

MEKELE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
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**ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF EARLY MARRIAGE ON GIRLS' EDUCATION IN
AFAR REGIONAL STATE: THE CASE OF BERHLE WOREDA**

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OCTOBER, 2025
MEKELLE, ETHIOPIA

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**ATHESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
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**OCTOBER, 2025
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DECLARATION

I, **Adlibara Ali Ibrahim**, do hereby declare to Mekele University School of Graduate Studies that this thesis is a product of my original work, and it has not been submitted to any other university for any academic degree. Materials and information other than my own are dually acknowledged.

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APPROVAL SHEET
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As supervisor of the thesis, I certify that I have read and evaluated the thesis prepared by **Adlibara Ali Ibrahim**, entitled “**Assessing the Impact of Early Marriage on Girls Education in Afar Regional State: In Case of Berhle Woreda, Afar Regional State, Ethiopia**” and recommend that it is acceptable as a thesis required for Masters of Art Degree in Management. The candidate has incorporated all the comments of the examiner/s during the thesis defense session.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASALs	Arid and Semi-arid Lands
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSA	Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
EFA	Education for All
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
ICRW	International Centre for Research on Women
LMICs	Low-and Middle Income Countries
MoE	Ministry of Education
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science

ABSTRACT

Early marriage significantly hinders educational opportunities for girls which increase the phenomenon of girls' school dropout. Hence, a descriptive and explanatory study method was adopted to examine the impact of early marriage on girls' education in Berahle Woreda. Mixed both (qualitative and quantitative) research approach was employed. The required primary data were gathered through survey and in-depth interview, while the supplementary secondary data were collected using document analysis. A stratified purposive and random sampling technique was implemented to select 269 primary school age girls Berhale Woreda. Binary and Multivariate logistic regression model was utilized to estimate crude and adjusted odds ratios for the dependent variables (early marriage and school dropout), while the qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Out of 269 distributed questionnaires, 248 filled questionnaires were collected by the researcher at a response rate of (92.2%). The prevalence rates of early marriage and school dropout were 75.8% and 64.5%, respectively. The odds ratio of the association between early marriage and school dropout was 0.051[0.02-0.10], signifies that school dropout is 94.9% higher among early married girls than unmarried. However, after adjusting confounding variables, the probability of school dropout was estimated to be 84.4% higher among early married girls as compared to unmarried peers [AOR= 0.152; 95% CI: 0.049-0.473]. The empirical multivariate analysis shows that religion, wealth index and residence were found to be significant predictors for both outcomes (early marriage and school dropout) and in contrast, religion, husband/household head education, husband or head occupation, wealth index, place of residence, ethnicity, and decision to marry were significant predictors for early marriage, while early marriage, religion, place of residence and wealth index were significant predictors for school dropout. Hence, the study concluded that early marriage is the most significant factor that increases the rate of girls' school dropout girls. Therefore, stakeholders and policymakers must prioritize hotspots, socio-economic, and demographic factors to achieve a meaningful reduction in the incidence of early marriage and school dropout.

KeyWords: Berhale Woreda, Drop Out, Early Marriage, Education, Girls, Impact, Prevalence.

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Early marriage refers to any union formed before the individual reaches the legal age of 18 (UNICEF, 2018). While boys and girls can marry young, in many countries, it is more common for girls to marry younger age. This harmful traditional practice is more prevalent in developing countries compared to developed ones, yet there are significant differences both between and within various global regions and nations (UNICEF, 2019). For example, South Asia is home to half of the world's child brides, and although early marriage is most frequent in Sub-Saharan Africa, these two regions together account for the highest rates of early marriage in ten countries (ICRW, 2015 & Vogelstein, 2013).

By the early 2000s, 59% of girls in Ethiopia were marrying before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2001). As in the broader context of Sub-Saharan Africa, early marriage in Ethiopia predominantly affects girls, with only 9% of men aged 25-49 marrying before 18 (CSA, 2016). The consequences are extensive and varied. Early marriage interrupts childhood by severely limiting access to education, skill development, personal growth, and even freedom of movement. Additionally, it raises the likelihood of early sexual activity, adolescent pregnancy, and childbirth (Nasrullah et al. 2014). These negative effects are exacerbated by the girls' physical immaturity and their lack of knowledge regarding healthy sexual and reproductive practices. As a result, the overall health, mental well-being, and quality of life of girls and young women are significantly compromised (Delprato et al. 2015).

Early marriage is a widespread challenge in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), particularly in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Subramanee et al. 2022). According to the 2022 UNICEF report on child marriage, around 12 million girls in LMICs are married before turning 18 each year, equating to one in five girls in these areas (UNICEF, 2022). The implications of early marriage can be severe for girls and their families, often perpetuating a cycle of poverty and disempowerment. Girls forced into early marriage typically have to leave school, which diminishes their educational and economic opportunities (Scolaro, 2015). Furthermore, child marriage is linked to increased rates of domestic violence and divorce, which

significantly harm the physical and mental health of girls and hinder their overall development and well-being (Naved et al. 2022).

In Africa, the problem of early marriage is prevalent, particularly among females who may be physically, physiologically, and psychologically prepared to take on the duties of marriage and motherhood. The International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW, 2021) highlights that early marriage has numerous harmful effects for both adolescent girls and boys, as well as for their communities. These effects include educational setbacks, poverty, health issues, and high rates of maternal mortality. Additionally, child marriage significantly impacts maternal health, with child brides facing a greater likelihood of pregnancy and childbirth complications, such as obstetric fistula and maternal death (Dadras et al., 2022). Children born to these young brides are also at an increased risk of mortality and malnutrition, contributing to a cycle of intergenerational issues, where malnourished children tend to leave school early and may become child brides themselves (Khanam & Khan, 2023). The detrimental effects of child marriage, along with its prevalence among girls, represent a substantial challenge in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). This situation complicates efforts to meet several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including health and well-being (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), education (SDG 4), and poverty reduction (SDG 1) (Julitta Onabanjo, 2022).

Early marriage significantly hinders educational opportunities for girls and their future children. Although research shows that child marriage does not drastically affect labor force participation, it diminishes women's educational prospects, which in turn lowers their potential earnings and household welfare (Wodon et al., 2015). Consequently, the prevalence of early marriage is a critical concern for communities and policymakers worldwide.

While there are various factors leading to early marriage, it is fundamentally a violation of human rights. The right to enter into marriage with free and full consent is recognized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and other human rights frameworks (Bunting, 2012). Early marriage has serious physical, intellectual, psychological, and emotional repercussions, often eliminating educational and personal growth opportunities. It typically results in early pregnancy and childbearing, which can lead to a lifetime of domestic and sexual subordination. Thus, early marriage exacerbates the feminization of poverty and perpetuates intergenerational poverty.

Therefore, it is crucial to explore the impact of early marriage on girls' education, as this can inform the development of more effective policies and programs.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Early marriage results in early pregnancy and motherhood, negatively impacting girls' education. Although the importance of women's education is acknowledged, numerous obstacles hinder women's access to education, limiting their ability to contribute significantly to society. Societal attitudes often discourage girls from pursuing higher education, perpetuating gender inequality and prioritizing economic resources for boys. To address this issue, various international conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), affirm the right to free education for girls (Bunting, 2012). Nonetheless, early marriage continues to be prevalent in many developing sub-Saharan countries, particularly in pastoral communities in Ethiopia, where traditional and religious practices maintain a strong influence.

Research by Boertien and Härkönen (2018) indicates that girls' perceptions of marriage and the age at which they marry can significantly impact their decisions, often overshadowing socio-demographic factors. According to Mourtada et al. (2017) child marriages are typically dictated by parental desires rather than the girls' own wishes. However, this is not always the case in practice. The fundamental reasons behind girls opting for early marriage instead of furthering their education and careers have not been thoroughly examined.

Literature consistently shows that early marriage disrupts and negatively affects the academic performance of female students. It poses significant risks to those compelled into such situations, leading to poor class attendance, limited study time, a shift in focus from academics to family responsibilities, sometimes resulting in withdrawal from school, and ineffective time management. These challenges have been documented as outcomes of early marriage on girls' education (Bayisenge, 2015; Omotayo, 2015; Elujekwute, 2011; Landis, 2015).

According to Omotayo (2015), girls who either drop out of school or do not enroll initially often find themselves compelled into early marriages, which typically hinders their ability to pursue education later. Bayisenge (2015) identifies several reasons for early marriage, including the need for economic survival, the desire to protect young girls, peer pressure, familial expectations, sexual issues, and socio-cultural and religious norms that regulate female behavior, along with factors like wars and civil conflicts. Landis (2015) notes that young girls hastily

marry due to their families' inability to finance their education, while do so after experiencing unplanned pregnancies. Many female students who leave school for marriage believe, or are persuaded, that they will resume their education at a later stage. However, Elujekwute (2011) asserts that a married woman's opportunity to continue her education often hinges on her husband's willingness to support her. Many husbands resist sending their wives to school due to various economic, social, and cultural reasons. Furthermore, research by Goldien (2007) indicates that many young married women encounter numerous challenges that prevent them from completing their education, and those who do manage to finish often perform poorly academically.

Extensive studies were conducted in different Asian and African countries by (Bayisenge, 2015; Omotayo, 2015; Elujekwute, 2011 & Landis, 2015) and in Ethiopia by (Woldehanna and Hagos, 2015; Abuya et al. 2013) most of the studies, most of these studies were relied on qualitative research method which might be difficult to observe the actual effect of early marriage on girls education. Additionally, most of these studies were overemphasized on the prevalence of early marriage and little/no emphasis was given to examine the impact of early marriage on girls" education, particularly in the pastoral regions of the country, Ethiopia.

Moreover, researcher"sliteraturereviewisconcerned,whileverylimitedstudieswereconducted in Ethiopia on the impact of early marriage on girls" education, unfortunately most of these studies have been conducted in regions and towns with comparatively better educational coverageandbettersocioculturalcontexts,yetnoemphasiswasgiventhepastoralafarregionsin general and Berahle *Woreda* in particular, where a century old cultural and traditional norms are prevailed, relatively poor infrastructural, socio-economic, educational coverage and other development indicators as compared to the rest regional states of the country, Ethiopia.

Furthermore, According to the region"s bureau of education, the number of girls who dropped out of primaryeducation (1-8 grades) reached how an increasingtrend from year to year. Hence, assessing the impact of early marriage on girls" education in the culturally unique Afar Regional State offers unique opportunity to address the exogenesis.

Bearing the stated prolonged facts and methodological gaps, this study is aimed to examine the impactofearlymarriageongirls"educationinAfarRegionalStateofEthiopiaincaseofBerahle *Woreda*.

1.3 Research Questions

This study is aimed to address the following research questions:

- What is the prevalence of early marriage in Berahle Woreda
- What are the causes of early marriage of girls in Berahle Woreda
- What is the impact of early marriage on girls educational attainment
- What are the possible strategies to reduce the practice of early marriage

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study was to examine the impact of early marriage on girls" education in Berahle *Woreda*, Afar Regional State of Ethiopia.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The study specific objectives included:

- To assess the prevalence of early marriage in Berahle Woreda
- To assess the causes of early marriage of girls in Afar Regional State
- To examine the impact of early marriage on girls educational development
- To state the possible strategies to reduce the practice of early marriage

1.5 Significance of the Study

Examining the impact of early marriage on girls" education in Afar Regional State of Ethiopia in case of Berahle Woreda would have the following contributions:

- **Contribution to policy makers:** understanding the causes and impact of early marriage on girls" education will help policy makers to make informed decisions. This will help enhance the participation of women in speeding up the development of the region in particular and the country in general.
- **Contribution to the sustainable development goal:** As long as women constitute almost half of the Ethiopian population, without a meaningful participation of women in socioeconomic, political and other aspects, the sustainable development cannot be envisioned. Hence, the study finding would benefit for the national sustainable development goal in enhancing women/girls education.

