

# Factors Which Contribute to Early Marriage Among Teenagers in Rural Areas: A Case Study of Amassoma Community, Southern Ijaw L.G.A. Nigeria

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this research work is to investigate the factors which contribute to early marriage among teenagers in rural areas, in Amassoma community, Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The work is divided into eight chapters. Chapter one discusses the background of the study, statement of the problem, scope of the study and significance of the study. Chapter two views the conceptual framework to the study, chapter three explains the theoretical framework used in carrying out this research. Chapter four contains the social cognitive theory. Chapter five contains research methodology. Chapter six views the method of data analysis. Chapter seven explains the discussion of finding. Chapter eight explains the conclusion. A self design itemed questionnaire was used in collecting data, the data collected was analysed using table and simple percentage, a total of three hundred and seventy eight (378) were administered to the respondents. The data analysis confirmed that the findings on the investigation of rural teenagers towards early marriage is based on poor family background and environmental factors. Based on the findings, it is recommended that economic opportunities should be given to young girls due to the fact that poverty is a major cause of early marriage among teenagers.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The sudden need to know the factors which contribute to early marriage among teenagers in rural areas in Amassoma community, Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State has attracted the interest of researchers within and outside the

state. Marriage is a social institution that unites people in a special form of mutual independence for the purpose of founding or maintaining a family. It is a social practice entered into through a public act, religious or traditional ceremony, marriage reflects the character purposes and also customs of the society. Most societies have norms that limit the age of young girls to enter into marriage, but in some cases the age limit does not take into consideration their physiological readiness for childbearing. It often takes place at ages much earlier than the legally ratified minimum age. Early marriage is a marriage of children and adolescents below the age of 18 years.

In some or several cultures, girls are forced into marriage at a very tender age due to various

reasons, for instance, the fear of some parents that their daughter would get pregnant while at home and getting dowry. Other factors include unequal power relations and also economic hardship, which also expose girls to unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases like, HIV/AIDS, AIDS and abortions. This also explains why adolescents suffer more from related complications such as maternal and infant death. Early marriage puts teenagers at risk because they are not fully physically developed to care for pregnancy, early marriage results in early or frequent childbirth and even an increase in family size. It denies girls the right to education, childhood and right to a husband of her own choice and also of her age. When girls are forced to marry someone who happens to be older than them and if by chance that husband dies, the girl in question automatically becomes a widow at an early age. Basically early marriage not only poses greater health risk for the young mother and the baby but it also violates the girl's right to make her own choice. Early marriage is used to refer to both formal marriage and informal union in which a girl lives with a partner as if married before the age of 18 years. It is also known as any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years before the girl is physiologically or physically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and child bearing.

We can trace the historical background to early marriage by speculating the cultural context of most people in the world. In most societies early marriage has been practiced from time to time. The children used to be married after attaining puberty and that is at the age of 12 to 16 years. This used to be the condition or the case for most girls who used to be given to

men as old as their own father. For example, the girls are engaged to be married immediately after their attainment of puberty in order to avoid social scandals. It was taken to be a curse if a girl was reminded at home after her puberty. Therefore, the family has to ensure that their daughters are getting husbands after the attainment of the age. And the families often take pride in their daughter's marriage. Marriages of girls used to be a source of income to many families. This is how parents used to pressurize their daughters to get married.

With the approach of awareness of human rights (especially women rights) , woman emancipation and economic setbacks due to overpopulation, some kind of restriction or control of early marriage started.

Generally, some girls become sexually active during adolescence. The rates are high in several countries of Sub Saharan Africa where girls aged between 16 and 19 years are sexually active, thereby leading millions of adolescents to have offspring.

In Latin America and Caribbean (Amin S. et al, 2002), about one third of the women population give birth before the age of 20. Likewise in Sub-Saharan Africa more than half of women give birth before the age of 20. Early marriages are due to outdated customs, culture and taboos. Another reason that encourages the young girls to be involved in early marriage is socio-economic pressure on the part of the parents, they later force their children to drop out of school in order to earn a living on their own because they cannot take care of them. And some other reasons are family

pressure, low self esteem, culture, poverty, illiteracy, inadequate sex education, peer pressure and conformity.

