, as they are facing developmental milestones, especially biologically. When they experience puberty and their first menstruation occurs, they are at higher risk of teenage pregnancy. They become confused and require guidance from adults.

Teenage pregnancy is a key driver and consequence of girl marriage and is greatly linked with school dropout in Sub-Saharan Africa (Petroni et al., 2015:786). As a result, resisting sexual intercourse is not always an option in most early marriages, as males are considered to have rights to have sexual intercourse with their wives (AU, 2015b: 27) without considering the health consequences.

One of the most harmful effects of early pregnancy and the need to prove fertility after marriage, regardless of age, is obstetric fistula, namely tearing of the vagina, bladder or rectum during childbirth, which if left untreated, triggers long-term outflow of urine and faeces (Nahamya, 2017:117). For instance, girls whose pelvis and birth canal are not completely developed are prone to complicated delivery, resulting in prolonged labour, which can harm the birth passage, damaging the inner tissue that segregates the bladder or bowel (AU, 2015b:27).

The unmanageable outflow of urine or faeces because of obstetric fistula will continue until the damage is surgically rectified (AU, 2015b:27). Girls with no say in protecting themselves against pregnancy or diseases are also subjected to enduring skin and tissue damage when experiencing forced sex, which places them at risk of catching sexually transmitted infections from their husbands, who may be sexually active outside marriage (AU, 2015b:27).

The United Nations 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women reported that early motherhood can restrain the educational and employment prospects of young girls and is likely to have enduring harsh effects on the quality of their lives and the lives of their offspring (UN, 2007:29). Women who give birth during their teenage years face a higher risk of maternal illness and mortality, and their infants are at higher risk of negative consequences (Psaki, 2015:6).

Kitson (2016:722) points out that young brides are in danger of not only major health risks, but also greater recurrence of neonatal mortality connected to infants' failure to thrive in their care. The primary causes of these fatalities are low birth weight and undernourishment, which are reinforced by parental illiteracy, poverty and denied participation in decision-making and child health services (Kitson, 2016:722). These issues result in psychological health conditions such as depression and suicide.

Regardless of reproductive health in general, Mtshali (2014:57) notes that since girls become pregnant too early, they give birth before they are psychologically ready for motherhood, culminating in psychological consequences such as depression and suicide. Girls who are not inclined to marry or who want to get away from forced marriage could also run the risk of suicide, although very little is known about the correlation between child marriage and suicide (AU, 2015b:31).

Early marriage is coupled with increased probabilities of suicidal thoughts in girls aged 10 to 17 years in Ethiopia (Gage, 2013:654). The findings of a study by Le Strat, Dubertret and Le Foll (2011:527) in the USA affirm that early marriage results in women having mental health problems. The study revealed that women who married at the age of maturity were unlikely to show a higher rate of mental disorders (Le Strat et al., 2011:527). The findings of studies on suicidal thoughts confirmed that women who married as children were more likely to have experienced psychiatric disorders compared with women married in adulthood (Gage, 2013:656). The confirmation of psychological health consequences shows that early marriage has a higher mental impact on women later in their lives than if they were to marry as adults. It means that the probability of suicide is higher for women experiencing psychological conditions if they married young.

Furthermore, the well-being of girls is affected when they marry into families as second or third wives, where they face competition, related pressure and stress at a very young age (Rembe et al., 2011:68). As Kyari and Ayodele (2014:583) rightfully state, marriage is regarded as a time of celebration and a milestone in adult life. However, in terms of girl marriage, it is regarded as premature marriage, because it inhibits personal and psychological advancement and has risky health consequences (Ame, 2013:156). In conclusion, early marriage affects the social, physical and psychological health of the girl brides.

2.4.4. Domestic violence

The Handbook on the Provision of the Child Marriage Act 2006, adapted by UNICEF and the Ministry of Women and Child Development in India, states that domestic violence is common in families where women had been married as girls. India is said to have the highest rate (67%) of gender-based violence in families where women had been married by the age of 18 (UNICEF & Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2006:4).

Girl marriage is openly interconnected to increased risk of gender-based violence involving physical and emotional abuse by husbands and other family members, as well as spousal rape and sexual obligation (McCleary-Sills et al., 2015:71). In some societies, early marriage is seen as a form of security for girls, although it adds to their

vulnerability in terms of physical, psychological and social problems, as teenage wives are at high risk of abuse and emotional affliction (Shawki, 2015:58).

Violence against girls undermines their psychological and physical well-being (RSA, White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997:72). The girl wives tend to have lower power and autonomy in their relationship because of a huge age difference and the absence of agency in numerous ways, for example being excluded from decision-making, resulting in advanced risk of domestic violence (McCleary-Sills et al., 2015:71; McFarlane et al., 2016:708).

The report by UNICEF (2008:46) further states that economic dependency and lack of financial resources expose married girls to violence and abuse during their marriage. Early marriage entraps girls in domestic violence, as they are not mature enough to deal with pressures associated with their marriages. In most cases this results in separation or divorce.

2.4.5. Divorce

Early marriage increases the chances of divorce. Benokraitis (2011:423), Schwartz and Scott (2010:365) observe that younger brides, especially those who are still in their early adolescent years when they marry, are more likely to divorce. A study on women who married under the age of 18 showed that 48% of marriages were dissolved within ten years, compared with 24% of marriages of women who were at least 25 years of age at the time of marriage (Schwartz & Scott, 2010:365).

The implications of early marriage as discussed in this section emphasises the importance of girls being protected through legislation and policies, as the next section will outline.

2.5. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK IN THE CONTEXT OF GIRL MARRIAGES

As stated in section 2.3, the reasons for girl marriages are multifaceted, including culture, poverty, illiteracy and lack of employment, which capture them in a vicious cycle that makes it hard for these girls to exit their conditions. Girls need protection from early marriages rather than provisions that tolerate and endorse it (Kitson, 2016:730). Addressing girl marriage successfully necessitates solutions that are tailored to local contexts (McCleary-Sills et al., 2015:75), therefore each country

should have a different strategy applicable to its local setting to curb the practice of girl marriage.

South Africa has ratified various treaties that protect the rights of women and girls, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR). Child marriage is regarded as marriage without consent, as the law regards children under 18 years as minors who require parental consent on legal matters (Children's Act 38 of 2005, RSA:23). The prohibition on marriage taking place without the free and full consent of both spouses is clearly stated in the regional treaty, Article 6 of the ACHPR (2005:8), and international treaties, Article 23 of the ICCPR (1976:12) and Article 10 of the ICESCR (1976:3).

Since culture, beliefs and societal norms form part of the fundamental causes leading to girl marriages, it is imperative to emphasise that Article 17 of the ACHPR (2005:16) supports women's rights in setting the protocol on the rights of females. As stated in Article 17 of the ACHPR (2005:16), women and girls have a right to live in a progressive cultural setting and to contribute at all levels to influence and develop cultural policies. In this study, the challenge was to explore social worker's views on how to curb girl marriages based on cultural beliefs.

In Zimbabwe, policies have been formulated to recognise harmful laws, cultures and traditional practices that impinge on women and girls' rights, recommending the abolition of these customs (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2013:13). Zimbabwe has a policy strategy to conduct a gender review on all existing applicable laws, identify gaps in line with new constitutional requirements and propose areas for reconsideration or endorsement of innovative mechanisms, which will ultimately encourage women and girl empowerment to stop girl marriages (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2013:13).

In South Africa, the government is committed to reviewing the long-term impact of the implementation of the policy on gender equality (Office on the Status of Women, 2002:49). This commitment has been confirmed by the formation of an inclusive national machinery, comprising key structures such as the Commission on Gender Equality (Office on the Status of Women, 2002:3) and the Ministry of Women, to protect the rights of women and children (RSA, 2014).

These structures represent coordination of services from government, which aspire to achieve equality in all spheres of life: the political, civil, social, economic, and cultural domains (Office on the Status of Women, 2002:26; RSA, 2014). Gender inequalities play an essential role in this process, for the reason that inequalities in one sphere underpin inequalities in others (UNFPA, 2016:27). Since girl marriage has an impact on all these spheres, as discussed in section 2.4, these government structures will ultimately address girl marriage for promotion of gender equality. In South Africa, strategies should be implemented to educate females about their rights to equality (RSA Gender Equality Bill, 2013:10).

In Uganda, the National Strategy 2019/2020 to end child marriage is a joint endeavour recommending numerous approaches taking account of expansion in the legal and policy environment by re-evaluating, fostering and executing government policies and laws and also informing communities about existing laws (Nahamya, 2017:133 & Republic of Uganda & UNICEF, 2015:39). It is aimed at the protection of children from all methods of abuse, violence and exploitation, including precarious practices, such as girl marriage (Republic of Uganda & UNICEF, 2015:39).

The National Strategy 2019/2020 of Uganda makes provision for girls and boys to learn about myths on gender norms and understand the consequences of equality (Republic of Uganda & UNICEF, 2015:42). However, gender issues include men and boys. Engaging men and boys to end girl marriage could be an effective link in the success of gender equality, as men are central decision-makers in most circumstances and yet are repeatedly disregarded in endeavours to promote gender equality (European Commission, 2016:4; UNICEF, 2010:8). The intention is to focus attention on girls and boys in policy promotion and discussions in order to empower women and girls to enhance justice (UNICEF, 2010:8).

The consequences of gender imbalance, such as child marriage, signify the suppression of elementary human rights to which every girl is entitled (UNFPA, 2016:27). Therefore, to transform circumstances that obstruct the attainment of substantive and sustainable gender equality, the root causes of girl marriage should be identified (RSA Gender Equality Bill, 2013:15). UNICEF (2010:6) proposes a lifecycle approach to gender equality, with inclusion of the rights of female infants,

youngsters and adults in policy discussions and programme collaboration on women's rights. Social workers can make a contribution by facilitating the process.

The different approaches to sustaining gender equality do not guarantee the minimisation of inequalities, as success will depend on the personnel designated to implement the programmes. The designated practitioners are encouraged to embark on programmes to educate the communities on practices such as girl marriages that discriminate unfairly on the grounds of gender (RSA Gender Equality Bill, 2013:12).

Practitioners are encouraged to embark on programmes to educate communities on gender discrimination (RSA Gender Equality Bill, 2013:12). In Nepal the government engages with social workers as designated personnel to work with parents and local priests to motivate the decision to delay the marriage of girls until they reach the permissible age (Pandey, 2017:244).

Zimbabwe has also developed systems in its National Gender Policy with the intention to supplement the competence of development personnel to tackle gender analytically in their service delivery for integration of gender perspectives in all development (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2013:12). Another policy strategy to end girl marriage is the cohesive approach developed in Ethiopia (Kitson, 2016:730).

Action Aid Ethiopia educates religious and traditional leaders to exercise their power to take a stand against harmful practices towards girls to protect their rights (AU, 2015b:33). In Zambia, the Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs is directing a three-year national campaign to end girl marriages with the purpose to empower traditional leaders to bring about change in their setting to revise applicable policies and safeguard the legal protection of girls to end child marriage (AU, 2015b:32).

Furthermore, In March 2016 the government of Nepal held a girl summit in Kathmandu to renew its commitment to implement marriage law and end girl marriage by 2030 (Pandey, 2017:244). These strategies show commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Moreover, in terms of sustainable development, policies for the promotion of enrolment and retention of girls in schools should be strengthened through the elimination of barriers leading to dropouts, as indicated in Article 12 of the ACHPR (2005:13) and Article 13 of the ICESCR, (1976:4). Educating girls has been described as the world's

paramount and pioneering investment, since it reinforces economic opportunities for women and girls, and increases the nation's productivity and economic progression (UN, 1989:8 & UNFPA, 2016:65), thus leading to a cycle of a dynamic, better educated youth.

Article 12 of the ICESCR (1976:4) promotes recognition of the rights of everyone to the enjoyment of the utmost realistic standards of psychological and physical health. The Gender Equality Bill of the Republic of South Africa (2013:10) emphasises that policies should intensify access to education on reproductive rights for young women. The National Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Framework Strategy is deemed to be a fundamental human right for everyone and is central to the development conditions of any population (RSA, 2015b:6).

The emphasis on reproductive rights gives girls the right to choose freely and sensibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health (RSA, 2015b:18). Having reproductive rights is also supported by the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Article 16 (e) confers the same rights to determine the number and spacing of their children on women and men (UN, 1979:6). Article 14 of the ACHPR (2005:15) captures women's right to take charge of their fertility. In the case of girl marriage these rights are not recognised because of the lack of girls' agency in contributing to standing up for their rights, which may result in gender-based violence, as discussed in section 2.4.

The Istanbul Convention instigated by the European Commission declares that gender-based violence is a destruction of fundamental rights, as it is both a cause and a consequence of disparities between females and males (European Commission, 2016:4). The propagation of girl marriage gives rise to girls' inability to exercise their reproductive rights, as they may be expected to bear children right after marriage, thus resulting in school dropout. In this case they may experience gender-based violence when expressing themselves about contraception.

Article 5 of the ACHPR (2005:8) emphasises elimination of harmful practices by protecting women and girls at risk of such practices, including violence and abuse. However, Article 7 of the ICCPR (1976:5) declares that nobody should be exposed to

brutal or degrading treatment, while the CRC (UN, 1989:5), Article 19 specifically safeguards children from all forms of physical or mental violence, abuse or exploitation. This means that girls' exposure to early marriage infringes on their rights to freedom of expression, education, equality and protection from abuse (RSA, 1996).

The Republic of Zimbabwe (2013:18) advocates for the integration of gender-based violence in the educational curriculum at all levels, which South Africa could also adopt. In summary, social workers can draw from the existing legislative and policy framework to guide interventions to curb girl marriages.

2.6. SOCIAL WORKERS' ROLE IN CONTRIBUTING TO CURBING GIRL MARRIAGES

Social workers' roles in curbing girl marriage can be contextualised within the broader definition of social work and the developmental approach. The IFSW and IASSW (2014) define social work as a profession that "promotes social change, social cohesion, development, empowerment and liberation of people". Social change can be promoted by social workers through a dual focus on the person and the environment, and the interaction between the two (Patel, 2015:127).

Girl marriage is a barrier to social change and development of girls in view of the social, cultural and economic situations in which it takes place and its related consequences. Social work intervention is required to challenge the causes of the practice of girl marriage. From a structural injustice perspective, social workers want to bring about social change in order to overcome limiting socio-cultural beliefs and institutional barriers to leading a full life (Patel, 2015:127).

The social worker's role in curbing girl marriage will be discussed next according to the themes of the developmental social work approach, that is, the human rights-based approach, bridging the gap between the micro- and macro-divide, integration of social and economic development, community participation and partnerships (Patel, 2015).

2.6.1. Human rights-based approach

Social workers are often challenged by issues of human rights invasion (Kafula, 2016:118), which in the case of this study is curbing girl marriages. Human rights-based practice entails allowing people to express their rights and to act in such a way as to have these realised and safeguarded (Ife, 2012:230). As discussed in section

2.4, the rights of girls experiencing marriage are infringed, since they are unable to practise their right to education, reproduction, dignity, safety, equality and freedom (RSA Constitution, 1996). The infringement of human rights results in disparities in income and discrimination (Kafula, 2016:119), which in turn feed injustices.

Early marriage is an injustice done to girls, as they lose out on development opportunities, such as being educated. Social workers promote social justice, and can therefore facilitate programmes that will help girls to realise their full development by recognising their capacities, values and assets (Kafula, 2016:118). This will prevent school dropout and contribute to a mind shift in societal norms that a girl's value is bound to becoming a mother and housewife.