- **Contribution to girls:** Addressing early marriage of girls will go a long journey in creating bright future for girls, their family and even the society. Hence, the study findings would shade light for stakeholders which could be helpful to tackle the prevalence of early marriage in Ethiopia generally and in Berahle *Woreda* in particular.
- **Contribution to academic literature:** The study findings would be contributes to the existing academic literature on the effect of early marriage on girls and women education. Thus knowledge can inform future research, foster academic discourse, and provide a foundation for comparative studies in similar topics.
- **Contribution to future researchers:** Furthermore, the findings could be used as an input by researchers and other interested parties who may have due interest in this area.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The fact that early marriage was not the exceptional problem to a specific area of the country, due to researcher financial, time, resource and other constraints, geographically this study was limited to Berahle *Woreda*. Additionally, this study was limited to take sample from primary school girl children who were enrolled at list one year primary school within five years prior to the survey. While the impact of early marriage was multidimensional including economic, psychological, health and other impacts, theoretically this study was limited to the impact of early marriage on girls' education and the rest impacts such as health, economic, psychological, and other perspectives were not addressed in this particular study. Moreover, methodologically, both descriptive and explanatory research design was employed.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

While no research is free of constraints", the researcher has been encountered from some limitations and the major limitation was reluctance of some participants to fill the questionnaire since they were busy of their daily routine. The present study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the MICS data are prone to recall and social desirability biases because of their use of self-reported data. Possibly, the illegality of child marriage may have led to systematic under-reporting because of fear of legal repercussions. If underreporting of child marriage was the case, the study may have underestimated the effect of early marriage.

Given the strength of the association and the frequency of reporting marriage as the main reason for school dropout, however, it is reasonable to argue that early marriage is a key factor that

leads girls to leave school. Third, the household wealth index was based on assets of the current household that girls live in. For married girls, household wealth assessed in the survey did not consider the parental household. The potential inconsistency of economic status may have introduced an unsystematic bias in the analyses.

1.8 Definition of Operational Terms

Education: Education is defined as the process of easing learning, or the learning of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits.

Early Marriage: Early marriage or child marriage is defined as the union between two people in which one or both parties are younger than 18 years of age.

Academic Performance: Academic performance is the outcome of education, the point to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals. Academic performance is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessment but there is no general agreement on how it is best tested or which aspects are more important.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This thesis is organized into five chapters. The first chapters was part of introduction which discusses about background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives, and significance, definition of terms, scope and limitation of the study. The second chapter was dealt about review of related literature that was consisted both theoretical and empirical reviews. Chapter three was the part of detail presentation about the thesis methodology and materials that included the subsections of research design, sample size determination and procedure the type of research data and data source, data quality management tools and data processing and analysis were presented. Then chapter four was a part of the study result, interpretations and discussions and finally, conclusion and recommendations were presented under chapter five of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Literature

2.1.1 Concept of Early Marriage

Early marriage, often referred to as child marriage, involves a union between two individuals where at least one party is under the age of 18. This practice conflicts with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stipulates that marriage should be based on the "free and full" consent of both parties. Such consent is impossible when one of them is a minor, who cannot make informed decisions about a lifelong partner. This issue is primarily prevalent in impoverished third-world countries, particularly in rural areas, where girls are often coerced into arranged marriages without their consent, sometimes even as infants. Girls are disproportionately affected by early marriage compared to boys (UNICEF, 2019).

Child marriage, defined as a marriage involving someone under 18, occurs globally but is particularly common in South Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Mahato, 2016; Mandali, 2013; John, et al., 2019). UNICEF further specifies child marriage as "a formal marriage or informal union before the age of 18," which is recognized worldwide (UNICEF, 2019). This definition is supported by various international treaties and agreements, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (Suresh Lal, 2016).

While many countries have set 18 years as the legal minimum age for marriage in their family laws, the enforcement of this standard is often lacking. For instance, in Ethiopia, despite agreeing to international conventions opposing child marriage, the practice persists, negatively impacting the lives of girls. It is evident that marrying before the age of 18 can have severe adverse effects on the well-being and future opportunities of married girls and their offspring. For example, in Ethiopia and similar countries, 18 is typically the age when individuals complete secondary education; therefore, early marriage often hinders girls' chances of finishing their schooling. Additionally, many young girls are unable to provide genuine consent for their marriages (Mahato, 2016).

Wodon et al. (2017) similarly indicate that girls under 18 are often too young to take on marital, sexual, and reproductive responsibilities. Furthermore, child marriage, defined as marriage before age 18, is clearly a serious violation of human rights. Everyone should have the autonomy to decide when and whom they marry, or even if they marry at all; unfortunately, many young girls are compelled into marriages that they did not choose, violating legal standards. This practice hinders a girl's development, leading to social exclusion, early pregnancy, interrupted education, limited career opportunities, and increased vulnerability to intimate partner violence. UNICEF (2019) similarly notes that in various cultures, girls are expected to fulfill gender roles tied to womanhood, such as marrying and becoming mothers, upon reaching puberty.

In many societies, including Ethiopia, the primary focus for girls is not enhancing their educational prospects or future potential but rather reinforcing traditional sociocultural roles. Research indicates that cultural and social norms heavily influence the age at which girls are expected to marry. Factors such as educational attainment, socio-economic status, and community conditions also play significant roles in the likelihood of early marriage (Klugman et al., 2014).

Early marriage represents a detrimental manifestation of the unequal power dynamics between women and men. For many girls, marrying young often leads to a life characterized by sexual and economic insecurity. The subjugation of women serves as both a cause and an effect of child marriage. Generally, child marriage leads to a sudden shift into a sexual relationship with an often much older husband whom the girl has not chosen, with greater age gaps more prevalent among younger brides (Nayak, 2013).

I contend that child marriage has profoundly negative consequences for young married girls, limiting their opportunities compared to their peers. For instance, uneducated girls often miss out on the quality healthcare and fulfilling lives that educated girls experience. Studies further support that child marriage constitutes a violation of human rights that adversely impacts girls' education, health, psychological well-being, and the health of their children (Mahato, 2016). Although boys can also be affected, the practice predominantly harms girls (Mandali, 2013).

Child marriage is often described as "early and forced" marriage because young girls are typically not physically or mentally prepared to make informed decisions about their spouses, the timing of the marriage, or the consequences of such a commitment. This situation is further

complicated by the fact that parents often coerce their daughters into marrying. Research indicates that strong social and cultural norms perpetuate this practice, even in the presence of legal prohibitions (Mandali, 2013).

Child marriage can lead to a loss of agency and decision-making power for women later in life due to low self-esteem and confidence among child brides. Parson et al. (2015) argue that these young brides are particularly vulnerable, as they often come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and lack education. I concur with Parson and others' viewpoints, as young married girls tend to be more controlled by their husbands and in-laws, especially compared to those who marry at an older age. Furthermore, research indicates that child marriage limits their ambitions and agency (Klugman et al., 2014), which may impact their decision-making capabilities, including access to healthcare during pregnancy and childbirth. A woman's decision-making ability is thus influenced by her agency and access to resources such as land, livestock, cash, and previous achievements.

A study conducted by Migosi et al. (2012) examined the barriers to educational access and participation for primary school students among the Turkana people of Northern Kenya. The findings revealed that cultural factors significantly hinder education for girls, as parents often view daughters as valuable assets to be invested in and later profited from. Consequently, they tend to keep their daughters at home, waiting for prospective husbands to pay their dowries.

2.2. over view on early marriage in Ethiopia

Marriage is a social institution that binds individuals in a unique form of mutual dependence for establishing and nurturing a family. It is a universal institution across cultures, although its forms may differ, being nuclear in some societies and extended in others (Nayak, 2013). According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, marriage is defined as the state of being legally united to a spouse in a consensual and contractual relationship that is acknowledged and upheld by law (Wodon and Nguyen, 2015). Additionally, marriage fulfills social and economic roles (Kassegne et al., 2018). The wedding ceremony, a crucial aspect of marriage, serves as a social occasion for the families, neighbors, and relatives of the couple. Furthermore, marriage facilitates the transition of responsibility for daughters from their families to their husbands (Kassegne et al., 2018). I contend that the significance of marriage as a social institution and a primary agent of socialization are undeniable, although the practices and implications vary across different

societies. In Ethiopia, many communities endorse marriage practices that restrict girls' rights to essential services like education, economic empowerment, and decision-making. Such practices often occur without the consent or interest of the girls involved. Research indicates that many marriage customs among Ethiopia's diverse ethnic and religious groups are primarily arranged by parents, typically with brief engagement periods (Wodon and Nguyen, 2015).

Ethiopia features a variety of marriage practices and ceremonies, including 'Bethortal' (Naqataa or sirat), arranged marriage (sabbat-marii), 'wish' (hawwii or mignot), abduction (Butii or telefa), Aseennaa or kalkidan, and Dhaala or wurs (Beyene and Tolera, 2006). While these types of marriages are prevalent across the country, their specific practices and ceremonies differ by region. 'Bethortal' is the most commonly practiced form of marriage, typically arranged by the parents of the couple through extensive negotiation (Beyene and Tolera, 2006; Augustyniak, 2009). The second most common marriage type, arranged marriage (Sabbat Marii), is less coercive and not necessarily based on the full agreement of the bride's parents. This involves the groom visiting the bride's family with friends to propose marriage, often necessitating repeated requests through elders if initial approval is denied. Eventually, the bride's family is generally expected to comply, as it is culturally unacceptable to reject the elders' decision. These marriage practices tend to promote early marriages, though the extent of this prevalence varies.

2.2.1 Causes of early marriages

Early marriages continue to persist in certain communities due to several underlying factors. According to UNICEF (2014), these factors include poverty, lack of education, bride price, cultural norms, community laws endorsing early marriages, religious and social influence, regional traditions, fear of remaining single, and the perceived inability of women to earn an income.

Poverty is highlighted by UNICEF (2014) as a significant driver of early marriages globally. In various communities, particularly in the Middle East and South Asia, there are numerous instances where girls are married off to older men as a means to alleviate family economic hardships. In regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, the expectation of bride price from the groom's family is often seen as a survival tactic for families. In extreme cases, this practice may exploit

young girls, leading them into prostitution, exemplified by situations in Bangladesh, where families may be deceived into marrying off their daughters under false pretenses.

Research from the United Nations (2003) and Malhotra (2010) indicates that in parts of northern Pakistan, Afghanistan, and certain Middle Eastern areas, underage girls are wed to resolve family disputes, pay off debts, or serve as replacements for a brother's bride price. Here, parents marry off their daughters at a young age to mitigate economic struggles, as doing so reduces the number of family members requiring essential resources like food, clothing, and education.

This issue of poverty as a catalyst for early marriages is notably evident in some Kenyan communities. Studies by Njuguna, and Wamukuru (2018) and Muyaka (2018) in Narok and Marsabit revealed that high poverty levels significantly contributed to early marriages, compelling young girls to leave school to marry wealthy older men in exchange for bride price, aiding their families' financial survival.

A study by Orodho et al (2013) in Garissa demonstrated that poverty adversely affected the achievement of Education for All (EFA) in Kenya. Families struggling financially were unable to cover additional education costs, such as school uniforms, building fees, and transportation. This financial burden was particularly severe for larger families with many school-aged children, where boys were often prioritized over girls in the allocation of scarce resources.

Illiteracy within families or communities is a significant factor contributing to early marriages among girls (Bhandari, 2019). In environments where parents lack education, fear and superstition can lead to the premature marriage of their daughters. For instance, in Nepal, there exists a belief that educated women are prone to becoming witches, prompting some illiterate families to prevent their daughters from pursuing education. Consequently, girls who marry young often have either dropped out of school or have never received formal education (Sekine & Hodgkin, 2017).

Although Kenya has made considerable progress in increasing educational access, many school-age children still cannot attend school, particularly those from nomadic pastoralist communities in regions like North Eastern Kenya. According to UNESCO's 2010 report, less than 40% of children in the former North Eastern Province were attending primary school four years after the

Kenyan government aimed for universal enrollment. The report also noted that over 60% of Somali girls were absent from primary school (UNESCO, 2014).