This chapter presents the reviewed literature from other scholars and researchers related to the study of the factors which contribute to early marriage among teenagers in rural areas. The term literature can be referred to as anybody of written works or books. It can also be referred to as any individual work itself. Literature is any written work used to describe written and sometimes spoken material. Although some person's associates the term literature to be fiction,

like novels, drama, poetry and

non-fiction. In terms of this study literature means the works which the researcher consulted in order to understand the research problem. In essence, literature review means any collection of material on a topic not necessarily the great literary texts of the world. It discusses published information in a particular subject area and within a certain time. Literature review can also be seen as an account of what has been published on a topic by scholars and researchers. It involves examining documents, like books and magazine journals.

## **2. Conceptual framework**

The Oxford dictionary defines a child as a young human below the age of puberty or below the legal age of majority. Merriam Webster defines a child as a young person especially between infancy and youth. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines a child as a person 19 years or younger, unless national law defines a person to be an adult at an earlier age. The United Nations convention on right of defines a child as a human being below the age of 18 years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier (Wikipedia). The Child Act Law (2009), defines a child to be a person below the age of 18, under section 13. The Law of the Child Act is a supreme law for the protection of children rights. For the purpose of this research, this is the concept which is adopted for the meaning of early marriage. Therefore, early marriage can also be a union between two people in which one or both parties are younger than 18 years of age and also seen as a forced marriage.

### **2.2. Socio-cultural and religious values**

In some communities where child marriage is dominant, there is strong

social pressure on families to submit or conform. And failure or refusal to submit often results in ridicule, disapproval or family shame. However, local perception on the ideal age for marriage and the desire for submissive wives, extended family patterns and other forms of customary requirements is all preserved in local customs and religious norms.

In many contexts child marriage is legitimized by patriarchy and related family structures. Sometimes marriage of children in some parts of Amassoma is used to consolidate powerful relations between families, for settling disputes or over property or sealing deals over land.

### **2.3. Social feminist ideology**

Adamson in explaining social feminist recognized the exploitation and oppression of women are rooted in the structure of patriarchal capitalism. Which believes that secularism is so deeply fixed in the social relationship of patriarchal capitalism that a fundamental transformation is necessary to bring about social change? Therefore, in this study, early marriage eradication may be hindered by the system where policies, beliefs and traditions still force young girls to be married.

### **2.4. Religious values**

According to a priest, he argued that with western ideas spread everywhere girls stay unmarried as late as 30years. It is scientific and modern but in our church, it is prohibited and such girls are either Blessed or clean. This strong religious belief or message enforces the view that marrying early is the best as supported by the priests representing Ethiopian's Orthodox Church

(Boshe P, 2009)

### **2.5. Early marriage among teenagers in rural areas**

Early marriage has considerable adverse effects on teenagers and children's health. Girls are at risk of early marriage. Programmes addressing adolescent reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention have focused primarily on unmarried youth. Girls who are married before the age of 18 have low or no education attainment and social mobility.

In some ways married girls have been found to have higher rates of HIV infection than their sexually active unmarried peers (Carael M. et al,2001). In India (Blanc A.1998), at least half of all women currently aging 20-24 got married at the age of 18.

According to available Demographic and Health survey (DHS) data. In certain regions of Ethiopia, India and Nigeria at least 40 percent of these women were married before the age of 18 years, Amin S. et al (2002).

In this study girls refer to those under the age of 18 (which is considered to be the legal minimum age of marriage in most countries). In the Child's Rights Act of 2003, it is pointed out that the age of consent for a child is 18 years old. Millions of girls around the world have their childhood cut short and their social economic opportunities and education limited when they enter into marriage before the age of 18 years. Married girls rarely attend schools; they have less household and economic power than married women. The Population Council analyzed data from Egypt, Kenya and also from India (Amin S.et al ,2002) have revealed that married girls have less decision making power and often live with little or no authority under the supervision of their new mother-in-law. Married girls have less mobility and

less exposure to modern media, they face social isolation, unwanted sex and potential risks to their health.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework for this research is the social cognitive theory and the behavioural theory (self-efficacy behavioural theory). Sometimes, beliefs, behaviour and thought can lead to either harmless or harmful consequences.