The DSD (2013:13) framework for social welfare services outlines that social workers' interventions should be aligned to promoting the rights of people at risk. Ife (2012:230) aptly states that social workers can protect the rights of people by empowering them with skills to act when confronted with injustice. Girls' risk of being forced into early marriage should be addressed to prevent oppression and discrimination arising from social and cultural beliefs and practices that impede social inclusion (DSD, 2013:13). Since early marriage violates girls' right to equality (Delprato et al., 2017:189; UNICEF, 2008:34), social work interventions should target gender inequality.

Human rights-based practice creates circumstances under which power and coercion can be changed through communal action to safeguard the rights of the individual and the group (Kafula, 2016:118). However, one of the most important values of social work is to elevate the dignity and worth of people (Kafula, 2016:118). If girls are helped to define their rights, they can develop agency, which will affirm their value and dignity in society.

The protection of girls' rights includes the attainment of economic welfare and protection and the right to live the life of a civilized human being according to the predominating standards in society (Patel, 2015:83). Human progress is vital for realisation of human rights and human rights are crucial for the full development of individuals (Green, 2012:23).

2.6.2. Integrating social and economic development

The integration of social and economic development is crucial in addressing girl marriages. Midgely (2014:93) points out that girls are over-represented in the

proportion of children who do not go to school owing to poverty and cultural norms. The integration of social and economic development can be attained via strategies to realise human capital investment in education, social capital and assets (Patel, 2015:89). Human capital facilitates people's ability to participate in a dynamic economy and experience improvements in standards of living (Midgely, 2014:88).

Social workers should engage with girls, families and their communities by facilitating access to resources for human development. This includes educating parents and communities about the importance of investing in education for girls. The connection between achievement of formal educational qualifications and consequent occupation and career success is extensively valued as a result of investment in formal education (Midgely, 2014:92).

Girls should be given an opportunity to complete their schooling to enhance their human capital, which will ultimately lead to employment prospects for financial stability. Secured employment or income will decrease the chances of girl marriage because of poverty. Educating girls can break the cycle of illiteracy and poverty in their families, as they will also be in a position to empower their own children to follow in their footsteps, and thus promote sustainable development.

The integration of asset-based strategies involves building financial competencies such as financial literacy and increasing access to financial facilities such as bank accounts, savings and access to borrowing (Patel, 2015:89). Access to these kinds of services can assist families to survive financial shocks that affect their income-earning capacity (Patel, 2015:90). Social workers can facilitate access to such services for families to prevent girl marriage due to poverty (see section 2.3.2). Families will be presented with alternative financial solutions instead of depending on the 'lobola' money to be paid once the girl is given in marriage. Helping the families will automatically lead to girls being more committed to complete their education and thus delay early marriage.

Furthermore, social workers can create an enabling environment for communities to strengthen their social capital. According to Patel (2015:90), social capital refers to social networks and bonds that connect people collectively. It reinforces trust and co-operative social interaction for the benefit of the community to advance social integration (Patel, 2015:90). Strong social bonds in communities will provide an

environment with a high level of economic development in which people can prosper (Midgely, 2014:107; Patel, 2015:90). Social networks also afford people a chance of obtaining access to resources and increasing the livelihood activities of the poor (Patel, 2015:90). Social workers can facilitate the process of mobilising communities to form social capital for the benefit of their families and to focus on positive development and protection of girls.

2.6.3. Bridging the micro- and macro-divide

In terms of the Framework for Social Welfare Services, social workers' interventions range from micro- and mezzo- to macro-levels (DSD, 2013:15). On a micro-level, social workers work with girls and their families (DSD, 2013:15; Patel, 2015:140) to assist them in dealing with challenges (Healy, 2011:55), including those associated with girl marriage. Early marriage is a life transition for girls in a way that results in lack of coping skills, which gives rise to depression and isolation (Healy, 2011:55). Depression could be caused by factors such as the pressures of being a wife and mother, which the girls are not mature enough to handle (see section 2.4.3).

In some instances a girl faces divorce because the marriage has failed and is then unable to return to her parents owing to societal stereotypes and preservation of family honour. Counselling by social workers affords the girls a chance to explore ways of enhancing their wellbeing (Healy, 2011:57). Social workers can play the role of mediator (Patel, 2015:144) in terms of conflicts between the girl and her family in cases where she wants to return home, but the family prevents her from doing so. This can be done through family group conferencing (Patel, 2015:144).

Social workers can play a role in curbing girl marriages on the mezzo level through engaging with groups of girls who experienced early marriage to enable them to support one another (DSD, 2013:15). Social workers can play a role in developing the capacity of groups to foster change (Healy, 2011:111). Group work will strengthen cohesion among girls who are in the same situation, which will reinforce their capacity to know and develop their self-worth and human rights. As FAMSA social workers address life skills issues with groups of learners in schools (see Chapter 1, section 1.1), their interventions can have a great impact if they incorporate girl marriage topics. Social workers can also embark on awareness campaigns in the community, including groups of parents and teachers, on the importance of protecting girls from marriage.

In this case social workers will play the role of educators, as it involves capacity building of people to improve their social functioning (Patel, 2016:143).

The response to girl marriage requires prevention on a broader structural platform (Girls Not Brides, 2016a:3). Macro-practice is a broader structural level, which encourages community involvement and collaborative support in building more responsive organisations (Reisch, 2016:260). In using a community work strategy, social workers can intervene to bring about social change through community development, social planning, awareness campaigns and community education (DSD, 2013:21). Involvement with organisations, societies and groups is aimed at creating purposive change (Reisch, 2016:260).

Reisch (2016:261) indicates that, “on a macro level, social workers represent dedication to social justice and social change by fostering structural solutions to systemic disparities and diverse forms of oppression that go beyond individual adaptation and resilience”. Social workers convert personal issues into public matters through strategic interventions to develop policies and programmes that address such issues on a macro-level (Reisch, 2016:259). The impact of girl marriage affects not only the girls, but the family as a whole, including the communities in which they reside. Girls are left behind in terms of development opportunities such as education and employment, which results in non-progressive generations.

Bridging the micro- and macro-divide gives social workers a platform for empowerment of individuals, families, groups and societies by intervening at different stages of services delivery (DSD, 2013:15). Girls should not be excluded from realising their developmental opportunities because of societal norms and stereotypes. Girls who are experiencing injustices thus require intervention from social workers to influence policy on a macro-level in order to reduce exposure to risks that affect their human development (DSD, 2013:15; Lombard & Twikirize, 2014:322).

Social workers’ involvement from a micro/individual to a macro/advocacy level (Haynes, 2012:273) will close the gap of inequalities resulting in lack of resources to curb girl marriage through the process of development. Through advocacy girls will be empowered to gain power and control over their own lives (Patel, 2015:346). In addition, research is essential in curbing girl marriage because it can assist in finding

new strategies for improvement of services that meet the needs of individuals (DSD, 2013:40).

2.6.4. Participation

Participation is concerned with effecting structural change in society through engagement, open social dialogue and holding duty bearers accountable (Patel, 2015:91). In tackling the power structures causing girl marriages, social workers should encourage community participation to ensure that the benefits of economic and social development are equably distributed (Green, 2012:158). Through the active involvement of girls, parents, community leaders, pastors and cultural councils in community dialogues, solutions can be sought collectively to address the constraints on girl development.

Participation provides the platform to have the voices of stakeholders, in particular those of girls themselves, heard in curbing and preventing girl marriages. Direct consultation with girls will give them the opportunity to challenge power structures and influence decisions that affect them directly (Patel, 2015:91). Furthermore, social workers can mobilise relevant stakeholders such as the Department of Social Development, NGOs, the private sector and civil society to engage as partners in curbing and preventing girl marriage.

2.6.5. Partnerships

The meeting of human needs is a communal duty (Patel, 2015:93). In curbing girl marriages, partnerships need to be constructed based on common purpose and reciprocal respect (DSD, 2013:8). Partnerships could strengthen delivery of developmental welfare services through expanding budgets and concerted efforts among partner activities to deliver services to girls more efficiently and effectively (Patel, 2015: 330).

The services addressing girl marriage should be based on combined responsibility and mutual alliances between the public and private sectors and civil society, training institutions and research institutions (DSD, 2013:8). In this regard social workers should collaborate on strategies to share responsibilities and resources for positive responsiveness (McCray, 2013:127) towards girl marriages.

Social workers can initiate incorporation of services that address girl marriage directly by involving the Department of Social Development to provide strategic governance

and coordinate the implementation of social welfare services across the welfare sector (DSD, 2013:16). The integration of services with the private sector and civil society can include local traditional councils, faith based organisations, community based organisations, girls, boys, families and communities (Girls Not Brides, 2016a:3).

2.7. SUMMARY

The prevalence of girl marriages is evident in different parts of the world. South Africa is affected mostly in three provinces, namely KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and the Eastern Cape (Byrne, 2017). The structural social work approach was argued as a relevant theoretical framework for the study because it explains the causes and consequences of girl marriage and can guide social workers to challenge circumstances that lead to vulnerability, discrimination and violation of the human rights of girls. Among the fundamental causes of girl marriages identified were poverty, culture and religion, lack of parental and societal protection, conflicts and social instability.

The practices of 'Ukuthwala', 'Wrestling', 'Telefa' and 'Trokosi' were discussed as the main causes of girl marriage in countries such as South Africa, Uganda, Ethiopia and Ghana. In these practices the decisions of parents are influenced by economic uncertainties and societal norms through which girls are classified as economic burdens to their families. Furthermore, girl marriage is regarded as a prevention measure for premarital sex to protect the family's honour. Girl marriage emphasises gender inequality and discrimination due to stereotypes and norms of girls and women as wives and mothers who should look after their homes and children.

Girl marriage results in school dropout, ongoing poverty, negative health consequences, domestic violence and divorce. These causes and consequences are intertwined and require intervention from all sectors. Social workers can utilise international and regional legislative and policy frameworks to strengthen interventions to curb and prevent girl marriages. Social workers' role in curbing girl marriages is entrenched in the developmental approach, which is embedded in a human rights-based approach, integration of social and economic development, bridging micro- and macro-interventions, participation of all role players and partnerships between government, the private sector, NGOs and civil society.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, EMPIRICAL STUDY AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The focal point of this chapter is the empirical study that was embarked on to explore the role of FAMSA social workers in contributing to curbing girl marriages in the provinces of the Eastern Cape and Gauteng. The study was guided by the following research question: What is the role of social workers at FAMSA in curbing girl marriages?

The following sub-questions informed the research question:

- What strategies, services, interventions and programmes do social workers engage in that contribute to bringing an end to girl marriages?
- How do social workers challenge structural causes and influence policies in preventing girl marriages?
- To what extent do social workers educate young girls, their parents and society about the consequences of early marriage?
- How do social workers promote human rights education for young girls at risk of early marriage?

This chapter will first present the research methodology that guided the study and the ethical considerations and limitations of the study, followed by the empirical research outcomes and interpretation of the study.

3.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The discussion on the research methodology involves the research approach, the type of research, the research design and methods.

3.2.1. Research approach

The qualitative research approach was used for this study. The views of social workers were explored on how they engage professionally with girls, parents and society and the meaning that they attach to girl marriages as a social and human problem (Creswell, 2014:4). The purpose of the research was exploratory and descriptive. Babbie (2013:90) states that exploratory studies are relevant for more persistent phenomena, such as early marriages. The main objective was to explore social workers' views on how girl marriages can be curbed. The descriptive purpose is

focused more strongly on deep analysis of phenomena and their apparently inscrutable meanings (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321). In this study, research participants were engaged in deep thought and analysis of their interventions, strategies and programmes within FAMSA to describe their role in contributing to curbing early marriages.

3.2.2. Type of research

Applied research was suitable for this study, as Neuman (2011:27) states that it is designed to address a particular phenomenon, such as girl marriage. Hagan (2000:13) infers that it is concerned with tackling immediate policy problems which, in the case of this study, relates to policy that curbs and prevents child marriage. Most applied research findings have implications for knowledge development (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95). Girl marriage is a global concern, which escalates gender inequality with embedded repercussions. The study intended to formulate findings that may help in developing strategies to challenge the structural causes of girl marriages from micro-to macro-level and influence policy in this regard on a local level, which is at FAMSA Eastern Cape and Gauteng.

3.2.3. Research design and methods

This section elaborates on the research design and methodology, which include the research population, sample, sampling method, data collection and data analysis.

3.2.3.1. Research design

Silverman (2013:83) stipulates that the role of a research design is to keep the researcher focused. The research design used in this study was a case study, because it provided a holistic and in-depth exploration of the case under study (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321; Kumar, 2011:126). A case study design aims to understand the case in its natural context, thus allowing a researcher to focus on the phenomena holistically (Punch: 2014:120). The participants were chosen in the context where girl marriage is prevalent, namely in the Eastern Cape and Gauteng (Statistics SA, 2016).

This yielded in-depth data as social workers stated their different perspectives about circumstances that cause girl marriages and how challenging it is to curb the practice owing to its complexity and embeddedness. The research was using the descriptive case study design in particular to depict, analyse and understand the phenomena of girl marriage (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321). The advantage of a descriptive case

study design was the consistency about the phenomena of girl marriages (Silverman, 2013:83; Yin, 2014:8) to explore the role that FAMSA social workers play in curbing girl marriages.

3.2.3.2. Research methods

The research methods include the study population and sampling, the data collection, data analysis and the pilot study.

3.2.3.2.1. Study population and sampling

Because of the hidden nature of girl marriages, the researcher experienced many challenges in getting social work service providers to participate in the study. After an extensive search, including both government and the NGO sector, FAMSA agreed to participate in the study. A population size of 26 social workers within the FAMSA Border, Stutterheim and Pretoria areas was identified. At the time of the study, the number of social workers at FAMSA Border was 13, at FAMSA Stutterheim it was five, and at FAMSA Pretoria eight. The type of sampling technique used was non-probability sampling, which Babbie (2013:128) defines as a procedure in which groups in the population will not have the same chance of being included in the study sample.

A stratification sampling method was specifically used to draw the sample in the Eastern Cape within the three FAMSA offices in the region. Strydom (2011:230) states that a technique of stratified sampling is primarily used to make sure that the different sections of a population are adequately represented in the sample. Kumar (2011:186) conjures that it is important for the characteristics that become the basis for stratification to be related to the main variable that a researcher is exploring.

The total sample was three social workers from FAMSA Stutterheim and six social workers from FAMSA Border. The sample from FAMSA Border represented East London and Mthatha, hence included a higher number of participants. In addition, a sample of four social workers was obtained from FAMSA Pretoria. Therefore, in total 13 participants were selected for interviewing until saturation of data (Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlam, Burroughs & Jinks, 2017:4). At the time of the interviews, only 12 participants could be reached, as one participant had other commitments. The researcher informed participants three weeks prior to the study about the procedures for interviewing.

The purposive sampling method was applied in the study, as the units of analysis were selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment about which ones would be most relevant for the research (Babbie, 2013:128). Strydom and Delport (2011:392) reckon that in purposive sampling, the researcher must first think judgmentally about the boundaries of a population and then choose the sample case accordingly, which in the case of this study was FAMSA Border, Stutterheim and Pretoria. Purposive sampling is based on the researcher's judgement as to who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study (Kumar, 2011:207), and who will provide the richest data (Fouché, 2015:129). Participants employed as social workers at the respective FAMSA offices who were willing to participate in the study had to meet the following criteria:

- At least two years' experience in social work,
- Work experience in poor communities,
- Working in an area where early marriage is prevalent, and
- Understanding of the practice of early marriage, such as culture, religion and protection.