Further supporting this data, Abagi (2014) reported high illiteracy levels in this region, with only 8% of adults in Wajir County being literate, compared to 18.5% in Mandera and 19.1% in Turkana. These statistics are starkly lower than the national literacy average of 79%. Additionally, the ratio of literate men to literate women in Mandera County is five to one. This significant literacy gap poses a substantial barrier to the educational aspirations of girls in places like Wajir, as studies show that illiterate parents are less able to support their children's education, particularly girls, due to their inability to help with schoolwork or engage effectively with teachers about their children's educational challenges (Bunyi, 2008).

A, Bride price

The tradition of paying bride price is prevalent in various cultures, particularly in African societies, where it is seen as a form of appreciation or compensation to the bride's family. This custom arises from the belief that since the bride will contribute her labor to her husband's family, some remuneration is warranted. Despite being an ancient practice, providing bride price remains a significant responsibility for families and husbands.

Research on the Maasai and Borana communities has highlighted the worth of women in these cultures due to their labor contributions (Nyamongo, 2000). This study indicates that girls are raised to be good wives and mothers, often marrying affluent older men who possess substantial livestock, thus reflecting their higher social and economic standing. Such customs often involve young girls, limiting their chances for education, which is deemed less valuable since a girl's marriage worth, measured in livestock, does not depend on her educational attainment. Consequently, families lack incentive to invest in girls' education.

Investigations by Muyaka (2018) examined how cultural and socio-economic barriers affect girls' education, particularly in Isiolo and Marsabit. These studies revealed that cultural practices negatively impact girls' schooling, leading to early marriages involving wealthy older men in exchange for bride price. Furthermore, girls sometimes become the target of arrangements made by boys who have never set foot in school, meaning these girls have few opportunities for education. Those who wish to stay in school face ongoing pressure from their families, peers, and the community to drop out.

Maina (2011) argues that societal beliefs among Muslims in Buna Sub-County regard a girl's time with her family as temporary, viewing her as destined for her husband's family. This mindset adversely affects girls' education, as they are seen primarily as future helpmates and marriage prospects once they reach maturity. Additionally, girls are often regarded as valuable assets in bride wealth transactions.

Research by Dube & Orodho (2014) on secondary education access and participation in Kenya indicated that one significant hurdle for girls in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) are early marriage. Girls in the upper primary are frequently withdrawn from school to marry wealthy men who can offer a substantial bride price, resulting in considerable pressure for these girls to drop out. This situation ultimately leads to higher dropout rates for girls compared to boys.

B. Cultural traditions/laws

Kahise (2013) examined how cultural factors influence girls' access to secondary education in Kisarawe District, Tanzania. It found that the community's negative attitudes toward girls led to a preference for boys' education and forced many girls into marriages, effectively ending their schooling. The study advocated for public awareness campaigns highlighting the importance of girls' education, bolstering counseling programs in schools, enforcing relevant laws, and hiring female teachers in rural areas to serve as role models.

Globally, many communities equate the onset of menstruation with maturity and readiness for marriage, as it signifies the ability to conceive (UNICEF, 2001). Consequently, parents often withdraw girls from school to prepare them for marriage, believing that continued education may hinder their prospects (UNICEF, 2014 & Njuguna et al., 2018). Some parents worry that educating their daughters might lower their chances of finding suitable husbands, fearing they may become either too educated or not sufficiently compliant to be desirable wives. In certain Kenyan communities such as Somali and Kuria girls frequently undergo Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) as a prerequisite for marriage, with many dropping out of school immediately afterward to get married (Ganira, 2015).

Another driving force behind early marriage in many communities is the desire to uphold a girl's virginity once she begins menstruating. This cultural belief maintains that younger girls are more likely to be virgins (Abagi et al. 2010). Research has also indicated that certain pastoral communities engage in harmful customs that contribute to early marriages. For instance, studies

by UNICEF (2014) and Muyaka (2018) found that in Samburu and Marsabit regions, community members practice "beading" and "booking," which refers to the temporary engagement of young girls even those who may have never attended school to men or boys. In some cases, these arrangements condone sexual interactions with girls as young as six.

Two studies Dube and Orodho, (2014) & Njuguna et al., (2018) investigated the impact of early marriages on girls' education in secondary schools across South and in Kenya broadly. The findings revealed that many girls drop out of school shortly after undergoing FGM/C, often when they are in upper primary grades. Those who do progress to secondary school typically leave before completing their education, primarily due to adverse socio-cultural practices, including early marriage and negative societal views on girls' education, which is often dismissed as a waste of resources because they are expected to marry eventually. Dube & Orodho (2014) found no evidence of boys dropping out, while on average, one girl per family did dropout, particularly between the fifth and eighth grades.

Abagi, Sifuna & Oando (2010) explored the link between FGM/C and early marriages among the Wardei, a Somali community in Wenje, and found a close relationship between these cultural practices and the detriment they pose to girls' education. Many girls, after undergoing FGM/C, perceive themselves as mature and ready for marriage. Additionally, the informal education provided during initiation ceremonies instills in them a sense of being "grown women," eagerly anticipating early marriages, as some are even "given away" to wealthy older men. The study concluded that FGM/C significantly contributes to high rates of school dropouts and early marriages.

Lastly, a study by Orodho et al. (2013) highlights that Somali traditions emphasize training girls from a young age to become excellent wives and mothers, which has resulted in a high incidence of early marriages. As such, young girls are viewed as valuable sources of labor and income. In an attempt to protect their daughters, parents may deny them the opportunity for education, claiming that schools cannot safeguard their virginity.

C. Religious and social pressures

In many cultures, girls' virginity is highly regarded, leading to practices aimed at „protecting" them from premarital sexual activity, including Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C), which is intended to inflict pain during any sexual intercourse. Additionally, in some areas, girls

may be pulled out of school once they reach menstruation to limit their interactions with male peers or teachers. While these measures are designed to safeguard girls from male sexual advances, marriage is viewed as a long-term solution, thus perpetuating the cycle of early marriages.

A study by Christian Aid, Nigeria (2018) highlighted that cultural and religious norms in Nigeria encourage girls to be conformist, making them susceptible to early marriage. This practice is often seen as an effective strategy to prevent adolescent sexual activity and unwanted pregnancies, negatively impacting their educational opportunities. The prominence of religion in Nigeria means that leaders wield considerable power over issues like the timing of marriages for young girls. The study advocates for empowering girls as a key strategy to protect them from early marriages.

Moreover, research by Kainuwa, Yusuf, and Saibon (2018) revealed that illiterate parents in Nigeria exhibit suspicion toward Western education, fearing it exposes their children to foreign Christian values. They view a Western-type education as conflicting with Islamic beliefs, leading to concerns that such education distracts girls from their traditional roles as mothers and homemakers. Consequently, some parents opt to withdraw their daughters from school to keep them at home.

Further study by Abagi (2014) focused on the education within pastoralist communities in Wajir, revealing a common belief that secular, Western-oriented education is inherently Christian and therefore irrelevant for Muslims. These religious convictions lead parents to underestimate the significance of broader education, favoring Islamic education provided in 'Madrassa' and 'Duksi,' which they believe suffices for their children's learning.

D. Regional customs

Gray (2016) identified significant differences across countries regarding the legal marriage age for boys and girls. For example, in Bangladesh, girls marry at 18 while boys marry at 21. In Afghanistan, girls can marry as young as 15 or 16 with parental consent and court approval, whereas boys typically marry at 18. In Sudan, girls may marry at just 10, while boys marry at 15 or upon reaching puberty. In Tanzania, Muslim and Hindu girls are permitted to marry at 12, provided that the marriage is not consummated until the girl turns 15.

In Kenya, early marriage is common among groups such as the Somali and Maasai (Plan International 2011). Early marriages pose a significant obstacle to girls' ability to participate in and complete primary education, though parents often view these arrangements as a means of controlling female behavior and sexuality. Within the Luo community, cultural beliefs encourage both boys and girls to marry at a young age, especially when traditional customs are observed. There is a belief that a girl who reaches puberty but dies before marriage will haunt her family, questioning why they allowed her to pass without experiencing love (Ogutu, 2007). Such beliefs drive the prevalence of early marriages.

E. Fear of remaining unmarried

In many patriarchal societies, women are often socialized to be compliant to men. Education plays a crucial role in empowering individuals; however, many men believe that a woman with little to no education will be more submissive as a spouse. This creates a fear among men whether real or perceived that educated women are unlikely to submit to their husbands, as noted by Turton (1974). Consequently, many young women in Africa, including Somali girls, believe that those who are better educated are less likely to find partners. As a result, parents often withdraw girls from school as they reach marriageable age, intending to prepare them for early marriage and limit their exposure to male classmates or teachers.

This perspective aligns with Juma's (1994) findings that in marginalized areas, schools are frequently staffed predominantly by male teachers due to the low participation rates of girls and the reluctance of non-local teachers to work in such environments. Parents fear for their daughters' safety in schools, especially when most teachers are male. This leads some to pull their daughters from school or refuse to enroll them entirely, particularly in the absence of female teachers who could provide a sense of security.

Research by Orodho et al. (2013) indicates that girls often face regressive cultural practices. These customs, combined with a patriarchal system, have led society to treat girls as tools for wealth acquisition. As a result, girls are often "sold" into marriage before they can benefit from education. Highly educated girls are perceived as being disconnected from their communities and therefore unsuitable for marriage, shedding light on the significant gender disparities in educational participation.

G. Perceived in ability of women to work for money

Despite significant advancements made by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) across various countries, women still encounter numerous obstacles in the job market. The World Bank has found that legal restrictions continue to limit women from engaging in certain professions worldwide. For example, in 18 countries, men legally prevent their wives from working, while in four countries; women are barred from registering a business (Darrah, 2020). This myth must be dispelled, as it hinders women's ability to work or start their own businesses.

Existing literature on the factors contributing to early marriages indicates that this practice has been extensively studied. Various reasons for its persistence have been identified, many of which are evident in Berahle Woreda, including poverty, lack of education, regressive cultural traditions, and strong Islamic beliefs. These factors contribute to the prevalence of early marriages and underscore the need for this study. However, the focus of these studies has primarily been on socio-cultural and economic influences on girls' education, with no research specifically examining the situation in Berahle Woreda. The current study aims to investigate the impact of early marriages on girls' educational opportunities.

2.2.2 Consequences of Early Marriage

The effects of early marriage on girls' education, poverty, and health have been documented by researchers and international organizations. Some significant consequences of early marriage include:

a. Early child bearing and unwanted pregnancies:

Girls who marry young often find themselves coerced into sexual relations with their husbands, exposing them to various health issues due to their psychological, physical, and sexual immaturity. Early marriage is also linked to premature childbearing. Young brides frequently experience immense pressure to demonstrate their fertility within the first year of marriage. Consequently, those who marry at a young age tend to have children earlier and may have multiple pregnancies due to their limited understanding of contraception and their weakened ability to negotiate its use.

b. Domestic violence and sexual abuse

Young girls who are married to significantly older men often experience an increased sense of powerlessness due to the age disparity, making them more vulnerable to abuse and less likely to stand up for themselves. These young brides are at a higher risk of being beaten or threatened, and they frequently accept mistreatment from their husbands. Studies show that girls who marry before turning 18 are more likely to tolerate abuse compared to those who marry after that age. Additionally, child brides face a heightened risk of domestic violence. Research in Egypt found that 29% of married adolescents reported being physically harmed by their spouses or others (Population Council, 2000).