The social cognitive theory and self-efficacy behavioural theory are used to understand the perceptions of participants in the factors which contribute to early marriage among teenagers study (Bandura Albert, 1977). These conceptual frameworks present the necessary behavioural paradigm to help understand the cultural aspects of the factors which contribute to early marriage among teenagers in rural areas.

### **4. Social Cognitive theory**

Albert Bandura (1977), extended the social cognitive theory to include how people's beliefs, feelings and their thoughts can affect their behaviour and self -efficacy. Self-efficacy beliefs are the foundation of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977). Bandura defines self -efficacy beliefs as an individual's manner or way of judging personal capabilities to carry out individual actions and execute precise performance. The self-efficacy beliefs are foundations for a person's motivation, accomplishment and well being.

In this research, self-efficacy behavioural theory was used to explore how young brides or teenage brides, parents and members of the community in Amassoma, Southern Ijaw Local Government Area, perceived their

capacities about conforming to early marriage without thinking about the negative consequences. Researchers have exposed that individuals, especially parents, perceive a high return for having their young child marry at a young age, which often motivates parents or guidance to continue the phenomenon of early marriage (Hyuksoo et al, 2013). Child brides, parents and community leaders perceived that early marriage could help them improve their personal situations through monetary gain. And some such parents are likely to adhere to these practices regardless of any negative implications (Hyuksoo et al, 2013).

## **5. Research Methodology**

The research methodology deals with the description of the method used in carrying out research study. This chapter contains research designs, data requirements, the target area population and sampling techniques, data collection instruments and data analysis.

This chapter highlights the methodologies which are used to guide the whole research processes in collecting the related data for the study at hand.

### **5.1. Research Design**

Research design is the detailed blueprint used to guide a research study towards the objective. Design of the study is the cross-sectional study. The researcher used this because.

- \* It was quicker to conduct the research
- \* It was cheaper to administer the questionnaires as it was conducted

for a short time.

- \* It minimized participation of correspondents as was conducted only once.
- \* The behaviour of those involved in the study was not manipulated.

The study used a qualitative design approach to examine the problems of early marriage among teenagers.

### **5.2 Sources of data collection**

Data were collected from two main sources namely; Primary source and Secondary source

#### **Primary source**

These are information or materials gathered or collected by the researcher for a particular purpose. And can be obtained through observation, questionnaires and experimental studies. It involves creating new data. The primary data were gathered using the questionnaire structured on the basis of the research objective, which were presented to respondents to express their views, opinions and observation.

#### **Secondary source**

These were from textbooks, documents or electronically stored information. They involved the collection and analysis of published material and information from internal sources. It involves the collection of diverse information, that is, gathering data that have already been collected by another researcher. The secondary data were used to develop a proper conceptual and theoretical framework for this study and providing answers

The research questions were made possible by the primary data.

### **5.3. Population of Study**

A population refers to all people or items with the characteristic one wishes to understand which may be tangible or intangible. Putting it differently, a population is made up of all

conceivable elements, subjects, or observations relating to a particular phenomenon of interest to the researcher (Asika, 2011). It could also mean the total number of people living within a geographical area.

For the purpose of this research, the study population consists of all adults of both sex included between the age of 18 above, who are married within Amassoma, Southern Ijaw LGA of Bayelsa state, Nigeria. Prior to the time of this research there is no record or data that gives the estimated population of the study area and so the population is unknown.

#### 5.4. Sample Size and Sample Procedure

Sample size refers to the selection of a number of individuals to represent a large population of study in order to enable the researcher to carry out his/her investigation on the subject matter effectively. This is paramount in any survey research design to draw out sample size representative enough for a large number of populations of study in order that efficiency and generalizability of the study conducted accurately is achieved.