In obtaining the sample, the researcher sent email letters of request to various FAMSA offices (FAMSA Pretoria, FAMSA Border and Stutterheim). Permission for the research was granted by the directors of all the offices (see Appendix A, B, C). The directors of the three offices undertook to send a list of social workers to the researcher. According to the directors, the total population of 26 social workers was willing to participate in the study. Their availability allowed the researcher to identify those who met the criteria through a list of names sent by the directors. The researcher contacted the social workers on the list until she obtained the required sample per selected office and arranged dates and appropriate venues for the interviews. The interviews were conducted in the participant's offices at FAMSA Pretoria, Stutterheim, East London and Mthatha respectively on 19, 20, 26, 27, and 28 June 2018.

3.2.3.2.2. Data collection methods

Data was collected by means of face-to-face interviews (Fouché, 2015:112). The interview is viewed as a social relationship designed to exchange information between the participant and the researcher (Greeff, 2011:342). A semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix E) was used to conduct the interviews, which further

facilitated personal contact between the researcher and the participants (Hagan, 2000:175). The type of questions asked were open-ended, which allowed for follow-up questions.

Conducting semi-structured interviews gave the researcher an opportunity to allow participants to raise concerns that the researcher had not predicted (Braun & Clarke, 2013:78). The participants were able to ask for clarification if the question was not understood. The advantages of the semi-structured interviews were the flexibility they gave the researcher in obtaining in-depth and rich information, and the maximum participation of participants (Greeff, 2011:352). In this study, the researcher asked the main questions from the interview schedule to facilitate the participant's maximum participation in responding to the questions.

The researcher experienced the disadvantages of longer interviews with some participants, as supported by McLeod (2014:13), who stated that the drawbacks of semi-structured interviews were that they tended to be time-consuming both in terms of data collection and data analysis. The researcher planned the time for the interviews, and avoided keeping participants longer than the agreed time. However, some participants wanted to give more comprehensive information and the researcher allowed them to speak as much as they wanted in relation to the study.

In addition, interviews can be costly (Hagan, 2000:176), as the researcher has experienced. Since the interviews were conducted at the participant's workplaces, the researcher incurred travelling costs to the participant's respective offices, being Pretoria, Stutterheim, East London and Mthatha.

3.2.4. Data analysis

Themes and sub-themes were generated from the data (Creswell, 2014:261). Data analysis assisted the researcher to give meaning to the information provided by participants, which led to conclusions and recommendations (Fouché, 2015:130). The following strategies outlined by Schurink, Fouché and De Vos (2011:403-418) were used in the study:

- **Data collection and planning for recording data**

During data collection, the researcher took notes and used an audio recorder to ensure that some points were not missed (Schurink et al., 2011:404). After collection of data

the interviews were transcribed in the form of verbatim texts (Thyer, 2010:407). The transcribed interviews were labelled and filed in a safe place that was only known to the researcher (Schurink et al., 2011:408). The data was analysed throughout the process of data collection to facilitate the development of themes (Creswell, 2014:247).

- **Managing and preparing data for analysis**

The researcher made prior preparations to manage data analysis from the onset. Bak (2004:27) notes that clarifying the plan for data analysis is significant and advises researchers to avoid doing data collection first, and then data analysis thereafter. Consequently, Bazeley (2013:123) asserts that the researcher should begin with minor analysis by noting down one episode, one case, one situation, and basically jot down viewpoints as they are mentioned. As the researcher commenced with the interviews, possible themes were jotted down on the margins of the notepad.

The preliminary analyses enhanced the richness of data (Schurink et al., 2011:405) and kept the researcher on track. The data obtained was managed to become useful (Bazeley, 2013:63). This aided the researcher to link data with literature and answer the main question of the study. The researcher further kept a hard copy diary and a soft copy (electronic) diary to manage data obtained during the research process.

- **Reading and writing memoranda**

Writing memoranda was crucial in identifying key concepts to be coded, as it helped in the initial phase of exploring data (Schurink et al., 2011:409). The researcher read the notes and transcripts to categorise significant data for the study.

- **Generating categories and coding data**

The researcher coded data to develop meaningful themes. Codes with similar meanings were marked with the same colour and grouped together (Creswell, 2014:247). This method stimulated thoughts on data analysis (Bazeley, 2013:125), as data was interpreted and elaborated (Punch, 2014:175).

- **Developing coherent understanding**

The researcher critically analysed the data to make it useful while also ensuring that it reflected the participants' own understanding (Bazeley, 2013:371). Schurink et al.

(2011:416) state that the noticeable emerging patterns of data should be challenged by searching for more reasonable explanations and linkages among them. The researcher interpreted data based on the opinions of the social workers participating in the study.

- **Presenting data**

The researcher transcribed the direct words of participants and connected themes and sub-themes accordingly (Creswell, 2014:249). The data was presented in the form of texts and tables (Diepstra & Natalie, 2010:408; Creswell, 2014:249).

3.2.5. Quality of data

The trustworthiness and credibility of the findings was ensured through peer debriefing, confirmability and reflexivity (Schurink et al., 2011:419; Creswell, 2014:201-202; Probst, 2015:46).

- **Peer debriefing**

The researcher used peer debriefing to heighten the truthfulness of the report and to enhance the ability to understand own biases (Creswell, 2014:202). Peer debriefing helped to examine the researcher's conclusions with colleagues to clarify interpretation and to check for variances and prejudice (Bezeley, 2013:409). The researcher got feedback on the findings from the supervisor to add to the integrity of the data and to address own preconceptions (Creswell, 2014:202).

- **Confirmability**

The other measure of trustworthiness used in the study was confirmability, which helped the researcher to promote objectivity (Schurink et al., 2011:421). The researcher used a notepad to record impressions and feelings about what had been experienced during the research process to maintain objectivity on girl marriages. This helped the researcher to remain neutral when interpreting transcribed data from the findings (Williams & Morrow, 2009:579).

- **Reflexivity**

Lastly, reflexivity in qualitative research examines the exactness of the study and the integrity of the findings by accounting for research ethics, theories, skills and preconceptions (Berger, 2015:221). The researcher adhered to the ethics of the study

by allowing the participants to consent to participate. This helped the researcher to maintain self-awareness during the course of the research process (Probst, 2015:46) to avoid biases.

3.2.6. Pilot study

The pilot study gave the researcher a chance to comprehend some of the useful aspects of effecting entry, making contact and directing the interview, as well as becoming observant to her own level of interviewing abilities (Greeff, 2011:350). The first two interviews were used as pilot studies at FAMSA Pretoria office, which enabled establishment of relationships with participants (Strydom & Delport, 2011:395) by becoming familiar with the atmosphere within FAMSA and getting to know the logistical arrangements of the area in which the sample was found. This assisted the researcher in planning the travel time to the location of participants and determined that the minimum time required to complete an interview was 30 minutes.

Greeff (2011:349) confirms that a pilot study tests the interviewing design with a lower number of participants. The researcher identified that most of the questions (two to nine) from the interview schedule required probing when participants provided vague answers, which was in alignment with a semi-structured interview schedule. Probing helped the researcher to get clarification and additional details to comprehend the information provided by participants (Galetta, 2013:79). Question five of the interview schedule, “In which areas within your work jurisdiction is girl marriage most prevalent?”, was dropped because it was too broad for the study. The testing of the research instrument assisted the researcher to test the feasibility of the study (Strydom & Delport, 2011:394).

3.2.7. Ethical considerations

The researcher kept ethical considerations in mind throughout the research process. Ethics are the study of what is right and focuses on complex issues and contexts (Punch, 2014:36). The following ethical aspects were taken into consideration by the researcher:

- **Voluntary participation and informed consent**

Voluntary participation is a crucial principle in research (Rubin & Babbie, 2010:257). Participants willingly participated in the study and they were informed of all the objectives of the study before they consented to participate (Rubin & Babbie,

2010:257). They were given a chance to understand the possible emotional, psychological or physical risks associated with the research project conducted (Babbie, 2013:35). Farrimond (2013:109) notes that voluntary participation and informed consent involve allowing participants to make independent choices, with sufficient and pertinent information, without pressure to participate.

The participants were given letters of informed consent to read and sign before commencement of the data collection (see Appendix D). The researcher ensured that the participants did not feel under pressure to participate by clarifying concerns and questions related to their participation. Furthermore, the participants were informed about the use of the voice recorder, for which they gave consent, and that data would be stored for 15 years in the Department of Social Work and Criminology, University of Pretoria.

- **Deception**

Their participation in the study was clearly stated in the letter of informed consent to avoid deception. Farrimond (2013:121) notes that deception occurs when participants are not informed about the purpose of the study, and Strydom (2011:119) emphasises that it occurs when the researcher withholds information or offers incorrect information to guarantee the participation of subjects.

- **Confidentiality and privacy**

The researcher undertook to keep participants' information confidential and private. Punch (2014:47) states that privacy is an individual's right to control the revelation of what he/she regards as personal information about him or her. The participants expressed their opinions freely and did not show hesitance to reveal any information pertaining to girl marriages. The participants were assured that the recordings and the transcripts would be stored in a safe place to safeguard confidentiality.

Participants were interviewed in their offices to ensure privacy. The researcher used fictitious names on the collected data; the principal file that links names and pseudonyms has been kept in a place separate from data (Bazeley, 2013:67; Punch, 2014:48) in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher had access.

- **Action and competence of the researcher**

A researcher should be adequately skilled to undertake the research study (Strydom, 2011:123). Before commencement of the study, the researcher read broadly about the topic, and this enhanced competence to undertake the study on girl marriage. The researcher passed a research methodology module and the study was guided by a study supervisor to monitor the quality of her work.

- **Avoidance of harm**

The ultimate ethical rule of social research is that the participant's involvement in the research should not have harmful consequences (Strydom, 2011:115; Vanclay, Baines & Taylor, 2013:248). On the contrary, participants should benefit from the research study (Babbie, 2013:34). Therefore, researchers should cautiously inform participants about the possible impact of the study in advance (Strydom, 2011:115). Although the study was not in relation to a personal matter for the participants, the researcher was aware that the social workers might have had particular emotions concerning their experiences and challenges in working with girls and the impact of getting married at a young age.

The researcher briefed the participants about the possible impact of the research during the signing of the informed consent forms to give them a chance to withdraw from the study if they so wished. The participants all clarified that they did not view the study as something that would harm them, but instead, they felt that it would benefit FAMSA. Furthermore, some felt that their participation would strengthen their motivation to continue with their own postgraduate studies. After the interviews, all participants reported that no harm had been done, either physically or emotionally.

- **Debriefing**

Debriefing is done after data completion (Farrimond, 2013:117; Fouché & Delport, 2011:122). Debriefing helped the researcher to know that there were no misunderstandings that might have arisen in the minds of the participants after completion of the interviews (Strydom, 2011:122). The participants indicated that they did not need further discussions or guidance on dealing with child marriage and hence there was no need to refer them for any follow-up discussion on the topic.

- **Publication of the findings**

The release of findings should happen in such a manner that others in the field of research can utilise them (Strydom, 2011:126). The study was documented in the form of this research report, which was submitted to the University of Pretoria. The research findings will be prepared for publication in a scientific journal and possibly in a conference paper. Furthermore, when the examination process has been completed, the findings will be made accessible to FAMSA East London, Mthatha, Stutterheim and Pretoria in the form of an executive summary.

3.2.8. Limitations of the study

Fouché and Delport (2011:111) state that possible limitations are often numerous, even in projects that were carefully planned. The challenges started when the researcher could not obtain participants for the study. The researcher initially forwarded a request to the Department of Social Development in KZN and was informed about various procedures to be followed to gain access to a study population in this province.

The researcher was required to send a draft proposal to the human resources section of the Department of Social Development in KZN and await an invitation to an interview, which delayed the process of data collection. Eventually an invitation came to attend a meeting the following day. It was impossible for the researcher to attend a meeting at such short notice. She then opted to search for participants through an NGO, namely FAMSA. However, because of the clandestine nature of the study topic, the researcher encountered challenges in obtaining participants from one region that could yield a sufficient sample for the study.

Hence social workers from two provinces (Gauteng and Eastern Cape) were considered as participants in the study. Thirteen participants were sampled; however, one of the participants withdrew owing to work commitments and the researcher could not obtain a replacement for the absent participant at short notice. The researcher had incurred costs in travelling long distances to interview the participants in their respective offices on specific dates, therefore it could be a challenge to reschedule a session for another date. Therefore only 12 participants were interviewed for the study.

However, because it was an overall challenge to access participants who fitted the purposive criteria for the sample, the researcher had to compromise on the criterion

to find participants who had two years of working experience, as indicated in the sample criteria. Although the unintended change in the sample could have influenced the richness of the data, saturated data was reached and the researcher could meet the objectives of the study (see Chapter four, section 4.2).

During the interviews, the researcher experienced that participants would at times express themselves in their first language, either in Xhosa or Setswana, to give deeper meaning to what they wanted to present. The researcher understood participants who expressed themselves in Setswana. However, the Xhosa language was a communication barrier for the researcher and participants were asked to clarify their statements in English. Some of the meaning of their responses may have been lost in the translation process.

3.3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section outlines the findings of the empirical study. The biographic data of social workers will firstly be presented in table format, followed by a brief discussion. The themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data will then be presented and discussed.

3.3.1. Biographical profile

The biographical data of the 12 participants, as depicted in Table 3.1 below, contains their gender, race, number of years employed as social workers, number of years working with cases of girl marriages and the FAMSA regions in which they are employed.

Table 3.1: Biographical information of participants

Participant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Race	African	African	African	African	African	African	African	African	Coloured	African	African	African
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Number of years employed as a social worker	4	3	2 and half years	10	3	2	23	2	3	3	2 years few months	4
Number of years working with girl marriages	4	3	0 ¹	10	2	Months ²	17	2	7 ³	3	2	4
FAMSA region	Gauteng	Gauteng	Gauteng	Gauteng	Eastern Cape	Eastern Cape	Eastern Cape	Eastern Cape	Eastern Cape	Eastern Cape	Eastern Cape	Eastern Cape
Office	Pretoria	Pretoria	Pretoria	Pretoria	Stutterheim	Stutterheim	East London	East London	East London	Mthatha	Mthatha	Mthatha

¹ The participant did not have any years of experience working with girl marriages, but had an understanding of the phenomenon and how it affects girls.

² The participant was uncertain about the number of months he had been working with girl marriages, but had an understanding of the phenomenon and how it affects girls.

³ The participant initially worked as social auxiliary worker and was exposed to girl marriages since then.

The gender distribution of more female participants is in accordance with the social work profession's profile. All the participants were Africans, with the exception of one person of colour. The employment experience of participants as social workers ranged between two years and 23 years, with an average of five years. On the other hand, the experience of participants working with girl marriages ranged between zero and 17 years, with an average of 4.6 years. Four participants were from Gauteng, representing Pretoria office, while eight participants were from three different offices (East London, Mthatha and Stutterheim) in the Eastern Cape Province.

3.3.2. Key themes

Seven themes emerged from the data. The themes and sub-themes are summarised in Table 3.2 below. Findings on the respective themes and sub-themes will be discussed, and supported by direct quotations communicating the views of participants. Literature will be integrated with the research findings where applicable.