Adolescents also have a greater likelihood of suffering from anemia than adults, which raises the risks and complications during pregnancy. They are more prone to malnutrition and issues such as high blood pressure and eclampsia as a result of pregnancy than women over 20 (Women's International Network, 2000).

c. Increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS

Research in Africa shows that men often seek young virgins due to fears of HIV infection, placing young girls at greater risk as their older husbands may have been exposed to the virus in previous relationships. The disparity in age and the girls' lower economic status further inhibit their ability to negotiate safe sex or require fidelity from their partners. Consequently, early marriage often results in young girls entering marital relationships without proper knowledge of sexual health, contraception, STDs, pregnancy, and childbirth.

d. Divorce or abandonment and Early Widowhood

Early marriage commonly leads to social issues reflected in divorce rates in developing countries. Young brides may feel desperate, prompting some to flee their marriages or end up abandoned by their husbands. This situation adversely impacts their lives, as they usually bear the responsibility of raising children without financial support from their spouse or family, thus increasing their likelihood of living in poverty. Additionally, early marriages are linked to early widowhood since husbands are frequently much older than their young brides. Some cultures forbid widows from remarrying or mandate that they be given to their deceased husband's brothers. The consequences of early marriage are severe, as many families may reject a widow upon her husband's death (UNICEF, 2001).

e. Consequences for children

The effects of early marriage extend beyond the young bride to future generations. A young mother's lack of maturity and education can hinder her nurturing abilities, resulting in higher infant mortality rates for children of very young mothers sometimes double that of infants born to older mothers (UNICEF, 2001).

2.3 Ways of Curbing Early marriage

Early marriage among girls represents a significant barrier to the educational progress of women in North-Central Nigeria and throughout the country, and it should be strongly opposed. This issue has contributed to the underdevelopment of women in the region, highlighting human rights violations and exacerbated by widespread poverty and immoral behavior among female students in senior secondary schools. To support the educational advancement of female students, it is essential to address early marriage by providing free and compulsory secondary education, implementing sex education, and launching campaigns to raise societal awareness about the value of girl-child education.

Elujekwute (2011) emphasizes that female students should receive sex education to inform them about the factors leading to early marriage and how to take precautions against premarital sex with peers. Additionally, Elujekwute stresses the importance of raising awareness among parents and guardians regarding the significance of girl-child education as a strategy to reduce early marriage, thereby enhancing the educational development of female students in North-Central Nigeria. Religious leaders should also promote moral values and highlight the significance of girl-child education to both parents and female students, fostering better educational outcomes.

In light of this, Elujekwute (2011) recommends that the federal government urgently enact laws prohibiting early marriage (specifically marriages involving individuals under 18) and enforce penalties for violators following proper legal procedures. This measure could eradicate the issue of early marriage and promote educational growth among female students in senior secondary schools across North-Central Nigeria and beyond. Furthermore, parents and guardians should instill moral values such as honesty, respect, and virginity in their daughters from a young age to help them avoid premarital sex and related behaviors that could lead to early pregnancies and marriages.

Njokwu (2013) argues that government and educational authorities at all levels should offer free and compulsory secondary education for girls, and effectively implement these programs to help curb early marriage in senior secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria. Additionally, curriculum developers should include sex education within the school curriculum to better educate students on the dangers of premarital sex and its implications for their lives and education.

2.4 Effect of Early Marriage on Girl's Education

Worldwide, over 700 million women were married before the age of 18, with about 250 million entering marriage before turning 15 (UNICEF, 2019). While child marriage occurs in Europe and Latin America, it remains a deeply entrenched practice in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where estimates indicate that 40 to 70 percent of marriages are child marriages (Raj and Boehmer, 2013). The highest rates of child marriages among girls are found in the South Asian (56 percent) and Sub-Saharan African (46 percent) regions, with Bangladesh, India (58 percent), and Nepal (52 percent) ranking among the top ten countries.

Schools are crucial institutions beyond the family that play a vital role in socializing and equipping young individuals for adult roles and responsibilities. However, early marriage inevitably deprives school-aged children of their right to education, which is essential for personal growth, adulthood preparation, and aiding future contributions to their families and society. Married girls often face practical and legal barriers that hinder their ability to pursue education.

In many regions, girls' educational participation faces significant obstacles due to outdated socio-cultural norms, which further marginalize vulnerable groups within the education system. For instance, research by Sifuna & Oanda (2014) and Abagi & Oanda (2014) highlights pronounced gender disparities in education, particularly in the former North Eastern Province, where boys are favored over girls. These disparities not only challenge educational access but also impede the broader socio-economic development of the

Research by Dube & Orodho (2014), Omuse (2017), and Njuguna et al. (2018) investigated the obstacles that early marriages create for the education of girls in secondary schools across various counties in Kenya. Their findings indicated that a significant number of girls leave school shortly after undergoing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), often to marry while still in

upper primary school. Those who do attend secondary school generally abandon their studies before graduation. This trend is primarily driven by regressive socio-cultural norms that view girls' education as an unworthy investment, based on the belief that girls will eventually marry. Consequently, families prioritize educating boys, with the intention of marrying off girls to acquire dowry. As a result, girls' educational participation suffers due to parents' inability to support the additional costs of schooling.

In a study by Abagi et al. (2010), the impact of FGM/C on early marriages and its detrimental effects on the educational involvement of Wardei girls, a Somali community in Wenje Division, Tana River District, was analyzed. The findings showed that many girls leave school immediately after undergoing FGM/C, believing they are now ready for marriage. This practice often shifts their focus towards early marriages, with some already being promised to wealthy older men. For instance, it was found that out of five girls who experienced FGM/C, four left school and entered early marriages, adversely affecting their educational engagement.

A report from the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2017) explored educational challenges faced by marginalized groups, including the Ajuran community in Buna Sub-County, Wajir County. It identified early marriage as a significant barrier to girls' educational participation, highlighting that it was common to see very few or no girls in upper primary classes due to the community's negative perception of girls' education.

Empirical Literature

Relatively limited research has systematically assessed the effects of child marriage on education. A key challenge is that a girl's decision to marry early or her parents' decision often correlates with her educational prospects. For instance, girls with lower academic expectations may perceive less potential loss in future earnings, resulting in weaker incentives to continue their education compared to academically stronger girls. These girls might be more inclined to marry early, as their parents may also be more willing to support such decisions. Additionally, girls who are less motivated to pursue education may marry young and could have left school even without marriage. Because decisions about education and marriage are interconnected, evaluating the impact of child marriage on educational attainment becomes quite complex.

Mohammed and Musab (2019) conducted an analysis on the prevalence and perceived impact of early marriage on the school enrollment and academic performance of female students in senior

secondary schools in Nigeria's North-East Geo-political zone. The study aimed to identify the significant effects of early marriage on the educational development of young females. An ex-post facto design was utilized, and data collected via questionnaires were analyzed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS) with t-tests for inferential statistics. The findings indicated a notable difference in the completion rates and academic achievements between students who married early and those who married later. The study recommended reforms in laws against early or forced marriage, the introduction of guidance and counseling in schools, and advised parents to postpone their daughters' marriages until later.

Edwin, Uwalaka & Loretta (2021) examined the impact of early marriage on the educational development of female students in senior secondary schools in North-Central Nigeria. The study focused on the influence of socio-economic backgrounds, indiscipline, and cultural values on early marriage and its consequences. The researchers discovered that these combined factors significantly affect the educational progress of female students, revealing that early marriage severely hampers their educational development and suggesting measures to mitigate this issue.

Oguejioffor (2020) investigated the implications of early marriage on girls' education in the Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State, using a descriptive survey design and structured questionnaires to gather data. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed with a coefficient of 0.89 through a test-retest method. Findings indicated that early marriage leads to poor academic performance, increased school dropout rates, and limits girls' educational aspirations and potential.

Monday (2017) explored how early marriage practices affect child dropout rates in Bubukwanga Sub-County, Bundibugyo district, employing a qualitative research design that included both primary and secondary data. The study found that early marriage is a significant issue in the area, influenced by parental attitudes that undervalue formal education. It highlighted the need for community awareness regarding the importance of girls' education to combat early marriage.

Nguyen and Wodon (2012) demonstrated that in Africa, each year of early marriage decreases the likelihood of literacy by 5.6 percentage points and the chance of completing secondary school by 6.5 points, with slightly greater effects for attaining any secondary education. They further noted that in India, early marriage negatively affected the fulfillment of educational rights by about 3.2 percentage points annually.

A study by Bariham et al. (2017) in Tamale, Ghana, identified factors leading to girls dropping out of school including parental ignorance regarding the value of girls' education, early marriages, and poverty. The study urged support for girls' educational pursuits through initiatives like girls' clubs, punitive measures against those marrying schoolgirls, and educating parents on the importance of girls' education to ensure their continued school attendance.

Ombongi (2008) reported that the early marriage practice adversely affected the educational value ascribed to girls in pastoralist communities. Economic considerations often led to girls aged 12-14 being married off to wealthy men in exchange for bride price, creating stress that discouraged them from remaining in school, as they faced peer and familial pressure to abandon their education. Literature reviews revealed that early marriages present significant obstacles to educational completion for primary school girls, with most studies conducted outside Kenya.

2/5 Theoretical Framework

This study builds on the theory of Social Norms. The social norm is what people in some groups believe to be normal in the group, that is, believed to be atypical action, an appropriate action, or both (Paluck and Ball 2010). A social norm is held in place by the reciprocal expectations of the people within a reference group.

Because of the interdependence of expectation and action, social norms can be stiffly resistant to change. Social norms are patterns of behavior in which people engage because they believe that they are expected to do so (Bicchieri, 2012; Heise, 2013; Mackie et al., 2015). They can be separated into descriptive norms, which describe what people do, and injunctive norms, which describe what members of a given reference group believe members ought to do (Ball Cooper & Fletcher, 2012).

While social scientists have approached norms from a variety of theoretical perspectives, none of which fully captures the messiness of real life. There is an emerging consensus that while „change can be rapid and abrupt or incremental and unnoticed“; it tends to be complex and non-linear, with descriptive norms often changing well in advance of injunctive norms (Marcus, 2014; Boudet et al., 2012; Calder, 2012; Rao, 2012). Much so, there is also growing evidence that it is easier to build new norms than it is to eliminate old ones (Heise, 2013).

Gender norms, which encompass a broad range of social meanings surrounding what it means to be a woman versus a man or a girl versus a boy in a particular culture, tend to be especially „sticky“ and difficult to change (Boudet et al., 2012). Not only are they pervasive, with „rules“ for everything, ranging from clothing choice to chore allocation to communication patterns, but, because few of us, carefully socialized since birth, are even able to see how they shape our lives, they are often silent. Indeed, noting the centrality of gender norms to our day-to-day lives, Boudet et al. (2012) observe that they „permeate daily life and are the basis of self-regulation. Layered on top of this conceptualization, Kabeer et al. (2011) noted that it is the economic reality that in many places women continue to be materially dependent on male family members and lack „any place in society outside of the family circle.

Much of the research and programming directed at changing restrictive gender norms is built around empowering girls and women to become their agents and make – and act on – their own choices (Marcus, 2014). Critical to the development of girls“ autonomy, however, is not only personal empowerment but space in which to exercise agency. Boudet et al. (2012) observe that changes in an agency are not necessarily predictive of norm change “if the structures of opportunities and constraints are not taken into account”. Understanding those structures and opening space for girls and women to become whom they would like to be, depends on the specific cultural norms which bind girls“ futures to the past (Boudet et al., 2012).

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework assists to visualize the relationship between early marriages and the education of girls“ in primary education. The figure illustrates a number of effects that were assumed to be the input that determine girls“ participation and completion in primary education, that is: causes of early marriages, early marriages and girls“ participation in education and completion rates in their primary education. The independent variables include: poverty, illiteracy, bride price or dowry, cultural traditions/laws, religious and social pressures, regional customs, fear of remaining unmarried and perceived inability of women to work for money. On the participation of girls, the study conceptualized on these factors: ignorance, gender bias, parent“s negative attitude towards the education of girl, role models and insecurity, thirdly conceptualized on completion rates and lastly, suggested remedies to early marriages. The framework also illustrated the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent

variable that is: low cost boarding schools, conditional cash transfer, punishing offenders, government policies, anti-FGM campaign and partnership with stakeholders. The process involves outcome of early marriages include: poor access, poor retention, poor participation, poor completion (meaning no future prospects for these girls), low transition (not moving from one grade/class to another) and gender inequalities in education.