For efficient and effective collection of data that were representative of the total population of the study, a sample size was drawn out of Amassoma. As such, the sample size for study was drawn from five villages in Amassoma using Taro Yamane (1967) formula as given below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n Sample Size

N = Population (6970 according to 2006 population census)

e = Level of Significance (0.05)

1 = Constant

$$n = \frac{6970}{1 + 6970(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{6970}{18.425}$$

$$n = 378.29$$

Approximately, the sample size = 378 subjects

**Table 5.1: Distribution of Sample Size by Instruments of Data Collection**

Selected communities	Questionnaire distribution	Proportions of sampling
Amafini	70	19
Efeke Ama	80	21
Foro Ama	65	17
Goin Ama	90	23
Saudi Ama	73	20
Total	378	100.0

Source: Author's Computation (2019)

#### 5.5 Questionnaires

The researcher constructed questions according to variables and distributed them to the target group for response, then collected them for data analysis. They were questions in written form and they were closed or open ended questions. Closed ended questions were questions where correspondents were given possible options to choose. While open-ended questions allowed free responses, responses were recorded in the respondents' own words. In this case the respondents were given possible answers to choose from. The researcher decided to use this method of data collection because it reduced cost in terms of time, money and labour, questionnaires were used to gather information from girls as the sufferers of early marriage because the targeted population is literate.

## 6. Method of data analysis

Data analysis involved examining what was collected in a survey or experiment and inferences; it involved uncovering underlying structures extracting important variables. The use of computer software tools also helped with accounting for collected data from interviews and notes that were documented from observations during the interviews, as well as maintaining credibility during analysis. Data analysis involved this study was qualitative. The finding of the study was presented by using contingency interviews, observations. The Nvivo software was also used in this study. The Nvivo software has the capability to compare the data and code data to connect with the study.

### 6.1. Presentation Of Data And Analysis

In order to ensure coherence and the proper coordination of this work, the information gathered from the respondents are analyzed using simple percentages as an analytical tool presented in tabular form and also simple percentages for testing hypotheses. The information used was gathered through questionnaires so as to give credibility to the work. The data collected were coded and comments were made using simple percentages for interpretation.

### 6.2. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 6.2.1: The table below indicates the number of questionnaires that were administered and retrieved from the field work

Number of questionnaire administered	Number of questionnaire retrieved
378	345

Source: field survey (2019).

**Table 6.2.2: These tables show the kind of persons that were interviewed.**

#### SEX OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	195	57.0%
Female	150	43.0%
Total	345	100%

Source: Field Work (2019).

Table two indicates that 195 (57%) of the respondents were male, while 150 (43%) were female. Questionnaires were distributed to both sexes.

Table 6.2.3: These tables shows the ages of persons that were interviewed

#### AGE LIMIT OF THE RESPONDENTS

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage%
18-30	145	42.0
31-40	45	13.0
41-50	100	29.0
51-60	55	16.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source field survey (2019).

The above depicts that 42.0% of the respondents are aged between 18-30 which consist of the largest population of age, while 13.0% of the respondents are aged between 31-40. The figure further revealed that 29% of the respondents are aged between 41-50, and also 16% are aged between 51-60.

TABLE 6.2.4: EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS

Educational qualification	Frequency	Percentage%
School certificate	93	27.0
National diploma	80	23.0
First degree	44	13.0
Post graduate	65	19.0
No Educational Qualification	63	18.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: field survey (2019).

qualification revealed that 93 (27%) of the respondents hold secondary school certificates. While, 80 (23%) hold National Diploma certificates, whereas, 44 (13%) of the respondents hold first degree certificates of various kinds. The number of respondents who hold post graduate certificates were 65 (19%) and finally the number of respondents with no education qualification were 63(18).

**Table 6.2.5: Occupation of the Respondents**

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Civil servant	103	30
Artisan	15	4.3
Business	97	28.1
Farmers	88	25.5
Traders	42	12.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: field survey (2019).