Table 3.2: Key themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Conceptualisation of girl marriage	
2. Reasons for marrying at an early age	2.1. Self-pressure 2.2. Autocratic fathers making decisions for and acting on behalf of girls 2.3. Peer pressure 2.4. Poverty 2.5. Religion 2.6. Culture and societal stereotypes
3. The aftermaths of girl marriage	3.1. School dropout 3.2. Poverty cycle 3.3. Girls 'anger because of husband's bullying behaviour 3.4. Early motherhood 3.5. Poor health 3.6. Substance abuse
4. Social work intervention strategies to curb girl marriage	4.1. Working with girls and families 4.2. Working with schools 4.3. Working with communities
5. Roles of social workers in curbing girl marriages	5.1. Counsellor 5.2. Educator 5.3. Advocate 5.4. Mediator 5.5. Collaborator 5.6. Broker
6. Barriers experienced by social workers in curbing girl marriages	6.1. Working in stereotyped locations 6.2. Insufficient resources
7. Recommendations to curb girl marriages	7.1. Coordination of services among key stakeholders 7.2. Development of policy to curb and prevent girl marriages

Theme 1: Conceptualisation of girl marriage

Participants defined a girl as a child under the age of 18, which is in alignment with the Children's Act 38 of 2005. All participants were able to conceptualise girl marriage in a context of a structural social work framework. They showed understanding of what girl marriage is all about and expressed their views on what it is pertaining to the girls' circumstances. Most of the participants indicated that girl marriage is a marriage without consent from the girl. Girl marriage was also conceptualised as a marriage arranged by families, which is forced on the girl child, a marriage without negotiations with the girl or her family, and a marriage to an older man who is able to support the girl and her family. The participants' views can be summarised in the following quotations:

P5: "It's, I can say to me personally it's when a girl get into marriage while she is still young ... like at the age around 12, 15, 16, 17 as long as the child ... is below the age of 18. We can say that one is the same marriage we are speaking about."

P7: "I think to my understanding girl marriage is a forced marriage without negotiations."

P9: "Okay my understanding is a when a girl is getting married but she is not an adult yet ..., and in some instances get married before, without even consented to and some other times it can even be arranged ... by her family then she just needs to get married."

P11: "Well my understanding is ... when the girls are taken by force by the older men to get married ..."

The participants' responses reflect the definition by UNICEF (2015:12) that, "child marriage includes any legal or customary union involving a girl below the age of eighteen, or any marriage without the free and full consent of both intended spouses". Maphanga (2011:33) refers to the practice of girl marriage as a union of a young girl to an older man. The study's finding on the force that accompanies girl marriage with older men correlates with the findings of Maphanga's (2011:33) study, referring to "the traumatic experience of girls about the violence-abduction ('Ukuthwala') leading to marriage."

Theme 2: Reasons for marrying at an early age

Findings indicated different reasons for girls to engage in early marriage, including self-pressure, autocratic fathers making decisions for and acting on behalf of girls and peer pressure. Furthermore, the reasons included poverty or religion, as well as culture and societal stereotypes. These findings will be discussed next as sub-themes.

Sub-theme 2.1: Self-pressure

A few participants indicated that girls as individuals use their own discretion to get married at an early age. The girls' attitudes and beliefs put them in a situation where they are exposed to the notion that growing up in a family or community where there is a history of intergenerational early marriages automatically puts them in a position where they expect to be married once they reach puberty. They thus exert pressure on themselves to marry early, even though there is less involvement from their parents. Some of this self-pressure to get married early is their belief that they should do it because their parents also married early, thus continuing the practice of early marriage within the family. Therefore, they easily agree to get married once a potential spouse has been found by themselves as individuals, despite their families' opinions about the marriage. Three participants' views summarise the key components of the finding on self-pressure:

P8: "Okay, I think basically it's about an individual [girl], when I talk about an individual ... let me elaborate it this way, it could be one's attitude, a nè [you know]! It could be one's beliefs, ah, it could be one's history or witness of the things [marriages] that are happening in the families in the community that is when it comes to an individual ..."

P9: "... sometimes the child might feel you know what, I am doing this for my family so I need to do this thing you know. Those ah umm values and beliefs that people feel know this is what our family is standing for."

P11: "... Our parents most of them got married through this practice."

Some participants had a different opinion: that the self-pressure is not necessarily coming from parents' expectations. On the contrary, parents could be against such a marriage, as they would think it is not good for the girl to marry so young or that the spouse is not suitable for the girl in view of the age difference. It is thus rather a case

of girl children who overpower their parents by controlling them in terms of decisions to marry. Furthermore, they do not always seek permission from the parent, which could be due to poor parental guidance and/or supervision. The following statement reflects parents' concerns on the one hand, but also their lack of power on the other hand:

P7: "... So at this point in time, not parents are forcing this girl. This girl is getting to this relationship but the parents can see the dangers you know, of this marriage because they could see the age difference. They could see that this person does not carry good values according to them and then this girl is still a child you know ... based on the poor parenting that is also happening in our community you know, the children deciding at an early age of 14 that she could have a blesser, she could have this and that [and that], and then she could easily go to that marriage she doesn't care [about] the repercussions and the results. Sometimes the approach is little bit different, now the kids are controlling the parents you know and they don't care you know also on the other side, the parents not having the powers to [-to-to] guide these children ... You know hence I am saying that there is this lack of [e e] good parenting, so ya."

In summary, the girls' own beliefs and attitudes put pressure on them to marry at an early age, which includes thinking that they are obliged to marry. Research confirming girls' self-pressure is limited to a study by Dzimiri, Chikunda, and Ingwani (2017:75) focusing on the 'causes of girl marriage in Zimbabwe', confirming that lack of parental supervision leads to girl marriages.

Sub-theme 2.2. Autocratic fathers making decisions for and acting on behalf of girls

The elements of this sub-theme are intertwined. This sub-theme highlights the participants' views about parents, especially fathers, of girls being autocratic in decisions, forcing the girls to marry the spouses of their (father's) choice. Autocratic fathers take control in the household and hence the father's view automatically becomes the parents' view. Autocratic fathers thus overrule their wives and girls in decision-making. The decision to wed girls is often based on the intention to protect the girls' virginity and their future. A few participants indicated that the parents identify when a girl is ready for marriage through her firm breasts, which develop when she enters puberty. The pressure from autocratic fathers is reflected in the following voices:

P3: "It's either their [girls'] parents or the guy who is interested in marrying the girl."

P7: "... because what is in their [parents] head is that this child is 16 years old now breast yakhe [her] is fit she is still a virgin now she needs go there [get married] ... my dad is forcing me to get married to a man .The father is stubborn he has taken [the] decision ... and he feels that at this point in time this child needs to go for marriage you know, so you know he was so autocratic telling that this is what I am going to do."

P10: "... We as women in our culture we don't have a say if the man agrees ... to take the child ... your girl child and [eh-eh] exchange for a cow because I will call it an exchange, exchange for the cows or the money, they [father] think it's enough ..."

P12: "... The parents do not want to be told about their children ... They think that they can take decisions or force them to do anything that they want ... their children to do ..."

Another factor the participants brought to light was the importance of carrying on the family values. According to the findings, some parents sustain these values by giving a girl in marriage while she is still young. The importance of values was summarised by the following participant:

P9: "There are still values the parents are teaching them ... family values what they should do ... that is the concern for those girls that are getting married at a very ... young age."

Sometimes because of parental friendships between the potential in-laws and the potential bride's family, arrangements for marriage are made without the girl's knowledge. One of the participant's view in this regard is as follows:

P1: " Mm ... some causes might be that maybe, eh, the parents are friends to each other, so they organise a marriage without even considering your perception as a girl of what you want, organised marriage. Mm."

Moreover, the findings revealed that some parents, especially fathers, accept goods from the potential spouse without the knowledge of other family members and at a later stage agree to allow that marriage. Most participants pointed out that the potential

spouses would usually be rich and buy material goods for the girls' families to soften their minds about the intended marriage. The potential spouse uses his money to lure the family or the girl to agree on getting married to him. This then results in the parents' or girl's agreement to allow such a marriage with a view that she will be taken care of by the husband, especially as he is usually older than the girl. In such cases, parents think that they know the best interest of their children. The views about potential spouses is depicted in the participants' statements as follows:

P1: "Maybe the husband is working fine, she [he] is buying them the beds everything that everyone can appreciate in the home ... the person who is marrying the girl is buying the girl, is doing good things for the family, is buying goods for the families ... yes."

P7: "... and then on the sides without even involving an entire family the father has accepted money from this man you know."

In summary, most participants regarded parents (fathers) and the girl's potential spouse as important forces in girl marriage. In most cases it will be the parents, especially fathers, who arrange for the marriage without the consent of the potential bride. This means that they are making decisions for their daughters on their own, without the girls' consent. This results in pressure on the girl to marry. A study by Oxfam in South Sudan revealed that women and girls often feel powerless and isolated when faced with girl marriage owing to the father's autocratic power in decision-making about a girl's marriage (Oxfam, 2019:20-23).

The finding on parents accepting goods substantiates Delprato, Akyeampong and Dunne's (2017:179) study about the intergenerational effects of early marriage in sub-Saharan Africa. These authors point out that parents allow girl marriage to safeguard the girl's future after accepting goods from the potential spouse (Delprato et al., 2017:179). Moreover, girl marriage in some parts of Africa and Asia is seen as a means of merging family relations to guarantee agreements about assets (International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) & The Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls, 2007:17). In addition, Jongizulu (2012:22) reiterated a South African perspective about parental involvement in child marriages, saying that the parents believe that family honour is increased when a girl is married while she is

still a virgin. Therefore, the amount of lobola (bride price and various kinds of gifts) will be higher than in a case when the girl is mature.

Sub-theme 2.3. Peer pressure

The participants indicated that girls are also prone to peer pressure to get married. In analysing the findings on peer pressure, it is found that this pressure can come either directly or indirectly from peers. Girls succumb to direct peer pressure when they associate with peers who are already married. These peers show them goods that their spouses bought for them, thus resulting in encouragement to marry at an early stage in the hope of attaining a better lifestyle, like their friends. The views of two participants on direct peer pressure are depicted in the following quotations:

P1: "... one of the causes in the girl's marriage, it can be the ... peer pressure from other girls."

P7: "... the child want[s] to show you know the phone mos [obviously] you know, to the school and show others [peers] that I have a phone, make her hair ..."

In terms of indirect peer pressure, the girls are watching from a distance how their peers benefit from their marriages and they end up motivating themselves that if they get that kind of opportunity, it will put them in the same position as their peers. The following participant substantiates the impact of indirect peer pressure:

P8: "... A child associates himself [herself] with the peer pressure from the marriage [girl marriage] within their community."

The findings on peer pressure concur with the outcomes of a study by Mashayamombe (2016:3) on the 'Girl's Indaba in Zimbabwe', confirming that girls' influence on one another puts them under pressure to marry at an early age in order to experiment with marital life and benefit economically from their husbands. It can thus be concluded that peer pressure contributes to girl marriages in the form of monetary gain for the girls.

Sub-theme 2.4. Poverty

Most participants concurred that because of poverty, girls are forced to marry in order to have a better life. Some participants pointed out that in some cases girls are forced to marry someone who is rich, in the hope that they will be well taken care of by the

husband. The following quotations capture the role that poverty plays in girl marriages aptly:

P4: “I can say eh it’s poverty, maybe there is nothing in the family so the girl can be forced actually to marry someone who is rich ...”

P8: “Umm poverty my dear. Poverty, I think it’s the most prevailing issue of child marriages because you can see that in the family you come from a family that’s poor and this comes a rich family and approaches your family and promises the family, because this is also their promise of good things and the stuff. So they will see themselves better than the way before, so this is what will lead the ... child to end marrying to the certain family not willingly. I don’t think it’s ... a choice, the circumstances are forcing our girls to indulge into this system.”

The findings indicating that poverty contributes to girl marriage have been confirmed by other studies and authors (cf. UNICEF, 2008:44; AU, 2015b:7; Kitson, 2016:726). Poverty is the leading cause of underage girls getting married (AU, 2015b:7; Jongizulu, 2012:10; Kitson, 2016:726).

Sub-theme 2.5. Religion

The research findings revealed that religion plays a role in early marriage. There are certain values and principles to uphold, which are influenced by religion in order to promote family dignity. A few participants indicated that girls would succumb to marriage because some churches do not allow members to date before marriage, as it is regarded as immorality, which can result in teenage pregnancy. The following citation reflects the participant’s view on religion:

P2: “Religion, yes like sometimes in a Christian religion, children are not allowed to date, so when ... they date [start dating], they advise them to get married to avoid sexual intercourse before marriage.”

The study’s findings about religious practice and its influence on girl marriages is confirmed by some views from the ‘Indaba about the girl’s voices on child marriage in Zimbabwe’, where girls cannot go against the religious beliefs, as they fear being ousted from the sect (Mashayamombe, 2016:2).

Sub-theme 2.6. Culture and societal stereotypes

The findings show that girls end up in marriage due to culture and societal stereotypes, including gender, which create expectations about girls getting married. Hence situations occurred where nothing would be done when a girl had been abducted for marriage ('Ukuthwala'), as it was believed to be a norm within the community. This therefore resulted in submissiveness to the tradition of girl marriage. For instance, research findings show that the custom of 'Ukuthwala' is still practised in Mthatha rural areas and society tolerates it. The participants expressed their views on culture and societal stereotypes as follows:

- P5: "There are lot of causes, one: there are cultural, yes ... you may call it abduction but to conceptualise the term into our language we call it 'Ukuthwalwa' yes. I believe most people in our region they still believe in that culture of Ukuthwala, yes."
- P6: "My main concern about e [the] girl marriages is, its worrying due to the fact that they get in that stereotype, so it's just like something that's revolving for them they conform to a life that has passed on."
- P8: "So because of gender women are there to be married you get me, so maybe it's a stereotype mentality aamh with blacks or our culture just to say it that way you know because, because we are meant to be married as women. Ya [yes] so you will be left sometimes with no choice but to oblige to the family values, ya I think I talked a lot."

The perception of culture and stereotypes is reflected by Mafhala (2015:14), who explains that in some traditional societies, for example Lusikisiki in the Eastern Cape Province, the significance of marriage is instilled in the girl child, who is socialised to regard it as a norm. This view is supported by the AU (2015b:10), which indicates that girls marry according to social expectations (stereotypes), as they fear that upon reaching maturity without marriage, their chances of being married will be less, resulting in no marriage at all.

Theme 3: The aftermath of girl marriage

This theme presents findings on the consequences of girl marriage. The sub-themes that emanated from the outcomes of girl marriage include school dropout, a cycle of

poverty, and girls' anger because of husbands' bullying behaviour, early motherhood, poor health and substance abuse.

Sub-theme 3.1: School dropout

All participants reflected that girl marriage results in school dropout, which has an impact on the personal development of girls and results in missed opportunities. The girl ends up being a housewife and has few prospects for the future. The findings revealed that some girls do not even obtain matric, leading to limitations in finding employment of their choice. Moreover, the participants indicated that some girls, upon fleeing from their marriages, opt for low-paying jobs like that of a domestic worker to get a basic salary for survival. Two participants' views aptly summarise the overall views of participants:

P2: "Mm, some of them they will drop out of ... they will drop out of school nè [you know] and then others when they got married, if maybe she was planning to go to further their [her] education, they [she] are not allowed because they [she] have [has] to take care of the home ... they have to be parents so they miss the opportunity like, most of them miss the opportunity to further their education, they end up being housewives."

P7: "... A girl now she is 24 she got married at 16 in the Transkei area but now she is working in the Kiblersdam as a domestic worker you know but in an old age home set up, ya [yes] she is looking after those [old-old] elderly people, you know."