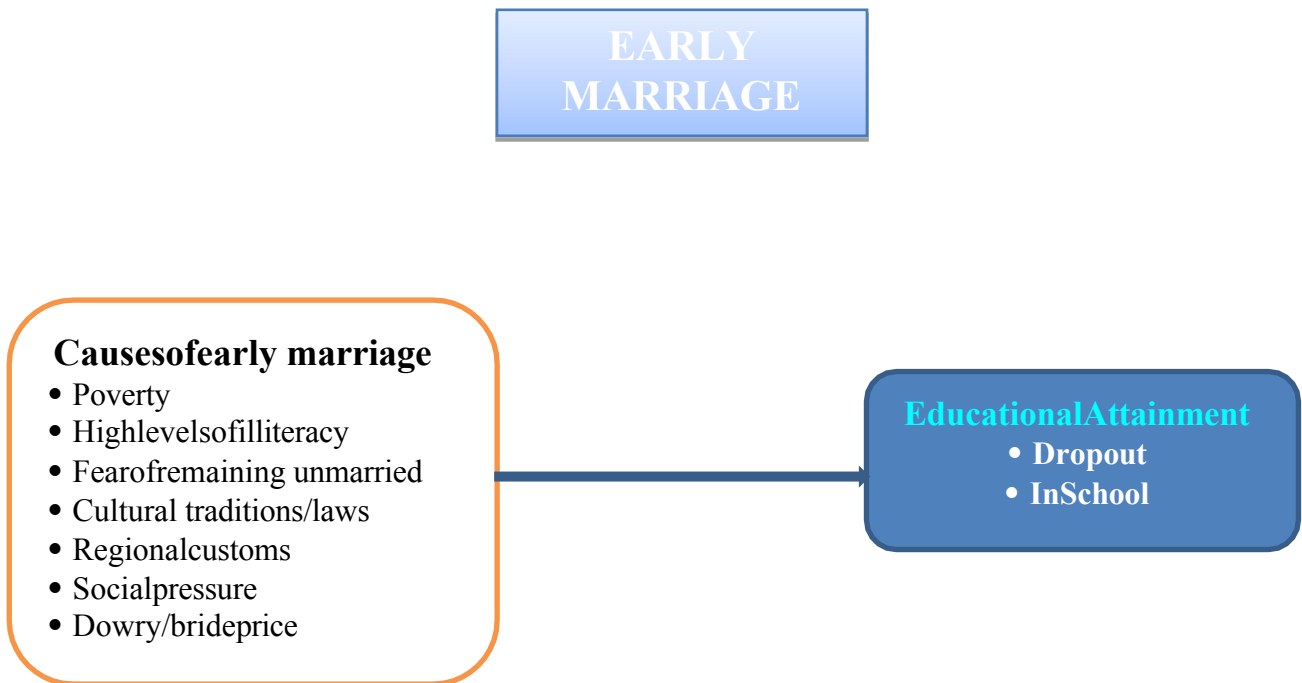


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework
(Source: Developed from literatures", 2025)

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Description of the Study Area

Berahle is a *Woreda* in Afar Region, Ethiopia and part of the Administrative Zone 2 (Kilbet Rasu). This *Woreda* is bordered on the south by Afdera and Abala, on the southwest by the Tigray Region, on the west by Koneba, on the north by Dallol, and on the northeast by Eritrea. Towns in Berahle include Berhale and Tiyarabora. The *Woreda* has a latitude and longitude of 13°51'N 40°01'E with an altitude of 639 meters above sea level.

Based on the 2007 Census conducted by the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), this *Woreda* has a total population of 78,881, of whom 45,501 are men and 33,380 women; with an area of 2,509.17 square kilometers, Berahle has a population density of 31.44. While 6,098 or 7.73% are urban inhabitants, a further 7,353 or 9.32% are pastoralists. A total of 11,402 households were counted in this *Woreda*, which results in an average of 6.9 persons to a household, and 11,653 housing units. 98.93% of the population said they were Muslim, and 1.03% was Orthodox Christians (CSA, 2007).

According to the Afar regional state Education Bureau annual report (2019) a total of 19,000 male and female students have dropped out from their primary school (1-8 grades) and of whom 674 male and 524 female were out of school from Berhale *Woreda* (ANRS Education Bureau, 2019)

3.2 Research Design

A descriptive and explanatory/casual research design was used to examine the impacts of early marriage on girls' education. According to Kothari, (2004), a descriptive survey design is a method of collecting information by administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals. Accordingly, a descriptive research design was employed to achieve the research objective and the rationale to employ a descriptive research design was because it is appropriate to the nature of the topic, which requires wider description, investigations of facts and information related to the factors influencing early marriage and girls' dropout from their primary education/school. Regarding an explanatory design, the study used this design to examine the cause-and-effect relationship or to measure the effect of early marriage on primary school girls' educational

attainment.

3.4 Research Approach

With regard to the research approach, mixed (qualitative and quantitative) research approach was employed. The rationale to employ a qualitative approach was because this research approach promotes the collection of data in its natural setting and allowed the researcher to capture the richness and depth of participants' experiences, which is especially appropriate in this particular study. Accordingly, the quantitative approach was adapted to obtain/collect both relevant data about the incidence of early marriage, dropout rate, literacy and other educational attainment data from the study targeted area, whereas the qualitative research approach was employed to collect and analyze the diverse sociocultural, economic and other contextual reasons or causes for early marriage and school dropout. By examining multiple cases of early marriage and girls' school dropout, the researcher was able to better understand the topic under study.

3.4.1 Data Type and Source

Both primary and secondary data were collected to examine the impact of early marriage on girls' education in Berhale *Woreda*. The required primary data were gathered through survey and in-depth interview, while the supplementary secondary data were collected via critical document analysis on relevant published and unpublished documents generated perspectives and insights to triangulate the results of primary data. Moreover, relevant secondary data were gathered by reviewing primary schools official records specifically, primary school enrolment, completion and dropout related pertinent data were analyzed.

3.4.2 Study Population, Sample Size & Sampling Procedure

3.4.2.1 Target Population

The study populations were all primary school age children in Berhale *Woreda*. There were a total of nine administrative Kebeles (2 urban & 7 rural) and 24 primary schools in the study area. Therefore, all primary school girls resided in nine administrative Kebeles of Berhale *Woreda* were the study populations. However, the actual primary school girl enrolment, particularly, the girls' primary and secondary school dropout figure was not well organized and found in the *Woreda* Education Office or the Regional Education Bureau.

3.4.2.2 Sample Size Determination

Out of the total nine administrative *Kebeles* in *Berhale Woreda* (2 urban and 7 rural), two administrative *Kebeles* (one urban and one rural) *Kebeles* were selected using a stratified purposive and random sampling techniques. Of the total 819 identified households which distributed as (613 HHs in *Berhale* and 206 HHs in *Adoe*) *Kebeles*, 269 primaryschool age girls were determined using Yamane"s (1967) sample size determination formula. The sample size determination was implemented as presented below:

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

Where:

n=samplehouseholdsize

N = the total household size =819

e=degreeof errorexpected=0.05 K

= is constant (1)

$$n = \frac{819}{1 + 819(0.00250005)}$$

$$n = \frac{819}{1 + 2.047500003}$$

$$n = \frac{819}{3.0475000003}$$

$$n = 268.74 = \mathbf{269}$$

There for a total of 269primaryschoolage girls were selected and participated in this study.

3.4.2.3 Sampling Technique

A stratified purposive and random sampling was implemented to select a representative sample size from the study area (*Berhale Woreda*). Initially, a total of nine administrative *Kebeles* (2 urban and 7 rural) were identified. Secondly, a total of two *Kebeles* (1 rural and 1 Urban)*Kebeles* namely;(BerhaleandAdoe)*Kebeles*were selected using stratified random sampling.

The rationale to employ a stratified sampling was to select a representative sample size of *Kebeles* by representing both rural and urban *Kebeles*.

Thirdly, out of 819 identified households which distributed as (613 HHs in Berhale and 206 HHs in Adoe) *Kebeles*, 269 primary school age girls were determined using Yamane's (1967) sample size determination formula.

Finally, 269 primary school age girls who enrolled at list one year primary school within five years prior to the survey were selected using a systematic sampling technique via their respective household list. The fact the concept of primary school age for enrollment is assumed for children between (7-14) years old, this study does not hold as rigidly, since in pastoral and rural areas, there were many students who are older than the typical school age, yet are actively pursuing education. Therefore, the determined 269 primary school age girls were allocated proportionally for the targeted two *Kebeles* and the allocated sample size of primary school age girls were selected using systematic random sampling technique.

Table 3.1: Sample size distribution

Study Area	Target Ketenas	Total Population (N)	Ratio distribution (n)
Berhale Woreda	Berhale town	613	$613 \times 269 / 819 = 201$
	Adoe Kebele	206	$206 \times 269 / 819 = 68$
Total		819	269

Source: Berhale Woreda Administration, 2025

In addition to the employed random sampling technique, a purposive sampling technique was implemented to collect the qualitative data using in-depth interview. Accordingly, a total of 10 informants were selected purposively.

3.5 Data Collection Method and Instruments

Both primary and secondary source data were collected. The primary data were collected through survey and in-depth interview, while the relevant supplementary secondary source data were gathered via documentation analysis.

Survey questionnaires: Structured close-ended survey questionnaires were used to collect the required primary data and the survey has two sub-sections. The first section was dealt about the socio-demographic characteristics of participants" and the second section dealt about the extent of early marriage and school dropout.

Key Informant Interview: Apart from the survey questionnaire, relevant qualitative data were collected via in-depth interview informants. An in-depth interview was held with purposively selected ten participants" and the informants were 4 out school girls due to early marriage, 2 primary school directors (one per school), 2 parent- teacher association members (one perschool) and 2 primary school teachers (one per school). Semi-structured interviews were conducted to have a detail understanding on the sociocultural factors influencing women employment opportunities. The Key Informant Interview participants were selected from the town Women"s and Youth Affairs Office and from the town women association. The rational to employ a purposive sampling was to give more emphasis for individuals with better insight and information on the topic under investigation.

3.6 Data Processing and Analysis

For the survey, all filled and returned questionnaires were checked for completeness and consistency of responses. Once survey data collection was finalized, experienced data encoders enteredquestionnairadataintoStatisticalPackageforSocialScience(SPSS)softwareversion 23.0 as data sets for cleaning, organization and analysis. Descriptive statistics was performed to weight percentages to compare demographic and socioeconomic characteristics among early married and unmarried girls. Chi-square test was used for categorical variables to determine whether differences in demographic and socioeconomic characteristics were statistically significant between married and unmarried girls.

Binary logistic regression model was utilized to estimate crude and adjusted odds ratios for the dependent variables (early marriage and school dropout), while multivariate logistic regression model was utilized to estimate the adjusted odds ratios for the dependent variables (early marriage and school dropout).

With regard to the qualitative interviews data, all sessions, with the consent of participants, were digitally recorded. Audio-files were later transcribed, post-coded and categorized under core thematicareas.Thematicanalysisprovidedinsightsintothenature,communityperceptionand

drivers of early marriage and changes. Narrated texts, graphs and tables were used to present results according to the nature of the information derived.

3.7 Study Variables and Measurement

This research began by investigating the factors leading to educational discontinuation through descriptive statistics. School dropout was treated as a categorical variable, determined by a questionnaire that included options such as 'economic reasons', 'parents did not allow', 'got married', 'school too far away', 'need to do household chores', 'dislike of studying', 'physical disability', and 'other'.

The school dropout variable was categorized as a binary measure of whether girls left school before completing their education, with a code of '1' for those who had dropped out and '0' for those who had not. Another variable distinguished between unmarried girls still in school and married girls who had dropped out due to early marriage. Married girls who cited marriage as the primary reason for leaving school were coded as '1', while unmarried girls currently attending school were coded as '0'. Girls who left school for other reasons were excluded from this variable.

Child marriage served as the independent variable in the regression analyses examining school participation and dropout rates. A dichotomous variable was created based on the reported age at first marriage. In this study, a girl was considered to be married if she entered into a formal or informal union before turning 18. The covariates included various demographic and socioeconomic characteristics used in the binary logistic regression models.