The above table shows that the highest frequency is the category of civil

servants 103 ( 30%) respondents, closely followed by Artisans 15 (4.3%) of respondents. The next in the frequency were Business Respondents 97 (28.1%), and closely followed by the Traders 42 (12.1%).



Table 6.2.6: Residents of the Respondents

Residents	No. of responses	Percentage%
Amassoma	200	58
Others	145	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: field survey (2019)

The above indicate that 200 (58%) of the respondents are from Amassoma while 145 (42%) are from other Local Governments, that is to say that all the respondents are from Southern Ijaw local government area of Bayelsa state.

Table 6.2.7 Nationality of respondents

Country	No. of responses	Percentages%
Nigeria	345	100
Others	-	-

Source: field survey (2019).

The above table indicates that 100% of the respondents are Nigerians. This means that the entire questionnaire was filled and collected from the country.

## RESEARCH QUESTION (1)

### 6.3. What are the psychological factors that contribute to early marriage among teenagers?

S/N	Questionnaire Items	A	SA	D	SD	%
1	Poor Family background and Environmental influence can be referred to as the factor that contributes to early marriage among teenagers	130 (37.7 )	150 (43.5 )	21 (6.1 )	44 (12.7 )	100
2	Unequal power relations can be regarded as a psychological factor of early marriage	80 (23.2 )	95 (27.5 )	79 (22.9 )	91 (26.4 )	100
3	Customs and Traditions is also a good psychological factor that contributes to early marriage among teenagers	120 (34.8 )	200 (58 )	15 (4.20 )	10 (3 )	100
4	Pregnancy can also be a major factor of early marriage among teenagers	287 (83.2 )	55 (16 )	2 (0.6 )	1 (0.2 )	100

Source: Field work (2019)

From the table above a total of 37.7 % of the respondents agreed, 43.5 of them strongly agreed, 6.1% of the respondents disagreed while 12.7% of the respondent strongly disagreed. The second item probing the research question had 23.2% of the respondents that agreed, 27.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 22.9% of the respondents disagreed while 26.4% strongly disagreed. The third item probing the research question had 34.8% of the respondents which agreed, 58% of the respondents which strongly agreed, 4.2% of the respondents which disagreed while 3% of the respondents strongly disagreed. And finally in the fourth item it was observed that 83.2% agreed, 16% which strongly agreed, and 0.6% which disagreed, while

0.2% strongly disagreed. From the study it was realized that there is a relationship between police corruption and national security challenge, the police serve as a watchdog in the nation and are embedded with power and responsibilities of securing the lives and properties in the nation and so if they are corrupt it is saddening and certain that we are exposed to risk, violence, instability and other social vices.

#### Research Question (2)

What are the effects of early marriage in society?

S/N	Questionnaire Items	A	SA	D	SD	%
5	Death can be regarded as an effect of early marriage in the society	126 (37)	164 (48)	25 (7)	29 (8)	100
6	Poor health can also be an effect of early marriage in the society.	155 (45)	80 (23)	50 (15)	60 (17)	100
7	Unequal power relations and economic hardship can be regarded as an effect of early marriage	220 (64)	70 (20)	25 (7)	30 (9)	100
8	Death cannot be regarded as an effect of early marriage in the society	25 (7)	29 (8)	164 (48)	126 (37)	100

Source: Field Work (2019)

From the table above a total of 37% of the respondents agreed, 48% of the respondents strongly agreed, 7% of the respondents disagreed, while 8% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The second item probing the research question had 45% of the respondent which agreed, 23% of the respondents which strongly agreed, 15% of the respondents which disagreed, while 17% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The third item probing the research question had 64% of the respondents which agreed, 20% of the respondents which strongly disagreed, and 7% of the respondents which disagreed, while 9% strongly disagreed

The fourth item probing the research question had 7% of the respondents which agreed, 8% of the respondents which strongly disagreed, and 48% of the respondents which disagreed, while 37% strongly disagreed.

In the course of this research it could be seen from the figures stated above that intra-party conflict has been a major factor in the development of Bayelsa State.