The impact of girl marriage on school dropout relates to what Kyari and Ayodele (2014:583) refer to as lost opportunities of human development. The girls' school dropout limits their opportunity to learn and acquire skills that would enable them to find sustainable employment (McCleary-Sills et al., 2015:71; Svanemyr et al., 2012:2). Mashayamombe (2016:5) points out that school dropout contributes to girls experiencing an undeveloped standard of living and lack of aspirations for their future; their situation results in increased responsibilities in the household, as they are subjected to domestic tasks.

Sub-theme 3.2: Poverty cycle

The poverty cycle is a reason why girls engage in early marriage (see sub-theme 2.4). Most participants affirmed that the poverty cycle continues in the aftermath of girl marriage. The intergenerational occurrence of poverty was identified by most participants as a dynamic negative result that girls still experience during their married lives. A few participants indicated that at times girls try to exit poverty from families by getting married, only to find that a few years later, the husband passes on or leaves them and they are trapped again in the same situation of poverty that they tried to evade. In such situations they get stuck in poverty, together with their children resulting in a cycle. These findings are summarised in participants' views as follows:

P4: "... then it means we have sort of more girls who are not going to be educated, more girls who are forced into marriage, more girls not empowered. Then it's just poverty again, sort of a poverty cycle no empowerment, no education, yeah ..."

P6: "... they get children after they get married, after that those guys [spouses] leave them here and after that they are subject to the same poverty that they were trying to evade, those children get to be 'amapharaphara' [drug users committing crimes for survival]."

P9: "The poverty cycle it's just continues ..."

These findings confirm the view of the AU (2015b:24), that the long-term continuation of girl marriage is disadvantageous. It can affect the next generation negatively, as the young mothers are particularly likely to have children who will also discontinue their schooling, marry at an early age and repeat the cycle of poverty (AU, 2015b:24). In addition, Svanemyr et al. (2012:1) confirm that girl marriage is a barrier to development, as it prolongs the cycle of poverty for girls and their families.

Sub-theme 3.3: Girl's anger because of husband's bullying behaviour

The research findings show that anger is triggered in girls by their husbands' bullying behaviour. The participants outlined several factors associated with anger, which developed after the marriage of girls. The findings revealed that bullying is probable because of the age gap between the husband and wife. In most cases, the wife feels as if the husband is 'parenting' her, as his age is almost the same as that of the wife's

father. For instance, some participants stated that the girl wife tends to be bullied by the husband to the extent that she is isolated from associating with other people (especially peers), which often results in anger. These views are reflected in the following quotations of two participants:

P3: "... the husband [s] they are jealous, they don't want them to associate with other people."

P7: "... you find out that the man is bullying this poor woman, is like he was parenting this young lady, parenting his wife because when they got married she was still young ... the anger is always there in the middle of whole thing ..."

Moreover, according to the findings, the girl's submissiveness to the husband requires her to be passive towards the spouse while anger builds up psychologically. Some other participants indicated that the girl wife is taught to be submissive, resulting in lack of decision-making power in the marriage. One participant stated:

P11: "They have to be submissive to those husbands and these in-laws so they are forced to grow up in [an] environment that is not suitable for a brighter future for them."

Another factor revealed by the findings is gender-based violence experienced by the girl wife, which results in anger. A few participants pointed out that as anger builds up, the girl wife ends up having affairs outside marriage, with infidelity leading to divorce. The following responses from participants confirm the findings:

P1: "They cheat to each other ... because they are unhappy [angry], the other thing they are divorcing, high rate divorce."

P7: "... has breed okanye [or] that has resulted in the gender based violence that violence that is happening within the home between the man and a female. Because when they are forced to this marriage, they are being oppressed [bullied] by this older man you know, age also is one of the elements."

In addition, some participants indicated that this anger not only affects the girls; they also transfer it to their children. The following view from one participant summarises the findings on girls' anger stemming from their husbands' bullying behaviour:

P5: “My main concern of this marriage is, I believe that if we speaking of a girl we are speaking of a woman tomorrow who will be a mother to someone then if this girl got into marriage while she is still young, she will be, she will be abused and she will grow up with that anger and she will possess that anger into her kids. Yes, so to me personally I am very concerned about this marriage, I think and believe that people need to be aware of this.”

The findings confirm that early girl marriage, especially in the case of forced marriage, breeds angry women as they mature. Usually, girls who face early or forced marriage ‘feel miserable and angry all the time’ (Oxfam, 2019:16). The views of various authors (cf. McCleary-Sills et al., 2015:71; McFarlane et al., 2016:708) indicate factors that include absence of agency in girl wives, for example being excluded from decision-making, which then results in high risk of gender-based violence. McCleary-Sills et al. (2015:71) further support that girl marriage is openly interconnected to increased risk of sexual obligation, and physical and emotional abuse by husbands. Although other studies do not specifically corroborate the current findings on anger as a result of child marriage, it is entrenched in these factors.

Sub-theme 3.4: Early motherhood

A few participants revealed that during their community outreach at local clinics they identified that most of the girls had babies as a result of girl marriage. Some participants stated that girls did not cope with the pressures of marriage and being mothers, child-bearing and child-rearing. One of the participants said:

P8: “Ah, since we do [e] community outreaches in the clinics dear nè! I think we got quite a big number of girl child[ren] who are married at an early young age. Aah seeing from the stats from the clinics that we collect when we go to the clinics. People that are below 20 that are already having kids they might not confirm that they are already married but you could see when a child is already having a baby at that stage ...”

The research done by Sibanda (2011:13) verifies the finding that marrying as a girl results in premature pregnancy, which leads to early motherhood. Moreover, the girl wife could experience complications in pregnancy and short birth spacing (Delprato et al., 2017:174) which would contribute to poor health.

Sub-theme 3.5: Poor health

This study found that girls are at risk of poor health relating to sexually transmitted infections owing to lack of prior knowledge about their spouse's health condition. The findings indicate that girls do not get a chance to determine if their spouses are carrying any transmittable diseases, but only realise this a few months after their marriages when they are also infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or other sexually transmitted diseases. The views of three participants summarise the findings on poor health as follows:

P8: "... we are facing ah diseases, yes you know mos [obviously] when ... you are forced to marry someone and you don't even know where this person is coming from ah nè! So the chances of you getting infected with some diseases is very high you see. We are facing so much people complaining about being HIV+ two three months down in a relationship."

P9: "... and [ah ah] disease it also spread because if you are getting married to an elderly person you don't know eeh [who] that person slept with you know."

P12: "... we come across with a child [who] will be forced to get married and then she will be getting married to an old man and the old man will be infected with diseases and the child will be raped of course because she won't be having interest in any sexual relationship activity ..."

The findings about girl brides being at risk of poor health is confirmed by other studies. The girls' exposure to infectious diseases during their married lives is perpetuated by the regularity of unprotected sexual activity and inadequate knowledge (IPPF & the Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls, 2007:12). The girl brides lack the autonomy to refuse sexual intercourse or suggest contraceptive use in marriage, and are subjected to increased health risks such as sexually transmitted diseases (Sibanda, 2011:13).

Sub-theme 3.6: Substance abuse

A few participants mentioned that girl wives resort to drinking alcohol to numb their feelings, especially about sleeping with their husbands, as they would have no sexual desire to sleep with their spouses when sober. The following quotation reveals the devastating impact of girl marriage in relation to substance abuse:

P10: “Eh, if I can talk about the implications I will tell you that most of these girls are ending up using, abusing [eh eee] substance abuse because of this [marriage] and most of them, let me not say most of them, one of them ... that I was offering the counselling said to me, ... It’s rather I use alcohol too much so that I can be able to sleep with the old man otherwise if I don’t do that I don’t have his feelings because I don’t love her [him], I don’t love him. So that is the implications it destroyed the little girls emotionally, physically and psychologically, mm.”

Although there is inadequate research linking child marriage and alcohol abuse, Gibson’s (2015:336) study about ‘shame and guilt in child protection social work’ verifies that adolescents use alcohol to ‘numb’ their feelings. However, findings from the study of Kheswa and Noho (2014:2810) about ‘Ukuthwala’, the sexual cultural practice with negative effects on the personality of adolescent females in Africa, clearly confirm that adolescent females who experienced this practice resort to alcohol in order to cope with negative feelings.

Theme 4: Social work intervention strategies to curb girl marriages

The findings show that social workers use specific intervention strategies in an attempt to curb girl marriages. The social workers’ intervention strategies to curb girl marriages include working with girls, families, schools and communities.

Sub-theme 4.1. Working with girls and families

Social workers provide counselling (see sub-theme 5.1) to the girls on their marital problems through one-on-one sessions. They also engage with girls to provide them with life skills to enable them to make better choices pertaining to marriage and to know about their rights. Furthermore, social workers reach families through house-to-house campaigns, to educate parents (see sub-theme 5.2) about the rights of girls and the negative outcomes of girl marriage. The views of two participants regarding working with individuals and families are quoted below:

P7: “I think what I can say is that I think our, as FAMSA né, I think every programme we have, and then we are implementing, then we are dealing with families there is always a girl because you will find that those families have gone through forced marriage ... all the programmes that we have are trying to confront this kind of marriages broadly ... because the girls are hurt you know ... we have

got a beautiful programme called Prepare and Reach meaning that preparation for marriage you know, so I think that programme is so beautiful that it puts the preventative measures you know upfront ... this girl children at young age they can understand ukba [if] how to choose a partner, what is the meaning of marriage you know when to say yes ... I think they [girls] can be informed so that they can be self-reliable ...”

P9: “You see, as I mentioned, I have been here for seven years so we normally meet the girls when they are already old so for us then it’s when it comes with marital problems to our organisation when they experience this; because they were not willingly married to this person because of their culture, because it was ... they were told by family members that they must get married to this person now they are older and now all the troubles started so mostly counselling.”

Furthermore, one participant emphasised that a preventative measure in curbing girl marriages would be reaching out to the girls and encouraging them to seek assistance from social workers when they are confronted with early marriage.

P10: “We at times we go house to house ... educate the girls, young girls that if the parents force them to get married they must come to the social workers so that social workers can intervene between ... the child and the parents ... we also go an extra mile where we take a one-on-one sessions with the girls and empower them about their rights ...”

The participants’ views about working with girls and families are confirmed in various studies about prevention of girl marriage (cf. IPPF & the Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls, 2007:30; Lee-Rife, Malhotra, Warner & Glinski, 2012: 293). Interventions in ending girl marriage start with endeavours to assist girls to improve their decision-making capacities through acquiring life skills (Women’s Refugee Commission, 2016:6). The life skills will empower girls to take action against early or forced marriage, as they will be activists for their own well-being (Lee-Rife et al., 2012: 293; Women’s Refugee Commission, 2016:6). Families should also be included in strategic interventions to end girl marriage (Women’s Refugee Commission, 2016:7). Through awareness programmes, the duties of parents (families) are reinforced to protect vulnerable girls from the negative effects of child

marriage (IPPF & the Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls, 2007: 28).

Sub-theme 4.2. Working with schools

The empirical findings confirm that schools play an important role in engaging with social workers to report cases of girl marriage. Some participants indicated that the schools identify incidents where girls do not resume their education after certain periods, such as Easter and the festive season. The school teachers call social workers to intervene in situations where some girls have reported a possible marital arrangement by the family. The following quotations reflect the participants' views:

P7: "I will be told by the teachers that we got this two girls but coming from two families this one, the daddy, her daddy is forcing her to get married to this man and the daddy ..., not like the child is crying she doesn't want to get involved to this man you know, she doesn't want to get married that is why the child will go and talk to the teachers and tell the teachers this is what is happening in the home."

P12: "... people who are working far there by in mines at Joburg [Johannesburg] ... they come back ready having money to get married in December. They come back in December so our parents are in need of money at that time so they [they] are being forced to get married in December; and at [in] January [when] they come back they don't go to school and you know the teachers know so and so is good at school and then she/he [she] didn't come back to school in January. So it becomes a challenge to them so they end up coming to us or any department seeking help. So we [we] get referrals so that we can intervene or when we go to school as we do the life skills as FAMSA, and then we do get such challenges and we have to intervene in such cases in January and after Easters."

Furthermore, social workers conduct prevention programmes in schools. Some participants use the Education for Living programme in the schools to educate learners about life skills and the consequences of teenage pregnancy, as reflected in the following quotation:

P8: “We do Education for Living in the schools where we educate ah the children on the consequences of being pregnant at a young age, ah just to enlighten them on the outside world from school premises you know.”

The evidence from the findings indicates that support from school teachers can increase retention of girls in schools (IPPF & The Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls, 2007:29), provided that referrals are made to social workers to enable them to intervene. The schools should refer vulnerable learners to services that will improve their social functioning (Mohlakwana, 2013:17). Therefore, social workers can work with teachers to identify girls who are vulnerable to early marriage.

Sub-theme 4.3. Working with communities

The research findings indicate that social workers engage in prevention strategies to create awareness about girl marriages in communities around Pretoria and in the Eastern Cape. Most participants identified that the communities affected by girl marriages are in rural locations and semi-urban areas. However, a few participants specified that girl marriage also occurs in urban areas. The participants revealed that social workers address communities about girl marriage through awareness campaigns, community dialogues and workshops. Some participants also mentioned that they undertake walks in the areas to inform community members, including councillors, about the harmful effects of girl marriage. The views of participants are expressed as follows:

P1: “... I am talking about Pretoria as a whole.”

P5: “As I have mentioned earlier on, that as social workers we do community dialogues, we do workshops in the communities, we do ah ... awareness campaigns to address issues like these [girl marriages].”

P8: “Okay, I’m, thank you for that dear né, I think I will [I will I will] report according to the stats of us according to us here at FAMSA and what we have gone through. Umm I think its quiet high here in the Eastern Cape more especially in the deep rural areas that is Engcobo ...”

P10: “... educate the council of the communities that is the rural areas about the danger of this marriage.”

Furthermore, some participants indicated that they convey information to communities through different platforms, for example by visiting clinics and churches. The findings also revealed that social workers report on radio to share information about the risks of early marriage. The following citations encapsulate this finding:

P7: "... We have started with the community, the clinics, we have started with some of the churches ..."

P8: "... We go on radio we do some activities in radios whereby we will be talking about different programmes on teenage parenting and positive parenting, ya."

Based on the findings and various studies, the social workers' endeavours in ending girl marriage require local community involvement in changing the attitudes of members regarding this practice (Girls Not Brides, 2014:4). Girl marriage campaigns have been undertaken at the community level, working with religious leaders and the Council of Elders as an entryway to communities in Kenya (Centre for Human Rights, 2018:63). The intervention strategy of arranging dialogues with communities and radio presentations will allow viable ways to end girl marriage (IPPF & the Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls, 2007:28; Oxfam, 2019:27) and intensify the community's knowledge about the harmful consequences of early marriage (Lee-Rife et al, 2012:293).

Theme 5: Roles of social workers in curbing girl marriage

The findings show the relevant roles that social workers play in their interventions to curb girl marriage as counsellor, educator, broker, collaborator, advocate and mediator.

Sub-theme 5.1: Counsellor

Most of the participants identified the role of a counsellor. The impact of marriage on the girls results in life stressors such as failure to cope in the marital relationship. Findings indicate that girls in early marriage experience anger, hopelessness, isolation, neglect and stress. Social workers intervene through counselling to aid the girls in developing coping skills. The following quotations reflect the important role of social workers in counselling:

P9: “Sometimes it’s individual counselling or other times it is for the marriage both in the marriage because there might be issues in the marriage and [that] they are struggling with but now they need to deal with it, because some, you may find some people come to a point where they accept yes it wasn’t by the choice when they got married when they were young but now as I am in this marriage I get used to this, I accept, this is now my husband ... So it’s sometimes the marriage counselling that the person feel I am done or the husband try to work through this to try to solve this so we need to go through that journey but otherwise it’s just the people they feel they need emotional support and how to really continue with this marriage as they don’t want to walk out, because also where are they also going to? That’s also another scary part for the client.”