3.8 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Validity is concerned with whether the findings were really about what they appear to be about (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). It refers to the extent to which the measurement device, in this case the measurement questions in the questionnaire, provides adequate coverage of the investigative questions. Judgment of what is “adequate coverage” can be made in a number of ways. One is through careful definition of the research through the literature reviewed and, where appropriate, prior discussion with others (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). To raise the validity of the research, the questionnaire was prepared according to literature reviewed and questionnaires were checked by the research advisor to maintain its validity.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Hamersley and Traianous, (2012) underlines that some of the most significant ethical principles in educational research are, minimizing harm, harm include among others financial and reputational consequences for the people being studied, protecting privacy, this means to keep data confidential and respecting autonomy that is showing respect for people in the sense of allowing them to make decisions for themselves, notably about whether or not to participate. In this study the researcher treats all the gathered information with utmost confidentiality to safeguard the public reputation of organizations and people concerned. Informed consent was obtained by informing the respondents the purpose of the study and benefits of participation, so as to provide sufficient information so that a participant can make an informed decision about whether or not to continue participation.

CHAPTER FOUR

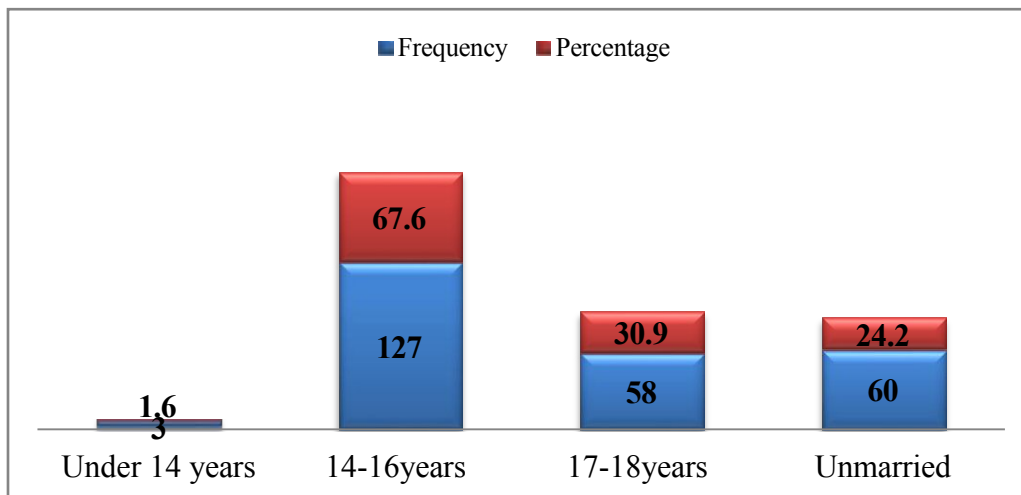
4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section the researcher was attempted to analysis, interprets and presented the study final outputs. The section is presented in three sub-sections and the first section was emphasized to present the prevalence of early marriage and socio-demographic characteristics". The second part was emphasized on the qualitative and quantitative result on educational attainment and dropout rate, while the third section is presentation of the empirical multivariate model analysis to describe statistically significant socio-demographic variables in relation to primary school age girls" educational attainment (drop out and in school). The fourth and the final section presented the result and discussion. Out of 269 distributed questionnaires, 248 filled questionnaires were collected by the researcher at a response rate of (92.2%).

4.1 The Prevalence of Early Marriage

Early marriage lead to early childbearing, increased risk of maternal health complications, and reduced overall well-being. In essence, early marriage and girls' education are closely linked, with child marriage often acting as a major barrier to girls' educational attainment. By acknowledging the stated fact, the section below presented the prevalence of early marriage in Berhale *Woreda*.

Figure 4.1: Marital status and early marriage



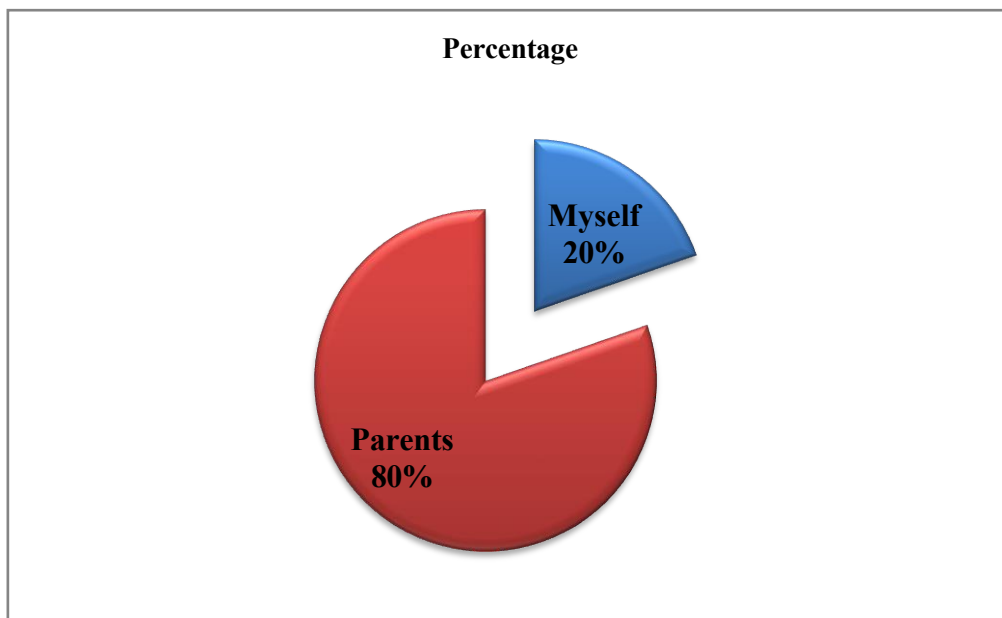
Source: Own survey, 2025

As depicted in Figure 4.1, out of (n=248) primary school age girls, the majority 188 (75.8%) were married and of whom 67.6% were remarried in age between 14-16 years, while, 30.9% married

between 17-18 years and the rest 1.6% married in age less than 14 years old. However, the remaining 60 (24.2%) were unmarried. This signifies that most of the surveyed girls were remarried at early age which subsequently influence girls' education negatively since early marriage leads to girls dropping out of school, limiting their access to educational opportunities and hindering their personal and professional growth. The possible reason for the increasing rate of early marriage in the study area is that the afar pastoral communities has been practiced a traditional “*Absumma*” marriage that predominantly practiced among the whole afar people as widely accepted and legal cultural norm. This context reinforced by the traditional gender roles and limited girls' agency and power, hindered their ability to make informed decisions about their own lives and future.

In comparing the prevalence of early marriage in Berhale *Woreda* (75.8%) with the national and regional prevalence rate, the prevalence of early marriage in Berhale *Woreda* 75.8% is relatively higher than the prevalence of early marriage in the afar regional state 67% and very far from the national prevalence rate 40% EDHS, (2017).

Figure 4.2: Decision to marry (n=188)



Own survey, 2025

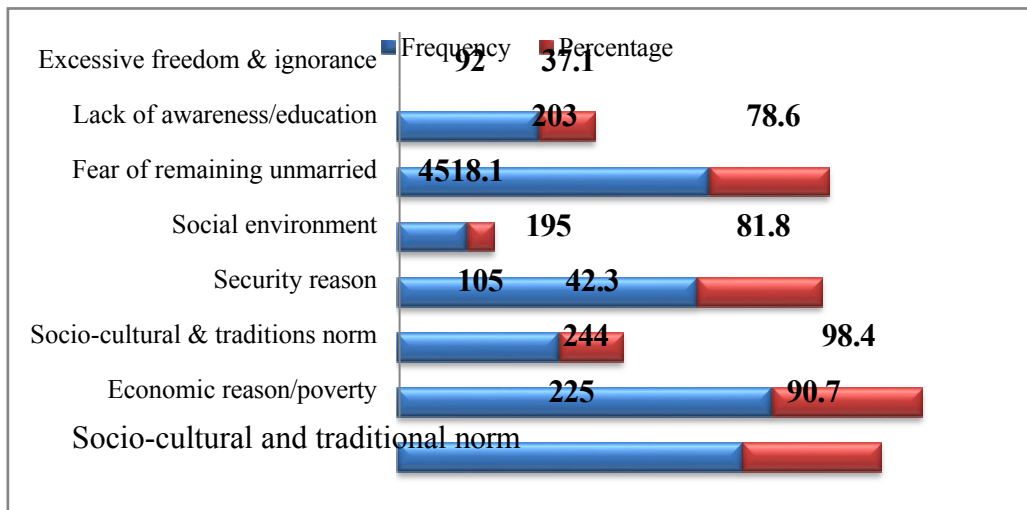
Based on Figure 4.2, of (n=188) married participants, only 37 (19.7%) had engaged in early marriage with their own decision, while the majority 151 (80.3%) of early married girls had engaged in early marriage due to parent decision. From this we can conclude that the majority early married women had forced to marry due to their parents' decision. The possible

explanation is that the afar region in general and Berhale *Woreda*, in particular known with the century-old harmful traditional practices that consequently caused the prevailed gender inequality and discrimination. The study area societies early marriage is deeply ingrained social pressure and cultural practice, locally named as “*Absuma*” that strongly influence the pastoral Berhale *Woreda* families to marry their daughters off young, regardless of other factors.

4.2 Reasons for Early Marriage

We can’t argue the relevance of assessing and identifying the fundamental reasons/causes and consequences of early marriage. In addressing and talking the existing early marriage requires understanding the most significant factors that caused and increases the prevalence of early marriage in any circumstance. Child marriage happens for many reasons, which differ between location, circumstance and community. However, in this section, the study investigated the key and fundamental causes/reasons for the prevailed early marriage in Berhale *Woreda*.

Figure4.3: Reasons for early marriages among girls



own survey, 2025

As summarized in the above Figure 4.3, the majority 98.4% of sampled participants reported the study area cultural traditions/laws and widely accepted norms as the main reason for the prevalent and increasing rate of early marriage in the afar regional state in general and in Berhale *Woreda* in particular. Additionally, participants in the qualitative interviews noted that entrenched traditional, cultural, social norms and religious laws have fostered the practice of child marriage in Berhale *Woreda*. In traditional societies like the predominantly pastoral

communities, sociocultural norms and religious laws hold more significance than legal aspects, as these norms receive greater societal respect and emphasis. Sociocultural norms soften the trajectory of social change within a community. In Berhale *Woreda*, the varying effects of these norms on both women and men remain a pressing concern. One interviewee who married young recounted that she married a relative due to cultural expectations, saying

One of the child married interviewee told that she married the one who is her clan and family member due to cultural norm:

I grew up with him and his family and saw him as my brother; I only learned later he was my husband. My family instructed me to move in with him when I was just 13. I was saddened by the cultural perception that „Absuma“ the marriage between siblings is a curse. Over time, I realized he was not my brother but my husband, which led me to despise my community and my identity as a woman.”

This situation underscores the pressure to uphold family reputation, as a girl's future is often seen to hinge on her marriage. The ability for girls to choose their partners or determine the timing of their marriages is typically relinquished to their parents under the guise of social and cultural norms. Parents often prioritize their own interests and considerations over their daughters' health and prospects when arranging marriages.

In the Afar region, particularly in Berhale *Woreda*, many pastoral families marry off their daughters at young ages, guided by sociocultural and religious frameworks that empower primarily fathers to decide when and to whom their daughters will wed. The cases mentioned illustrate that socio-cultural norms and religious laws often restrict girls from engaging in sexual activities before marriage. To enforce these restrictions, parents adopt various practices, including female genital mutilation, which is culturally viewed as a method to diminish girls' sexual desires. In many communities, early marriage remains socially acceptable, despite existing legal restrictions. These customs are often rooted in patriarchal views regarding female sexuality and the traditional roles of women as wives and mothers. The stigma associated with premarital pregnancy further perpetuates child marriage, as it is seen as a means to "protect the honor" of the girl and her family.