#### Research Question (3)

What are the attitudes of rural teenagers towards early marriage?

S/N	Questionnaire Items	A	SA	D	SD	%
9	Shyness is an attitude of rural teenagers towards early marriage	248 (72)	58 (17)	17 (5)	22 (6)	100
10	Negative attitude on contraceptive can also be regarded as an attitude towards early Marriage	199 (58)	63 (18)	38 (11)	45 (13)	100
11	Inadequate Parental care is an attitude of teenagers towards early marriage	187 (54)	78 (23)	50 (14)	30 (9)	100
12	Lack of Access to information can also be an attitude of teenagers on early marriage	90 (26)	83 (24)	96 (28)	76 (22)	100

Source: Field Work (2019)

From the table above 72% of the respondents agreed, 17% of the respondents strongly agreed, 5% of the respondents disagreed, and 6% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The second item probing the research question had 58% of the respondent which agreed, 18% of the respondents which strongly agreed, 11% of the respondents which disagreed while 13% of the respondents strongly disagreed, the third item probing the research question had 54% of the respondents which agreed, 23% of the respondents which strongly agreed, 14% of the respondents which disagreed, while 9% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The fourth item probing the research question had 26% of the respondents which agreed, 24% of the respondents which strongly agreed, 28% of the respondent which disagreed, and 22% of the respondents which strongly disagreed.

#### Interpretation

As shown above, the majority of the respondents, 150(43.5%) Agreed that Poor Family Background and Environmental influence has been a major psychological factor that contributes to early marriage and should be accepted.

### 7. Discussion of Findings

The deduction drawn from the result of the analysis that was analyzed above. In our discussion on the Factors which contribute to early marriage among teenagers in the rural areas, it was shown that the majority of the respondents, 150(43.5%) strongly agreed. From our survey we can see that early marriage has played a negative impact in the lives of teenagers in the rural areas.

### 8. CONCLUSION

In Amassoma Community particularly at Goin-Ama, Efeke-Ama, early marriage is a common practice. Available data show that married women married before the age of 18 years.

Youth in Amassoma Community continue to engage in early marriage due to lack of access to Pregnancy. As a result they are in danger of being affected with HIV/AIDS disease because of factors stated in this study that regarding sexual and reproductive rights, about 60 percent of married women especially girls reported that they could not say “No” when asked for sex by a husband or partner. Eighty percent of women reported that they could not ask a husband or partner to use a condom during sexual intercourse, even if she suspects that he has another partner. These results reflect the low status of women in the home and the limited capacity they have to negotiate on issues related to their sexual life. One-in-five women in urban areas and a third in rural areas do not think it is appropriate for a woman to ask her partner to use a condom, even if she suspects that he has HIV/AIDS. They do not assume it to be right to make such a demand.

Findings indicate that early marriage is highly prevalent in the Community and that it is the most serious of all the harmful traditional practices. According to available Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data in some settings married girls have been shown to have higher rates of HIV/AIDS infection than their sexually active unmarried peers. The majority of the women entered into marriage as a result of someone’s pressure and more than 80% of the marriages were arranged by parents. The main reasons for early marriage included a combination of socio-economic and cultural traditional factors, these include, prestige (maintaining ones good name and social esteem), strengthening the ties between the marrying families, ensuring virginity of girls at the time of marriage, avoiding the possibility of a girl not being marriageable later in life, fear of premarital sex and pregnancy, lack of awareness about legal prohibitions and the poor level of law enforcement. In general, adequate education was the

main social factor which accelerates high contribution factors to early marriage. This is simply because many girls do not go to school so they get married early because they think that being married will solve their problems. Our schools do not offer sex education and reproductive health as a result young girls who complete standard seven get married and enter into marriage without adequate health education. Ignorance on reproductive health was seen to be the factors contributing to early marriage. Also the study shows that early marriage is the major cause for girls not to attend school or discontinue their education. However advising parents to sending their daughters to school when schools are too far will not work. Making schooling for girls more accessible is very important.

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