P10: “First of all, ah, its emotional difficulties counselling because at times they eh become angry and they become, feel neglected and they isolate themselves from others so we mostly deal with [e] stress management and emotional, difficult emotions.”

The counsellor role of social workers is discussed by various authors (cf. Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2017:203; Cournoyer, 2014:253; Patel, 2015:143). The participants confirmed various issues associated with girl marriage that require counselling. A counsellor works with clients on a certain issue (such as girl marriage) applying diverse methods based on the clients’ problems to achieve their goals (Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2017:203; Cournoyer, 2014:253). Patel (2015:143) states that a counsellor helps clients to manage their relationships through problem-solving in order to cope with changes taking place in their lives. Therefore, the role of a counsellor is important to assist girls who have experienced girl marriage as they come across various issues within the marriage (see sub-theme 3.3).

Sub-theme 5.2: Educator

All the participants mentioned the role of educator, which is utilised at the workshops in communities and in life skills programmes in the schools, to educate society and the learners about the impact of girl marriages. Social workers also assume an educator role to teach girls and parents by empowering them with information on their rights and responsibilities. Through this role, they also consult other relevant stakeholders

to promote knowledge about the impact of girl marriages. Four participants stated the importance of an educator role of social workers as follows:

P4: “Ah holding workshops in the communities, in the schools, empowering the community about the wrongs and the negatives of girl marriage so the ... I think those are the most programmes that social workers engage on.”

P5: “Our role as social workers as I have said that we, our role is to go out there into the communities, talk to them, make them aware, educate them about this ah marriage, consulting other stakeholders, make sure that this marriage is being addressed in all levels of angles. Yes ... as social workers we do community dialogues, we do workshops in the communities.”

P8: “Okay, umm as I have just said nè! We talking of human rights here now on the programme of positive parenting we do have rights and responsibilities. Okay so we do educate parents and children on their rights so on that positive parenting programme we do have a session whereby we enlighten the parents on their rights and responsibilities and the kids too you know mos [obviously] a right cannot just come without a responsibility the same goes it’s just vice versa thing. The same goes with the kids they cannot just have rights without responsibilities you [you] get a right to go to school, but as a parent I expect you to pass a-nè [you know] a right to go to school, wena [you] as a child what do you do? So we [we] trying so much to let kids know about their rights at the same time the parent, ya.”

P12: “... on life skills programme we educate young girls to know about their rights so that they can be able to defend themselves ...”

The educator role is defined by Patel (2015:143) as a role that helps social workers to develop the capabilities of clients in order to enhance their social functioning. Birkenmaier and Berg-Weger (2017:207) affirm that these enhanced capabilities help clients to accomplish their human developmental goals. This means that if girls are educated, they will have more options in finding jobs and could break out of the cycle of poverty, with more opportunities for themselves and their children (Levine, Lloyd, Greene & Grown, 2009:19).

In the case of this study, social workers educate communities about the implications of girl marriages and emphasise the importance of rights. Among others, the social worker as educator develops people's psychosocial functioning by training, coaching and providing information (Cournoyer, 2014:253) through life skills programmes, which encourage girls to stay in school and avoid pregnancy.

Sub-theme 5.3: Advocate

A few participants stated that as advocates, social workers intervene in situations where girls feel unhappy about the marriage. They talk to families, church leaders and communities on behalf of girls to prevent early marriage. The following view was noted from one of the participant's responses:

P2: "They [social workers] can, like act as advocates. The social workers are working with these girls and they can see how unhappy they are, so they can get to change that by talking with them, by advocating on behalf of these girls so that it can be prevented ... and engage in topics such as disadvantages of girls getting married at an earlier age. ... girls being proud of being girls ... educate girls that they don't have to rush to get married even if the culture is forcing them to ..."

The findings on the advocate role of social workers is aligned with various authors' interpretation of this role (cf. Glicken, 2011:611; Greener & Kropf, 2009:267). Since the 'girl' child is forced to marry, Greener and Kropf (2009:267) reiterate that as advocates, social workers take action to resolve 'discriminatory' practices, in support of social justice (Glicken, 2011:611). The social worker as an advocate protects the rights of individuals (girls), families, groups, or communities who are at risk of harmful consequences (cf. Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2017: 209; Kirst-Ashman, 2017:18; Patel, 2015:145; Wilks, 2012:2); in the case of this study they advocate girl's rights.

Sub-theme 5.4: Mediator

In some instances, a few participants mentioned that during their interventions, they have to mediate between conflicting parties (parents and the girls). This mediation takes place in situations when girls come to FAMSA complaining about the parents' plan to get them to marry someone they do not wish to marry. This results in tension among family members; therefore, to maintain peace, they mediate in order to help

them resolve conflicts. One of the participants expressed the view about the mediator role as follows:

P10: “If the parents force them to get married they [girls] must come to the social workers so that social workers can intervene between the [both] parties that is between the child and the parents to act as a mediator for the interest ... best interest of the child.”

The findings confirm the role of a mediator as a communication link to facilitate productive interaction between disputing parties (Cournoyer, 2014:253). In the case of this study, social workers act as mediators by creating mutual understanding between conflicting individuals (parents and girls), to be aware of each other's perspectives, and by helping to find options to facilitate conflict resolution (cf. Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2017: 205, Glicken, 2011:224; Patel, 2015:144).

Sub-theme 5.5: Collaborator

The research findings show that social workers in FAMSA mostly collaborate with the Department of Social Development, schools and clinics. They collaborate with the Department of Social Development and schools in times of crisis and about other issues that require their organisation's services. For instance, the participants indicated that sometimes teachers are confronted with cases of girls who are forced by their autocratic fathers (see sub-theme 2.2) to drop out of school to get married, hence the teachers involve social workers to intervene, as they regard the matter as an emergency, because it affects the girl's schooling.

Some participants also indicated that they collaborated with the Department of Social Development and other organisations when 100 girls were turned into sex slaves and wives at 'Seven Angels Ministry' church in Engcobo (cf. Manona, 2018:1-2). According to the findings, this incident was regarded as urgent because of the abuse that the girls experienced; they thus had to be placed in safe homes (see sub-theme 5.6.). Furthermore, the participants revealed that they worked with clinics and churches, where they shared information about girl marriages with community members. The following two quotations confirm these findings:

P7: “Sometimes we do collaborate with the Department of Social Development, ... we do contribute as FAMSA in our own way, but I think the department is also

contributing you know they have got bigger projects than us you know in the community ... the last meeting that I attended with Department of Social Development in the province, ... we were also called as stakeholders in the community to assist with [cases of girls who were forced to marry in Engcobo] because those girls were taken away from their homes to be placed temporarily on the safety homes ... The teachers told us so that we can intervene [when the father was forcing a school girl to marry] and then try and support this child ...”

P8: “... Yes and we go to the clinics, we are sometimes invited into the churches to do [e e, the] talks.”

The collaborator role of social workers in the case of Seven Angels Ministry’s church involved young girls experiencing sexual abuse, marriage and motherhood (Manona, 2018:1-2) and required partnership with other professions (Birkenmaier, Berg-Weger & Dewees, 2014:199) in the distribution of roles and responsibilities and sharing of resources (McCray, 2013:127), for example places of safety and counselling services.

Sub-theme 5.6: Broker

Participants elaborated on the importance of linking girls who experienced early marriage to other resources. This is because the girls sometimes require advanced services that the organisation cannot provide. The resources include the Department of Social Development’s intervention in respect of placing the girls in shelters and reporting matters to the police to ensure the protection of girls. Participants articulated their role as brokers as follows:

P4: “... Then we look into referrals to probably shelters that can actually empower her, yes ... We have the Salvation Army which is at Pretoria West if I am not mistaken and a Mercy House, and also Fatima House, I [am] don’t know if it’s still operational because we used to make some referral there from 12 to 18, the age group, it’s at Pretoria North ...”

P12: “There are in most cases, the child will be taken to a safe home so that she can be away from the people that [who] exposed her [to child marriage] so we try by all means to protect the child. At the same time we charge [report] okanye

[or] report the case to the police station so that the parents can be charged for the case of that child.”

The view of the participants on their role as brokers is affirmed by Patel (2015:144), who indicates that being a broker involves recommendation to a service or facilitating access to resources. The IPPF and the Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls (2007:29) highlight that the provision of resources such as shelters to girls who escape marriage creates protection to deal with distresses. In this regard, social workers can facilitate access to resources for girls who are vulnerable to early marriage. Therefore, a broker role entails assessment of need, coordination of diverse services and resources in which the client (girl) is involved (cf. Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2017: 203, Cournoyer, 252:2014; Turner, 2011:394).

Theme 6: Barriers experienced by social workers in curbing girl marriages

This theme presents the findings about barriers experienced by social workers in curbing girl marriages. The sub-themes that emerged include working in stereotyped locations and insufficient resources.

Sub-theme 6.1: Working in stereotyped locations

The research findings confirm that some rural locations are still holding on to their customs and have become stereotyped on issues such as child marriage. The elders in communities still conform to religious and cultural values and principles. Some communities believe that cultural education should be transferred to the younger generation to preserve their customs. The custom of girl marriage is transferred from generation to generation and as such forms an intergenerational transference of cultural values. This perception is reflected by two participants:

P8: “... being stereotyped ... okay this society or this community still believes in girl marriage and I believe nana [dear] as social workers we face challenges of rejection in some communities. When we go to the community to try and help, we find a situation, the community is expecting something from us nè! So the same with culture of child marriages you go to the community you try to educate people on that [and] they tell you no nana ..., let me tell you [about] our culture this is our culture. So if people can be educated it will be shifted a bit. We educate the parents on the impact of child marriages just because

nyan nyan [truly] there are other people they were born, raised and everything that they do is back in the rural area. The rural area, not that I am judging or what, just because we grew up [when we grow up] there are values that you keep on as human being ... Just because regardless of the shift that is happening with the world nè, but you hear that there are people who are still practising that you see. And there are people who are still fine with it, ya.”

P11: “The elders in the rural areas who believe that is their customs they have been doing this for many years ...”

Various studies confirm that some communities are still stereotyped when it comes to girl marriage. In some communities, women and girls are considered to be responsible for marriage and childbirth, while men and boys supply families with finances (cf. Oxfam, 2019:11; Public Defender of Georgia, 2016:15). Therefore, women and girls become powerless (see sub-theme 2.3) to challenge the stereotypes because they are rooted in indigenous knowledge, which should be preserved throughout generations (Mtshali, 2014:52; South African Law Reform Commission [SALRC], 2015:26). To conclude, these stereotypical views perpetuate gender inequality for girls (cf. Centre for Human Rights, 2018:25; Jongizulu, 2012:26; Oxfam, 2019:12), resulting in challenges when attempting to curb early marriages.

Sub-theme 6.2: Insufficient resources

The participants reiterated that the lack of human resources and infrastructural resources impede effective service delivery. Human capital, budgets, equipment and office infrastructure are among such resources, that FAMSA offices requires to serve a vast number of locations. The participants elaborated on the shortage of social workers and transport in the region, which contributes to the difficulty of reaching villages on the outskirts. Consequently, clients sometimes find it difficult to come to their offices. This lack of resources interferes with the enhancement of services to curb girl marriages. Therefore, they urge the government to enhance support for the projects on which they embark. Participants responded as follows to insufficient resources:

P4: “And again I am sure with the resources as well I don’t think we have enough resources as well, so we need resources and support from the government.”

P5: "... we don't have lot of social workers in the areas ... And I believe that also the resources, we have limited resources in our region ... most of the areas [they] are out there in the rural areas. And you will find that we can't even go there sometimes. And these things [girl marriages] you will find that [they] are mostly happening deep down in the rural areas. For example now, here in this office we have one car ... we are working in a broader area ... we have four FAMSAs in the Eastern Cape. So you can imagine how large the Eastern Cape is. So even [our] Cradock ... [and] Aliwal North [fall under our areas of service], and that side when you go to Free State is [also] our region. Let's say someone is going there to attend a training for a week it means that we won't have a car in that whole week. I feel like [that] it's high time for government to intervene, yes and that means so that we can manage those obstacles [lack of resources]. And so [because] when there are no resources we can't even go to the communities. Yes."

The findings on lack of resources are confirmed by various authors (cf. Batti, 2014:57; Budlender & Proudlock, 2011:57; Jamison, Wakefield & Briede, 2014:51). In Africa, organisations experience a common challenge of unlimited needs, but insufficient resources (Batti, 2014:57). Likewise, organisations and communities in South Africa face a lack of adequate resources (Strydom, Spolander, Engelbrecht & Martin, 2017:156). All provinces in South Africa depend on non-profit organisations (NPOs) to provide services, but the subsidies provided by the provincial department to NPOs do not cover the range of services they are expected to deliver (Budlender & Proudlock, 2011:57).

Moreover, social welfare services and services to children receive insufficient subsidies (Budlender & Proudlock, 2011:61). The regular lack of both financial and non-material resources in NGOs hinders social workers in performing their duties (Batti, 2014: 57; Jamison et al., 2014:51; Strydom et al., 2017:156). For instance, lack of vehicles prevents social workers from reaching out to the communities situated far from their offices, especially in rural areas. Therefore, lack of resources is a challenge to social workers' endeavours to end the practice of girl marriage; they thus require alternative means of acquiring resources.

Theme 7: Recommendations to curb girl marriage

Most participants indicated that ending the prevalence of girl marriages effectively requires coordination of services among key stakeholders and the development of policy to curb and prevent girl marriages, taking into account human rights stipulations and their implementation.

Sub-theme 7.1: Coordination of services among key stakeholders

Despite the findings on the role players mentioned under theme four, where social workers work with girls, families, schools and communities, it was affirmed that this is insufficient to curb girl marriages. The participants were of the view that broader coordination of services among key stakeholders is required to curb girl marriages.

Key stakeholders include the Department of Social Development, Department of Education (schools and universities), the South African Police Service, Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (courts and lawyers), Department of Health (clinics), Department of Home Affairs, faith-based organisations (religious leaders), civil society and community leaders is required. The following extracts highlight the stakeholders that participants regard as important in a partnership to curb girl marriages:

P5: “... consulting other stakeholders, make sure that this marriage is being addressed in all levels of angles, Yes. If I mention other stakeholders I am talking about departments that [we] are working with, the Department of Home Affairs because you know if these marriage, let’s say the girl is 17 years and this husband obviously they have to go to Home Affairs for marriage certificate and you will find out that ... the Department of Home Affairs [they] don’t have a problem, they just issue these things, certificates of marriage, yes. And the SAPS, yes, those are the main departments that I feel like they need to indulge with social workers.”

P7: “We are on the planning stage but we have started with the community, the clinics, we have started with some of the churches but we are targeting we want to target also the universities and high schools you know, ... so this girl children at young age they can understand ukba [if] how to choose a partner, what is the meaning of marriage ... So I think that it’s something that needs to be put to

an end ... the civil society and government integrated they mustn't stop to intervene you know. The faith-based organisations, integrated you know because not one institution can be able to do this so it needs the ... community leaders ... NGOs and ... government so that we can stop this ...”

This sub-theme reflects suggestions by the IPPF and the Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls (2007:28) that to end girl marriage requires concerted efforts to ensure effective programme development and implementation. However, the discussion paper on 'Ukuthwala' by the SALRC (2015:29) stipulates that the duties of different stakeholders should be clarified in the laws and policies to enable efficient service delivery.