In rural Ethiopia, early marriage is viewed as a crucial opportunity for girls within their communities. They are encouraged to marry young to adhere to local socio-cultural norms and

religious beliefs; otherwise, they may face difficulties in finding a partner later in life. If a girl marries outside these cultural expectations or at an older age, she risks facing disrespect from her husband, his family, and her community. This is echoed by Bezie and Addisu (2019), who noted that, in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, girls are often married young and sent to live with their in-laws, where they are reared to embody the "values of a good wife" for their sons.

Social environment

Social and environmental factors emerged as the most frequently cited reasons for early marriage, noted by 81.8% of those surveyed. Many participants pointed out peer pressure as a crucial social element influencing this trend, emphasizing the significant impact peers can have on each other. One female participant similarly identified the environment as a primary social factor affecting early marriages in Berhale *Woreda*:

"Peer pressure plays a major role in early marriages; when young individuals see their friends within the same social circle getting married, they often perceive it as the norm and feel compelled to do the same. This tendency is especially common in rural areas. The surrounding environment greatly influences people's beliefs and behaviors, which is why child marriage is so common in these regions. Observing peers marry can lead to the assumption that it is an acceptable practice."

These insights clearly illustrate that social environment and widely practiced child marriage are one of the influences that significantly contribute to early marriage in Berhale *Woreda*. Similarly, McCleary-Sills and Parsons (2014) emphasized that societal norms, expectations, and gender discrimination play significant roles in undermining the autonomy of women and girls.

Lack of awareness and education

A lack of public awareness and the community's low educational levels were cited by 78.6% of participants as the main reasons for the rise in early marriages. Interview responses corroborated the survey results, with many informants detailing how insufficient education and awareness in the community heavily impact the issue of early marriage in both rural and urban areas of Berhale *Woreda*. One participant emphasized this concern, stating:

"Ignorance significantly contributes to early marriages. Many people are unaware that starting a household at a young age can lead to considerable emotional and physical"

stress, along with myriad responsibilities. They tend to believe that love alone justifies marriage, overlooking the potential for more constructive paths that would prevent entrenching themselves and future generations in poverty."

This finding resonates with Sathyamoorthi (2013) which noted that both parents and young girls often lack awareness of the implications of child marriage. The girls expressed that they were not pressuring their parents for marriage; instead, it was the parents who urged them to leave school and marry a groom of their choice, justifying this by recalling their own experiences of marrying young and suggesting that there's nothing wrong with their daughters doing the same.

Economic reasons/poverty

Poverty is a major factor contributing to child marriage across various contexts. Families facing financial hardship often view child marriage as a means to lessen their financial responsibilities. In some cases, they may receive a dowry from the marriage of their daughters, which can provide crucial income. In Berhale Woreda, a staggering 90.7% of survey respondents identified low economic status as the primary driver of early marriage.

Supporting these quantitative findings, many interviewees expressed that parents often marry off their daughters to gain financially from bride price payments, which can then help fund the education of younger siblings, especially boys. In poorer families within Berhale Woreda, economic pressures can also prompt girls to miss school to work in markets. One respondent emphasized the societal importance of marriage as:

Marriage is a social currency here. It defines your status, your worth. Choosing a career over marriage felt like choosing shame over acceptance, a path less traveled and less understood.

Consequently, when families experience severe financial stress, it is common for them to marry off young girls for economic benefit. It is crucial to highlight that girls can be compelled to leave school for early marriages when indirect costs, such as those associated with primary education, are factors. The research findings indicate that economic struggles lead parents to marry off their daughters, viewing this as a means to achieve financial gain through bride price. Additionally, marrying off older daughters allows larger families to finance the education of younger siblings, particularly boys. The study portrays child marriage as a means of securing financial gain and a

strategy for families to escape their economic woes. Similarly, Hodgkinson (2016) recognized poverty and related economic issues as significant drivers of child marriage, suggesting it serves as a coping strategy for families facing financial instability, while contextual economic factors such as income poverty and bride price play a role. Furthermore, Chitempa (2017) noted that poverty often prompts parents to withdraw their daughters from school and offer them in marriage to older men for a dowry, reinforcing child marriage as an inter-generational issue that perpetuates poverty.

Other reasons

The issue of security reason 42.3%, excessive freedom and ignorance 37.1% and fear of remaining unmarried 18.1% were the least agreed and mentioned reasons in influencing early marriage in Berhale *Woreda*. Few participants expressed that the anxiety surrounding a girl child remaining unmarried for life contributes to the prevalence of early marriages. As one participant articulated:

"People often believe a girl is ready for marriage as soon as she reaches puberty, driven by the idea that if she doesn't marry young, she risks being single for life. When a woman surpasses the conventional marriage age, society tends to label her as deviant not only because of her situation but also due to societal norms."

Birech (2013) supports this notion by noting that a woman's status significantly affects child marriage trends. As a result, if a girl goes beyond the traditional marrying age of 25, she may be seen as a burden and brings shame to her family, prompting parents to feel pressured to marry off their daughters right after puberty.

Some participants pointed out that excessive freedom due to insufficient parental guidance contributes to the problem of child marriage. They highlighted that single-mother households often lack a father's authority, allowing children to act without supervision. One participant remarked that;

Early marriage is especially common in impoverished, single-mother families, as the absence of authority leads to the early marriage of girls while prioritizing the education of male children who can provide for the family later."

Another informant elaborated that early marriage results from parental neglect, which gives children too much freedom and fails to instill proper morals, particularly evident in urban settings among the elite. As a result, girls may become pregnant and be forced into early marriages, or they might feel inclined to marry without being pregnant.

The Population Council's report on ending child marriage in Zambia (2017) also indicates that all girls are affected by this issue, especially those with lower education levels, those living in rural areas, and those from poorer backgrounds. These girls are more at risk compared to their peers with higher education or those in urban, wealthier settings, due to peer pressure in rural areas and parental neglect granting them too much liberty.

Lastly, while few informants mentioned that early marriage could provide safety and security for young unmarried girls, this sentiment was especially valid for girls in the Berhale Woreda. One participant shared her experience, stating that she was worried about her school-aged daughters becoming involved in relationships, which have become increasingly common due to modernization. Although she initially did not intend to end her daughter's education or arrange her marriage solely based on this concern, she eventually decided to marry her off to secure a better match within her family. This underscores the need to explore the complexities of early marriage and the factors influencing such decisions. Parents of young school or college-aged daughters also expressed anxiety about their daughters' safety while traveling to school, mentioning that local boys or men often harassed them. Consequently, these parents viewed marrying their daughters as the only viable solution to ensure their safety.

In conclusion, the study revealed that the existing cultural and traditions norm and laws, the social norm & environment, economic reason/poverty and lack of awareness/education are the fundamental and significant causes, while excessive freedom and ignorance, fear of remaining unmarried and security reason were slightly influencing reasons for the increasing early marriage practices among Berhale *Woreda* households and communities.

4.3 Early Marriage and Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Socio-demographic conditions, including factors like poverty, low education levels, and rural residence, are significant predictors of early marriage. These conditions often create circumstances where early marriage is seen as a means of addressing economic hardship or

meeting societal expectations. Accordingly, the section below presented the descriptive result of early marriage and participants' socio-demographic characteristics" (Table 4.1).

Table4.3:Early marriage and demographic characteristics

Variables		Married (n=188)		Unmarried (n=60)		Total (%)	X ²
		Count	%	Count	%		
Religion	Muslim	167	88.8	47	78.3	86.3	4.23
	Christian	21	11.2	13	21.7	13.7	
Placeofresidence	Urban	11	5.9	34	56.7	18.1	79.0
	Rural	177	94.1	26	43.3	81.9	
Husband/HHhead education	Illiterate	161	85.6	25	41.7	75.0	55.8
	Read&write	4	2.1	1	1.7	2.0	
	Primary	14	7.4	17	28.3	12.5	
	Elementary	8	4.3	9	15.0	6.9	
	Secondary	1	0.5	8	13.3	3.6	
Husband/HHhead occupation	Formal	40	21.3	26	43.3	26.6	11.3
	Informal	148	78.7	34	56.7	73.4	
Ethnicity	Afar	172	91.5	42	70.0	86.3	17.7
	Others	16	8.5	18	30.0	13.7	
Wealthindex	Poor	147	78.2	19	31.7	66.9	55.8
	Middle	16	8.5	29	48.3	18.1	
	Rich	25	13.3	12	20.0	14.9	

Source: Filedsurvey,2025

1. Early marriage and religion

Overall, 86.3% of sampled primary school age girls were Muslims. Among married girls, 88.8% were Muslims, while 78.3% unmarried girls were Christians. The chi-square test score (4.23, $p=0.052$, >0.05) confirmed that there is insignificant difference among married and unmarried girls in terms of religion. This could be due to the fact that the majority residents in Berhale rural and urban areas were dominantly Muslims.

2. Early marriage and residence

Out of the sampled participants", 81.9% girls resides in rural area and 18.1% urban. Only 5.9% of urban dwellers were married, while 56.7% of urban girls were unmarried. The chi-square test score 79.0 confirmed that there were statistically significant difference among married and unmarried girls in terms of place of residence. This indicates that early marriage is more prevalent in rural and pastoral areas, often due to factors like less access to education, limited economic opportunities, and stronger traditional norms.

3. Early marriage and HHH and education

Among the sampled girls, 75.0% were headed by illiterate heads or husbands. The majority 85.6% of married women had illiterate household head/husband, while 41.7% of unmarried girls had illiterate headed/husband. The chi-square test score 55.8 confirmed that there is statistically significant difference among married and unmarried girls in terms of household head/husband educational status at 5% significance level.

4. Early marriage and HHH/husband occupation

Overall, the majority 73.4% of household heads/ husbands was engaged in informal employment and 26.6% had formal employment status. Among married girls, only 21.3% girls head/ husband had formal labor, while 43.3% of unmarried girls husband/heads had formal employment. The chi-square test score 11.3 confirmed that there is statistically significant variation between married and unmarried girls in terms of husbands/household heads occupational status. This could be due to the fact that the majority participants" rural girls, where informal agro-pastoral and pastoral livelihoods were dominant.

5. Early marriage and ethnicity

Out of the surveyed girls, the majority 86.3% was afar and among married girls, the majority 91.5% was a few ethnic groups, whereas 70.0% of unmarried girls were afar. The chi-square test 17.7 indicate the presence of a statistically significant variation among married and unmarried primary school age girls in terms of ethnicity. This could be due to the fact that the majority participants" were rural girls.

6. Early marriage and wealth index

Out of (n=248) sampled primary school age girls, the majority 66.9% were poor, while 18.1%

middle and 14.9% had rich wealth status. Among married girls, the majority 78.2% had poor wealth index, whereas only 31.7% of unmarried women had poor wealth status. The chi-square test (55.8) indicates the presence of a strong and statistically significant variation among married and unmarried primary school age girls in terms of wealth index. This indicates that poor girls are more likely to marry than their counterparts. This is due to the fact that in rural Ethiopia in general and in rural pastoral afar regions in particular, poor families were more inclined to marry off their daughters early to reduce the financial burden of raising them. Hence, we can conclude and argue that economic hardship strongly leads to limited opportunities for education due to the greater probability to marry at early age seem like a viable option.

4.4 Factors Associated with Early Marriage

In this section an empirical regression model was utilized to examine the crucial factors that determine/influence early marriage among Berhale *Woreda* households. In order to identify statistically significant factors, seven explanatory variables including religion, household head or husband education, husband or head occupation, wealth index, place of residence, ethnicity, and decision to marry were used in the multivariate logistic regression analysis, which are statistically significant factors in the binary logistics regression analysis.

Multivariate logistic regression analysis revealed that religion, husband/household head education, husband or head occupation, wealth index, place of residence, ethnicity, and decision to marry were statistically significant and the main contributing factors for early marriage in Berhale *Woreda*.