Firstly, the social workers can initiate a long-term partnership with the Department of Social Development, as it serves as a significant stakeholder in the delivery of integrated and sustainable programmes for children (DSD, 2008). Moreover, the function of the Department of Home Affairs will be to provide statistics on cases of marriages entered into by young girls, as they have records of statistics about trends in marriage registrations (Statistics SA, 2018:2-5).

In addition, the police can play a significant role in partnerships to end girl marriage because the principle of the South African Police Service is to co-operate with all communities and appropriate role-players in protecting citizens (SAPS, 2010:1). In this case, it will be protection of girls from conflict and violence associated with early marriage. Literature confirms the study's findings on other significant partners in curbing girl marriages, namely religious leaders, traditional leaders, courts, schools, health practitioners and civil society (cf. Centre for Human Rights, 2018:63; Girls Not Brides, 2016b:5; Mohlakwana, 2013:17; UNICEF, 2008:26).

Sub-theme 7.2: Development of policy to curb and prevent girl marriages

The participants' responses to questions about policy are basically about developing a policy that will protect the rights of girls. The proposed policy should give direction to social workers, the government and the key stakeholders on interventions to curb and prevent girl marriages. The findings pointed out the importance of hearing the voices of girls and communities.

In this way the views from both sides (people supporting girl marriage and the girls) can be heard and it can be ensured that strategies to tackle this phenomenon are inclusive. The findings further indicated that social workers should consistently monitor the implementation and evaluation of policy relating to girl marriages. According to the participants, policy monitoring will give social workers direction as to whether strategies to prevent and curb the practice of girl marriage are effective or not. The opinions of three participants on policy development are reflected below:

P3: “You know, it’s if they can engage with the parliament to, to structure like policies that will prevent this, and also get more people [on] in the field to monitor the implementation of this policy. Get the police involved, get the teachers, get the principals, the pastors involved and we will be able to implement these policies.”

P7: “... So all the programmes that we have are trying to confront this kind of marriages broadly although I think mhlaombe [maybe] this study that you are doing is kind of like conscientising us that we need to have a special programme that will talk to the girls [curb girl marriage] ...”

One participant suggested that policies relating to girl marriages should encourage addressing the issue by starting with younger children.

P4: “Umm since we are working with the community especially with the young children from, from when they are still infants we can try to sort of work with kids from such a tender age and trying to sort of implement whatever policies that are related to girl marriages so I am sure it’s in our work to try to monitor the implementation.”

The above findings indicate that participants are aware of the gaps in their services that need to be addressed through a special policy to deal with the issue of girl marriages successfully. There is a need to strengthen existing policies and laws such as the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 and the Children’s Act 38 of 2005, as they are insufficient to curtail the practice of girl marriage. However, the law regards the practice of girl marriage as an exploitation of girls (Children’s Act 38 of 2005, Chapter 1:1), which in the end violates their rights (see theme 3).

The Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (Section 12:23) prohibits the marriage of girls younger than 18 (see theme 1). This is supported by the ‘Global Programme to Accelerate

Action to End Child Marriage' between UNICEF and UNFPA (cf. UNICEF & ICRW, 2017:6). This 'joint plan' emphasises strategies to implement laws that establish 18 as the minimum age of marriage (UNICEF & ICRW, 2017:6) for girls. Therefore, the minimum age of marriage should be clearly stipulated in the recommended policy in order to protect the rights of girls. The successful prevention and elimination of girl marriages necessitate the formation of a distinct rights-based and appropriate all-inclusive policy (CEDAW & CRC, 2014:10).

The Department of Social Development recognises that the realisation of children's (girl's) rights requires proper development and implementation of policies and programmes (DSD, 2008). In relation to the findings, the CEDAW and CRC (2014:21) have posted comments supporting the elimination of harmful practices. The recommendations from these committees suggest that governments should develop programmes to confront and transform the practices (see theme 2) that propagate girl marriages (cf. CEDAW & CRC, 2014:21). This is in conjunction with strategic objectives of Girls Not Brides (2016b:17), stating that government support should be strengthened to develop interventions that end girl marriages. Therefore, the findings support the global initiatives in policy development to eliminate girl marriages.

3.4. SUMMARY

In this chapter the research methodology for the study was presented and the ethical aspects and limitations relevant to the study were specified. The focal point of the chapter was to grant the researcher an opportunity to interpret findings on the role of social workers in curbing girl marriages. Seven themes emerged from the study; the first theme was about conceptualising girl marriages.

In the second theme, reasons for girls to marry at an early age, such as self-pressure, autocratic fathers making decisions for and acting on behalf of girls, peer pressure, poverty, religion, culture and societal stereotypes were outlined. The third theme discussed the aftermath of girl marriage; that is, school dropout, the poverty cycle, girls' anger because of husbands' bullying behaviour, early motherhood, poor health and substance abuse.

Social workers' intervention strategies to curb girl marriage constituted the fourth theme and included the girls, families, schools and communities. The fifth theme of the study presented the roles of social workers in contributing to ending the practice

of girl marriages. These include counsellor, educator, advocate, mediator, collaborator and broker.

In theme six, the barriers experienced by social workers in their interventions to curb girls' marriage were identified as stereotyped locations and insufficient resources. Theme seven presents the participants' recommendations to curb girl marriage efficiently. The two recommendations are on service coordination among key stakeholders, and the development of a policy to curb and prevent girl marriages. The next chapter presents the key findings of the study, the conclusions and recommendations from the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher discusses how the goals and objectives of the study were accomplished. The key findings of the study are presented and conclusions are drawn from the findings. Lastly, recommendations are made based on the study.

4.2. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal of the study was to explore and describe social workers' role at FAMSA in curbing girl marriages. The goal of the study was realised through achievement of the subsequent objectives:

4.2.1. Objective 1

- To conceptualise girl marriages within a structural social work theoretical framework.

This objective was achieved in Chapter two (see sections 2.2 and 2.3) where the structural social work theory was discussed as the theoretical approach to the study. The key aspects of the theoretical framework highlighted that social workers can challenge circumstances violating the rights of girls through empowerment to promote social change (Hicks & Murray, 2009:86; Weinberg, 2008:3). In section 2.3, it was pointed out that culture and religion, poverty and constrained parental protection are constructs that lead to girls' vulnerability to early marriage.

The objective was also addressed in Chapter three (see theme 2), where the findings indicated the reasons for girls marrying at an early age. The reasons, such as self-pressure (see sub-theme 2.1) where girls feel obliged to carry on the family values by marrying early, were identified based on the structural conditions in which the girls find themselves. Decisions were often taken by autocratic fathers acting for and on behalf of girls (see sub-theme 2.2), making them believe that marriage was the best option to secure their future. In addition, the findings indicated that peer pressure (see sub-theme 2.3) is also among the reasons leading to girl marriage because of girls' association with peers who had already experienced the benefits of marriage, which are mostly materialistic. Experiencing poverty within families (see sub-theme 2.4) was another factor that contributed to girl marriage. Upholding religious principles, (see

sub-theme 2.5), was also presented as important to protect the family dignity if a girl should fall pregnant out of wedlock. Lastly, culture and societal stereotypes (see sub-theme 2.6) perpetuate gender inequality, since in some communities, the notion of marriage is the norm and families and communities expect girls to submit to the custom of early marriage.

4.2.2. Objective 2

- To explore strategies, services, interventions and programmes that social workers utilise in ending girl marriages.

The realisation of this objective was accomplished in Chapter two (see section 2.6). An extensive literature study was done to explain the diverse intervention strategies of social workers on a continuum ranging from individual to advocacy level, bridging the micro- and macro-divide. The human rights-based approach, integrating social and economic development, partnerships and participation of girls and society were indicated as preventative measures in social workers' services to curtail girl marriages (see sub-sections 2.6.1-2.6.5).

The objective was also realised in Chapter three (see themes 4 and 5), as participants indicated that social worker's interventions generally address issues of girl marriage owing to the growing need to deal with the practice of girl marriage, as there is no specific coherent programme focusing on girl marriages. However, these interventions include therapeutic services through counselling (see sub-themes 4.1 and 5.1) to girls who experience difficulties with coping in their marriages. Furthermore, the findings revealed that social workers engage in preventative programmes such as life skills and workshops (Education for Living, Prepare and Reach, Positive Parenting) to educate girls, families and communities about human rights, decision-making and teenage pregnancy (see sub-themes 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 5.2).

It was also found that social workers advocate for the interests of girls who are at risk of marriage, mediate between parents and girls to resolve conflicts related to decisions of parents to wed girls, and collaborate with the Department of Social Development to link girls with resources such as shelters to protect them from this type of marriage (see sub-themes 5.3 - 5.6).

Social workers use different approaches to promote awareness of girl marriage by initiating house-to-house campaigns, public meetings, community walks and

dialogues (see sub-themes 4.1 and 4.3). Social services are implemented in partnership with schools, clinics, churches and the radio (see sub-themes 4.2 and 4.3). The role played by the schools is crucial, as the schools take the initiative in identifying girls who are vulnerable to early marriage. Moreover, the findings indicated that relevant stakeholders are not sufficiently involved in preventing girl marriages (see sub-theme 7.1).

4.2.3. Objective 3

- To determine how social workers challenge structural causes and influence policies in preventing girl marriages.

From a literature perspective, the objective was achieved in Chapter two. Legislation and policy frameworks, including the CRC, ACHPR, CEDAW, Children's Act 38 of 2005, Gender Equality Bill, ICCPR, ICESCR, National Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Framework Strategy and the National Gender Policy Framework, make provision for social workers to challenge girl marriage (see section 2.5).

The empirical findings in Chapter three confirmed that social workers use the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (theme 1 and sub-theme 7.2) and the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 (sub-theme 7.2) to challenge girl marriage. These laws are, however, insufficient to curb girl marriages; therefore, there is a need for a policy to strengthen the existing laws and direct services to curb girl marriage on a macro-level to attain sustainable development for girls.

4.2.4. Objective 4

- To determine how social workers educate young girls, parents and society about the consequences of early marriage.

An extensive literature study was done in Chapter two (see section 2.5) to contextualise the right of girls to education, health, safety, equality and freedom of choice. The objective was also achieved in the empirical study (see Chapter three, themes 4 and 5) where the findings indicated the importance of educating societies about the consequences of girl marriage. Social workers promote girls' rights through generic programmes that they implement to educate girls, families, schools and communities.

The objective was also accomplished in the empirical findings in Chapter three (see theme 5), as the findings indicated that social workers play distinct roles in promoting the rights of girls at risk of early marriage. The roles of advocate (sub-theme 5.3) and educator (sub-theme 5.2) were indicated, as the social workers act on behalf of the girls by talking to families, church leaders and communities to prevent girl marriage. Social workers also empower girls about their rights and responsibilities to resist early marriage by becoming activists to secure their own rights.

4.2.5. Objective 5

- To make recommendations on social workers' role in curbing girl marriages, based on the research findings and conclusions.

Objective five is met in this chapter as the researcher draws conclusions and makes recommendations to foster the importance of social workers' role in curbing girl marriages (see sections 4.3 and 4.4).

4.3. KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section presents the key findings of the study and the conclusions derived from the respective findings.

- The findings indicated the complexity of structural circumstances causing girl marriages. Girls are vulnerable to early marriage owing to socio-economic conditions, self and peer pressure, the patriarchal culture, stereotypes and religion. These structural causes are motivated by monetary gain and protection of cultural values for the girls and their families. The findings show that the structural causes of girl marriage result in long-term negative consequences, which are transferred to their own children. Girls experience missed opportunities in education, leading to an intergenerational cycle of poverty and inequality. Consequently, their families and spouses expect them to fulfil a variety of roles and duties as wives and mothers, which influence their health. The girls develop anger resulting from the expectations in the marital setup and often resort to the abuse of alcohol to endure the matrimonial relationship.
- It can be concluded that the structural causes and consequences of girl marriage are intertwined and should therefore be collectively addressed to curb girl marriage. Girl marriage results in limited socio-economic opportunities for girls,

which prolongs the cycle of poverty and inequality, leading to disempowered, stereotyped, illiterate women and families, poor peer association and an angry and unhealthy young generation with lack of agency.

- The findings revealed that schools have been an integral role player in enabling social workers to curb girl marriages. Although the findings indicated that social work programmes address the girl marriage phenomenon generally, they are motivated to implement existing services to curtail the practice. Social workers implement life skills in schools to educate learners about decision-making in terms of avoiding teenage pregnancy and early marriage in order to attain a better future. They also promote girl marriage awareness through radio talks, workshops, public meetings and dialogues with families and communities, including churches and clinics.

The findings revealed that FAMSA social workers take the initiative in crisis situations through partnership with the Department of Social Development to deal with girl marriages. However, the findings indicated that social workers are confronted with obstacles in the form of lack of broader stakeholder coordination. The suggested stakeholders that should support ending girl marriages were identified as follows: Parliament, the South African Police Service, Department of Health, Department of Social Development, Department of Justice, Department of Education and Department of Home Affairs, lawyers, cultural councils, men and boys. There was also an indication of lack of access to social work services to isolated communities, which is exacerbated by social worker's inability to reach out to such communities owing to inadequate access to transport in the organisation.

- The researcher concludes that schools are a good entry point to identify girls who are vulnerable to early marriage. Social workers can reach out to a large number of girls who can be empowered with skills and knowledge about their rights in decision-making pertaining to early marriage. Schools also give access to boys. Programmes can be implemented to sensitise both girls and boys about stereotyped gender roles of men being autocratic and making most household decisions and being the single breadwinners, while women assume the roles of

child bearers and housewives. Hence schools' role needs to be supported for easy access to provide social work services on a long-term basis.

It is further concluded that the involvement of girls, families and communities is a step in the right direction to curb the practice, as a broader audience will be reached to know about the impact of girl marriage. It is concluded that social workers understand the barriers to preventing the practice in isolated rural areas where there is a need for adequate resources, such as vehicles and satellite offices. Moreover, the conclusion is that efficiency of service delivery in curbing girl marriages can be achieved if social workers are given access to the necessary resources, with support from higher authorities such as the Department of Social Development. The participation of the Department of Social Development and coordination of services with other key stakeholders need to be strengthened and consistent for the attainment of long-term results in the elimination of girl marriages. It is therefore concluded that the coordination of services by all role players can strategically support the plans for improved services in curbing girl marriages.

- The findings show that social workers play particular roles in therapeutic and preventative interventions to stop girl marriages. The social workers assume a counsellor role in therapeutic interventions when girls do not cope in their marital relationships. The educator role is rather applied on the prevention level, where social workers teach girls about their rights. Social workers also use a broker role to protect girls from circumstances perpetuating their vulnerability in marriage by facilitating access to resources. The roles of mediator, advocate and collaborator are important for empowering families and communities to understand the consequences of girl marriage. However, the monitoring role was found to be lacking, especially when social workers have to determine whether their interventions are effective and hence sustainable.
- It can thus be concluded that the monitoring role is important for social workers to play in conjunction with other roles, to allow for consistent updates on the success rate of the prevention of girl marriage and therefore account for the sustainability of their interventions in curbing girl marriages.

- Lastly, the findings revealed that there is a need for the development of policies directed at girl marriage prevention in order to give clear guidelines on strategic plans to curb girl marriages.
- The conclusion is that the existing laws do not cater for strategies to curb girl marriages. The development of policy can challenge the structural causes of girl marriage and contribute to girl empowerment and agency. In this way, social workers will contribute to achieving SDG five of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda which aims to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls in eliminating early and forced marriage”.

4.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above findings and conclusions, the researcher recommends the following in identifying and addressing structural injustices to curb girl marriage:

- **Social workers must create a platform for dialogue on curbing girl marriages**

Social workers/FAMSA must take the initiative to establish a platform for open dialogue among all role players (e.g. girls, parents, school and church leaders, elders, chiefs, NGOs, government departments) to create awareness and understanding of the impact of girl marriage on the future of girls, families and society, and collectively seek solutions to curb the practice. Dialogues should discuss structural obstacles such as culture, stereotypes, religion and poverty in curbing the practice of girl marriage. Dialogues should also include empowerment and capacity-building strategy initiatives for girls, families and communities to combat the problem of child marriage. These include the advantages of delaying girl marriage and strengthening parents’ and communities’ abilities to protect vulnerable girls.

- **Strengthen existing programmes to include topics about girl marriage**

Social workers should identify the gaps in existing life skills and other educational programmes to harmonise their interventions and develop a coherent special programme targeting girl marriage. This special programme can address factors leading to girl marriages, the implications thereof, and moreover, recognise

vulnerability indicators and ways to apply human rights in fighting against the practice of girl marriage.

In addition to counselling in their interventions, social workers should promote support groups to girls with similar experiences in early marriage. In addition to the current awareness campaigns in which they engage, social workers should promote awareness raising by distributing information to communities and report in the media about the effects of girl marriages in order to send the message of the harmful effects of the practice of girl marriage to a broader societal platform.

Social workers should consistently monitor their interventions on issues relating to girl marriages in order to keep track of and report on the effectiveness of services aimed at curbing these marriages. This will assist social workers to forecast the girls' vulnerability to early marriage and determine indicators for the sustainability of their interventions. The monitoring of programmes can enable social workers to report regularly on the progress they make in preventing girl marriages, which should be embedded in a policy framework that requires monitoring and scheduled reporting on curbing and preventing child marriage.

Social workers can play a vital role in continuously challenging the hurdles in curbing child marriage through empowering the girls and families to look for alternatives, such as human capital development to secure the girl's future, rather than resorting to early marriage. In this way, girls will have access to a variety of opportunities, including education and employment, and they will be empowered to secure their own families' futures. This in turn can result in empowered families and a nation with sustainable human development.

Social workers must also strengthen existing programmes through early childhood development to educate children (girls and boys) about gender socialisation and societal stereotypes. This will be a foundation to facilitate their understanding of how societal norms and stereotypes can affect how society views individuals. The involvement of boys as prospective spouses and fathers is essential to shift their attitudes to gender-specific mind-sets and behaviour in order to eliminate gender inequalities.

- **Social workers must develop a girl marriage ‘peer education’ programme in schools**

Since girls are prone to peer pressure resulting in early marriage, FAMSA social workers and the girls concerned should develop a peer education programme similar to ‘Girl Marriage Ambassadors (GMA)’ to empower girls to resist pressure to marry early for financial benefit or any other reason. This programme will enhance the principle of ‘teach a girl to support a girl’, which can be replicated in other regions. The peer programme should be initiated with girls who are empowered to walk along with girls to motivate them to stay in school and have a vision for their future, providing support in overcoming challenges and knowing when to refer girls for professional services.

This peer education programme will enhance the self-determination and confidence of girls to embrace their gender and understand the structural circumstances related to the practice of child marriage, for example poverty in their families. Peer educators can motivate girls to stay in school and develop their human capabilities to enable them to escape their socio-economic conditions and as a result safeguard a better future.

Peer educators will be capacitated and empowered to be confident in educating fellow girls about the consequences of the practice by being involved on local, national, regional and international level in events such as the ‘International Day of the Girl Child’, which is commemorated in October (UNICEF, 2017). Peer education supports the global goal to recognise girl empowerment and eliminate harmful practices, such as girl marriages, for sustainable development (United Nations, 2015:22).

- **Support from Department of Social Development and resource mobilisation**

The Department of Social Development, as the duty bearer for children, should reserve funds to support NGOs such as FAMSA to provide social services related to the prevention of girl marriages. This support should include facilitating an enabling environment to work in, including having vehicles, and opening satellite offices to reach out to secluded rural communities where girls are unable to access services.

In addition, the Department of Social Development should partner with FAMSA social workers by taking a leading role in coordinating services and strengthening

partnerships with key stakeholders such as the Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Justice, and Department of Home Affairs, as well as the South African Police Service, government, lawyers, cultural councils, community, school and church leaders, families, girls and boys. Coordination of intervention plans, monitoring and evaluation can enable stakeholders to report consistently on curbing girl marriages.

- **Policy development to curb and prevent girl marriages**

The current policies focus on the protection and best interests of children (cf. the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the Children's Act 38 of 2005, Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998, Marriage Act 25 of 1961, and the Recognition of Customary Marriage Act 120 of 1998), but substantial legislation on girl marriages is lacking. The Children's Act 38 of 2005, section 2 (i) largely fosters the protection, development and interests of children. This Act makes provision for the prohibition of marriage of a child below the minimum age, which is 18, as set by the law, but does not state the measures in place to prosecute those who promote such a marriage.

Chapter three of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, section 2(a) and 3(c) explains the parental rights and responsibilities to care for children and the consent they should give to the children's marriage. Also, the civil and customary marriage of minors is recognised by law where parental consent is obtained (Marriage Act 25 of 1961 [Sections 24 & 25] and the Recognition of Customary Marriage Act 120 of 1998, Section 3[a]). In addition, sections (28) and (29) of the Constitution are explicit about children's rights, but section (15) unambiguously states that the law "does not prevent legislation recognising marriages concluded under any tradition, or a system of religious, personal or family law" (RSA, 1996).

The Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 stipulates protection against behaviour that causes or may cause harm to the safety of vulnerable individuals. Some parts of the current laws are in conflict with efforts to stop girl marriage. These laws are contradictory, as they only specify the age of marriage and parental consent, but give no detailed elucidation on how child marriage should be avoided, because it infringes children's (girls) rights. Girl marriage is a harmful practice and violates girls' right to education, health, protection, freedom of speech and equality. Therefore, social

workers should encourage the development of policy addressing girl marriages to protect the best interest of girls by expanding existing legislation.

The findings revealed tradition as an important factor in the propagation of girl marriages, and in this instance there is gap in existing legislation in terms of allowing minors to enter into marriage with parental consent. This means that policy should be developed to protect girls by preventing marriage of minors in all circumstances, even with parental consent.

The policy should be delineated in such a way that it regards girl marriage as invalid and should take cognisance of the fundamental aspects that propagate this form of marriage. This will assist social workers in helping societies to comprehend that violation of one right leads to infringement of other rights, and thus protect girls from early marriage and encourage them to complete their schooling to attain a better life for themselves and their families. In this way societies will experience a positive cycle of empowerment, as the information can be transferred from generation to generation for sustainable development. Social workers should take the initiative to advocate the adoption and implementation of such a policy.

- **Further research to be conducted**

FAMSA and the Department of Social Development could work hand in hand in terms of resource mobilisation by approaching research institutions to encourage further research to explore viable options to curb the practice of girl marriage in Gauteng and the Eastern Cape provinces as a whole. Social workers, in collaboration with the Departments of Education and Social Development, can play a leading role in identifying a particular school as a research site to pilot a life skills programme that targets child protection, including girl marriage, and in breaking down gender stereotypes for both girls and boys. The outcomes of the pilot project can be monitored and evaluated to determine the retention of girls in school over a particular period.

In collaboration with the Department of Social Development, FAMSA social workers could play a leading role in initiating action research with a core group of role players in the community to find solutions to curbing girl marriages. Such an initiative could emphasise the promotion of socio-economic development, as poverty is a cause of girl marriage. The impact of successful socio-economic development projects should be monitored and evaluated in relation to curbing girl marriages.

FAMSA social workers could initiate research involving girls who are already in a marital setup to hear their voices on curbing girl marriages and in addition, the efficiency of support and other services in relation to their needs and rights. The policy must still be developed; this is covered in the recommendation above.

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APPENDIX A: PERMISSION LETTER FAMSA PRETORIA

FAMSA

Families South Africa - Pretoria



ATTENTION: SUPERVISOR

Professor Antoinette Lombard
University of Pretoria

Dear Professor

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH SOCIAL
WORKERS ABOUT THEIR ROLES TO CURB GIRL MARRIAGES IN
GAUTENG**

ADUA SALIM - STUDENT NUMBER: 23223732

Famsa Pretoria gives hereby permission to Adua Salim to conduct her research on the above mentioned research topic at our offices and satellite offices.

Yours sincerely

PETRO THERON
DIRECTOR
9 April 2018

FAMSA PRETORIA
218 Lange Street
Brooklyn
P.O Box 2411
Brooklyn Square, 0075
Tel: (012) 460 0733/8
Fax: (012) 460 0745 or
086 610 6590
famsa@absamail.co.za

SOSHANGUVE
Boikutsong Community
Centre, Block T
Tel: 076 310 6484

MAMELODI OFFICE
Stanza Bopape Community
Hall, Ext 5
Tel: 073 641 7912
072 476 3613

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER FAMSA STUTTERHEIM



FAMSA
Families South Africa
007 377 NPO

Phindiwe Nombewu
Director
FAMSA STUTTERHEIM

Tel: 043 683 1418/3234
Fax: 043 683 1418
Email: director@famsastutt.co

04 April 2018

ATTENTION: ADUA SALIM (23223732)

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT EMPIRICAL RESEARCH WITH SOCIAL WORKERS

This letter serves to confirm that Adua Salim is granted permission to conduct research with FAMSA Stutterheim social workers about their roles to curb girl marriages for the fulfilment of her postgraduate studies in MSW: Social Development and Policy registered with the University of Pretoria. The interviews will be conducted at FAMSA Stutterheim offices.

I trust that you will find this in order.

Yours faithfully

Mrs P.V Nombewu-Kwayinto

FAMSA Stutterheim Director

Tel : 043) 683 1418/3234

Mobile: 083 365 3425/078 737 2280

Email: director@famsastutt.co.za/famsastutt@mwebbiz.co.za

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION LETTER FAMSA BORDER



FAMSA
Families South Africa
001-560-NPO

Date: 03 April 2018

ATTENTION: ADUA SALIM (23223732)

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT EMPIRICAL RESEARCH WITH SOCIAL WORKERS

This letter serves to confirm that Adua Salim is granted permission to conduct research with social workers about their roles to curb girl marriages, for the fulfilment of her postgraduate studies in MSW: Social Development and Policy registered with the University of Pretoria. The interviews will be conducted at FAMSA Border (East London and Mthatha).

I trust that you will find this in order.

Yours faithfully

Thozama Sishuba (Mrs)

Director

Signature.....

Contact Details:

043 743 8577 /thozi@famsa-bc.org.za

16 Duiham Street
Madala Chambers
Satellite Office
MTHATHA
Tel: 047 531 0140
Fax: 047 531 0140

P.O. Box 11035
Southernwood 5213
263 Oxford Street
EAST LONDON 5201
Tel: 043 743-8277/8577
Fax: 043 743 4973
Email: admin@famsa-bc.org.za

FAMSA Builds Relationships - Reg. No.: 003 499 NPO



19/05/2019

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Researcher: Adua Salim

Tel: 011 986 1027

Mobile: 079 879 9169

E-mail: salimadua@yahoo.com

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

- 1. Title of the study: The role of social workers in contributing to curbing girl marriages: a FAMSA case study**
- 2. Goal of the study:** The goal of the study is to explore and describe social workers role in curbing girl marriages in FAMSA.
- 3. Procedures:** I understand that I will be invited to participate in a face to face interview based on a semi-structured interview schedule to explore the role of social workers in contributing to curbing girl marriages in FAMSA. I take note that I will be informed in advance of the interview date, time and place. The duration of a session is expected to take approximately one hour. The interviews will be tape recorded; therefore I give full consent to the researcher to audio tape the interviews. The audio tape recordings will be transcribed for purposes of data analysis. Only the researcher and the study supervisor will have access to the tapes and transcripts which will ultimately be stored in a secure place by the University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years. I am aware that the data may be used for further research for which I give consent.
- 4. Risks and discomforts:** I take note that there are no anticipated physical, emotional and psychological risks or harm associated with my participation in the study.
- 5. Benefits:** I understand that the researcher will not offer me any incentives for my participation in the study.

6. **Participants' rights:** I am completely cognisant that my involvement in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any repercussions.
7. **Confidentiality and anonymity:** I take note that the research findings will be kept confidential and that both the notes and audio records will be stored in a safe place. I realise that my name will not emerge in the research findings. I also agree to treat all the information that is revealed during the interviews as confidential.
8. **Person to contact:** If questions or concerns relating to the study arise, I can contact the researcher, Adua Salim at any time on 079 879 9169 or email her at salimadua@yahoo.com

Declaration

I,, understand my rights as a research participant, and I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being conducted.

Date

Place

Participant's signature

Date

Place

Researcher's signature

APPENDIX E: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Semi-structured interview schedule for social workers

Demographic information

Gender	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Race	African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coloured	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	White	<input type="checkbox"/>
Number of years employed as a social worker	_____							
Number of years working with girl marriages	_____	FAMSA Region	<input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Cape					
			Office:_____					
			<input type="checkbox"/> Gauteng					
			Office:_____					

Topic related questions

1. Given the highest prevalence of girl marriages in your region, what is your understanding of girl marriage?
2. What are the causes of girl marriages in this region?
3. What type of services do you provide for girls who experienced early marriage within your jurisdiction?
4. How often do you get cases of girl marriages at FAMSA?
5. In which areas within your work jurisdiction is girl marriage most prevalent?
6. What are the implications of girl marriages in this region?
7. In consideration of girl empowerment goals from a global to a local level, what is your main concern about girl marriage?
8. What is your perception about ending girl marriages?
9. What is the role of social workers in confronting the broader social, economic, religious and cultural contexts within which girl marriage is prevalent?
10. What strategies and programmes do social workers engage in that contribute to ending girl marriages?

11. How do social workers challenge structural causes and influence policies in preventing girl marriages?
12. To what extent do social workers educate young girls, parents and society about the consequences of early marriage?
13. How do social workers contribute towards human rights education for young girls at risk of early marriage?
14. What obstacles do you foresee in social workers intervention to curbing girl marriages?
15. In your view, how will the social workers develop and monitor the implementation of policies relating to girl marriages?
16. Any additional comments regarding girl marriages?

APPENDIX F: RESEARCH AND ETHICS COMMITTEE LETTER



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Research Ethics Committee

31 May 2018

Dear Ms Salim

Project: The role of Social Workers in contributing to curbing girl marriages: a FAMSA case study
Researcher: TA Salim
Supervisor: Prof Lombard
Department: Social Work and Criminology
Reference number: 23223732 (GW20180511HS)

Thank you for the application that was submitted for ethical consideration.

I am pleased to inform you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee at the meeting held on 31 May 2018. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should your actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

Prof Maxi Schoeman
Deputy Dean: Postgraduate and Research Ethics
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: PGHumanities@up.ac.za

cc: Prof A Lombard (Supervisor)

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotheo

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof MME Schoeman (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Mr A Bizos; Dr L Blokland; Dr K Booyens; Dr A-M de Beer; Ms A dos Santos; Dr R Fasselt; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr E Johnson; Dr W Kelleher; Mr A Mohamed; Dr C Puttergill; Dr D Reyburn; Dr M Soer; Prof E Taljard; Prof V Thebe; Ms B Tsebe; Ms D Mokalapa