Table 4.4: Factors Associated with Early Marriage

Variables	Married (n=188)	Unmarried (n=60)	AOR:95% CI	P- Value
Religion				
Muslim	167(88.8)	47(78.3)	5.7[1.07-30.6]	.041*
Christian	21(11.2)	13(21.7)	1	
Husband/HH head education				
Illiterate	143(76.1)	25(41.7)	.169[0.03-0.80]	.026
Read&write	9(4.8)	6(10.0)	1.98[0.02-1.79]	.150
Primary	20(10.6)	13(21.7)	.136[0.01-0.95]	.045
Elementary	11(5.9)	9(15.0)	.101[0.01-0.88]	.039
Highschool&above	5(2.7)	7(11.7)	1	
Husband/head Occupation				
Informal	148(78.7)	34(56.7)	0.247[0.07-0.87]	.030
Formal	40(21.3)	26(43.3)	1	
Wealth index				
Poor	147(78.2)	19(31.7)	.040[0.009-0.1]	.000
Middle	16(8.5)	29(48.3)	1.43[0.40-5.12]	.578
Rich	25(13.3)	12(20.0)	1	
Place of residence				
Rural	177(94.1)	26(43.3)	17.4[5.1-59.1]	.000*
Urban	11(5.9)	34(56.7)	1	
Ethnicity				
Afar	172(91.5)	42(70.0)	0.131[0.03-0.5]	.004*
Others	16(8.5)	18(30.0)	1	
Decision to marry				
Parents	151(80.3)	26(43.3)	3.3[1.06-10.6]	.039*
Myself	37(19.7)	34(56.7)	1	

Own survey, 2025

Table 4.2 demonstrated the result of multivariate logistic regression analysis and the result indicated that the prevalence of early marriage is 5.7 times higher among Muslim religion followers as compared to Christian follower girls [AOR = 5.7, 95% CI 1.07-30.6]. The estimated odds ratios revealed that early marriage is 83.1% and 89.9% more prevalent among girls with illiterate and elementary school heads/husbands as compared to girls who had household heads/husbands with secondary and above educational status [AOR = 0.169; 95% CI: 0.03-0.80] and AOR = [0.101; 95% CI: 0.01-0.88], respectively. Likewise, the odds of early marriage are 86.4% higher among girls who had primary school heads/husbands than girls who had heads/husbands with secondary and above educational status [AOR = 0.136; 95% CI: 0.01-0.95].

The prevalent of early marriage is 75.3% higher among girls who had heads/husbands with informal employment, than their counter parts [AOR =0.247, 95% CI: 0.07-0.87]. Moreover, the analysis shows that girls with poor wealth index were 96.0% higher to engage in early marriage than girls with rich wealth index, as the estimated odds of early marriage for girls in the poor wealth index was [AOR= 0.040; 95% CI: 0.009-0.1].

Furthermore, the prevalence of early marriage is 17.4 times more likely among rural girls as compared to urban girls [AOR= 17.4; 95% CI: 5.1-59.1]. Early marriage is 86.9% more prevalent among afar ethnic girls as compared to other ethnic girls [AOR= 0.131; 95% CI: 0.03- 0.5]. Finally, the prevalent of early marriage is 3.3 times higher among girls whose marriage decision made by parent than girls whose marriage decision was made by themselves [AOR= 3.3; 95% CI: 1.06-10.6].

4.5 The Impact of Early Marriage on Girls Education

The third objective is to examine the effect of early marriage on girls' educational attainment in Berhale *Woreda*. Accordingly, the researcher was attempted to address this objective through comparison among in school and out school primary school age girls. Additionally, the highest grade level among early married and school out girls was depicted to understand the extent of early marriage effect on girls' education in Berhale *Woreda*. Moreover, for deeper understanding about the effect of early marriage on primary school age girls' education, the qualitative interview findings were presented.

Table 4.5: Early marriage and educational attainment

Variables	Categories	Married (n=188)		Unmarried (n=60)		Total (%)	X ²
		Count	%	Count	%		
Schooling	In-school	38	20.2	50	83.3	35.5	79.1
	Dropout	150	79.8	10	16.7	64.5	

Table 4.3 demonstrated that out of the surveyed (n=248) participants, only 88(35.5%) were in school, while the majority 160(64.5%) were drop out. With regard to married and unmarried girls, only 38(20.2%) of married girls were in school, while 83.3% of unmarried girls were still attaining their education (in school). This indicates that girls who engaged in marriage in general

and in early marriage in particular were more likely to leave (drop out) as compared to unmarried girls. The chi-square test score 79.1 confirmed that there were statistically significant difference among married and unmarried girls in terms of educational attainment at 5% significance level. The possible explanation is that married girls could be faced new responsibilities related to childcare and housework that could overwhelm, making it difficult to balance school and family life.

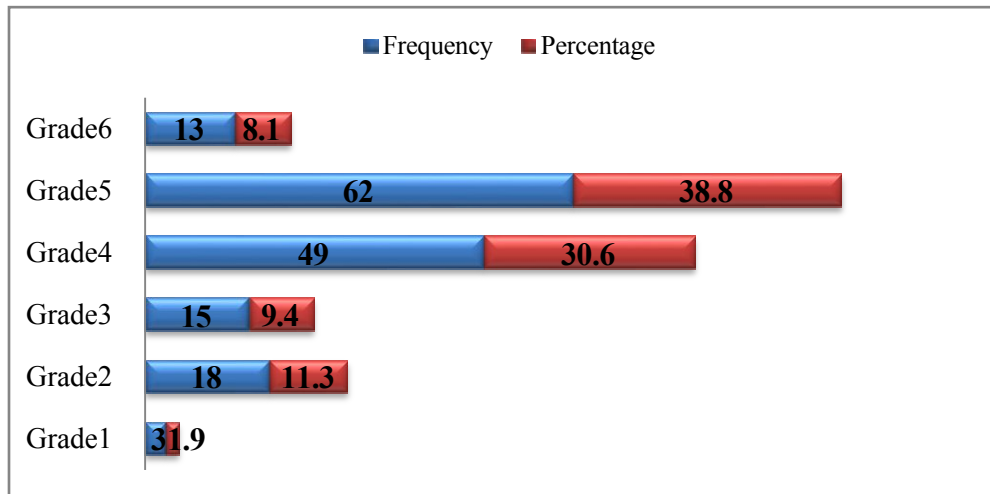


Figure 4.4: Highest completed grade among early married & dropout girls (n=160)

Figure 4.4 demonstrated about the distribution of the highest grade completed by early married and out school girl in Berhale *Woreda* and of (n= 160) out school primary school age girls, the highest 62(38.8%) were dropped out at grade five and followed by 49(30.6%) who drop out in grade 4, while 18(11.3%) drop out grade two, 15(9.4%) drop out in grade three, 13(8.1%) drop out in grade six, and 3(1.9%) were drop out at grade one.

Table 4.5: Associations between early marriage and school dropout

Educational attainment	Married (n=188)	Unmarried (n=60)	OR[95%:CI]	AOR[95%: CI]	
Dropout	150(79.8)	10(16.7)	0.051[0.02-0.10]	0.152[0.04-0.47]	.000
In school	38(20.2)	50(83.30)	1	1	

Own survey, 2025

Table 4.4 demonstrated that the odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals (CI) for school dropout

among primary school age girls. The logistic regression analysis shows that early married girls

were significantly more likely to leave school (drop out) (OR 0.051; 95% CI: 0.02-0.10) compared to their unmarried peers. The effect remained significant (AOR= 0.152; 95%CI: 0.04-0.47) after adjusting socio-demographic variables (age, place of residence, household wealth status, religion, social class, and education of the household head).

Apart from the above finding, the qualitative interview was held with the selected key informant participants. Similarly, most of the interview informants noted; early marriages hindered girls' educational attainment. This also comes out clearly from one participant as:

... I was married when I was 14 years old by dropping my school from grade 6. Currently, I have four children. My family forced me to quit my education in grade six. My husband was 26 years old when he married me.

This implies that child marriage practice strongly limits the educational opportunities of girls because family and the members of the community give more value for the benefit they get from child marriage than the advantage girls get from the achievement of their education.

Similarly, most of the interview informants noted; early marriages hindered girls from reaching their full potential, leaving them reliant on their husbands. One participant stated:

"The education of the girl child suffers significantly, as early marriage diverts their attention away from their studies toward marital responsibilities, which they may struggle to uphold. Consequently, they may never become self-reliant in the future, since their education is the key to self-sufficiency has been compromised, resulting in a lack of essential skills needed for economic advancement."

The above case highlights that how much the deep-rooted gender inequality and existing discrimination perpetuates child marriage that paralyzes the opportunity of girls' education and other. Educating a girl therefore is viewed as watering somebody else's flower since the girl is an outsider who will leave her parents' home and go to her husband. Based on such misplaced attitudes, taking a girl to school will be seen as a waste of time and resources. Early marriages rob girl children of their chances to create a livelihood, rendering them dependent on their husbands and potentially exposing them to poverty if the marriage fails or the husband abandons them. In such cases, the children may end up on the streets, forced to fend for themselves due to the absence of parental support.

This is consistent with Wodon and Yedean (2017) and Mahato (2016) reported that girls' quit their education even not completing their primary or basic education due to child marriage. Similarly, Save the Children Ethiopia (2019) also shows that child marriage is contributed to lower education of girls which also affects their economic status because child brides are less able than unmarried or older girls to access schooling and income-generating activities or to get benefit from education.

The results of the empirical multivariate analysis in Table 4.5 demonstrate the effects of socio-demographic characteristics on the likelihood of school dropout. The analysis indicates that early marriage, religion, wealth index and residence were statistically significant predictors for girls' school dropout (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Multivariate logistic regression

Variables	Schooling		COR[95% CI]	AOR[95% CI]	P-value
	Dropout (n=160)	Inschool (n=88)			
Early marriage					
Yes	150(79.8)	38(20.2)	.051[0.02-0.109]	.152[0.049-0.47]	.005
No	10(16.7)	50(83.3)	1	1	
Religion					
Muslim	148(92.5)	66(75.0)	4.11[1.92-8.79]	4.06[1.12-14.6]	.032
Christian	12(7.5)	22(25.0)	1	1	
Wealth index					
Poor	137(85.6)	29(33.0)	8.7[3.97-19.1]	15.8[4.1-60.0]	.000
Middle	10(6.2)	35(39.8)	0.52[0.19-1.3]	2.6[0.63-11.0]	.182
Rich	13(8.1)	24(27.3)	1	1	
Residence					
Rural	156(97.5)	47(53.4)	0.029[0.01-0.08]	.080[0.018-0.35]	.001
Urban	4(2.5)	41(46.6)	1	1	

Own survey, 2025

Table 4.5 demonstrated the multivariate logistic regression analysis and the result shows that among the included ten socio-demographic variables, four variables including early marriage, place of residence, wealth index and education of household head/husband were statistically significant and main contributing factors to school dropout due to early marriage.

Early married girls were 84.8% more likely to leave out of school due to early marriage as compared to unmarried girls (AOR=0.152; 95% CI: 0.049-0.473). Girls who belong to

Muslim religion were 4.06 times more likely to drop out of school due to child marriage [AOR = 4.06, 95% CI: 1.12-14.6]. Girls with poor wealth index were 15.8 times more likely to drop out of school than girls who had rich wealth status due to early marriage [AOR = 15.8, 95% CI: 4.1-60.0]. Girls living in rural area were 92.0% more likely to drop out of school as compared to urban girls reside [AOR = 0.080, 95% CI: 0.018-0.35].

4.6 Strategies for Ending Early Marriages

This section addresses strategies for addressing early marriage in Berhale *Woreda*, aiming to outline methods for programs and organizations and to identify actions that local stakeholders should take to combat this issue. The data discussed pertains to the third question: what approaches can be taken to eliminate early marriages? Participants in surveys and interviews described various strategies, including empowering girls through financial incentives and information, providing economic support to girls and their families, educating parents and community members about the consequences of early marriage, enhancing access to quality education, and effectively enforcing supportive legislation.

1. Empowering Girls

Community involvement, access to health, education, and child protection services, and establishing legal frameworks to safeguard girls were highlighted as critical strategies to reduce and ultimately end early marriage. Participants emphasized the necessity of empowering girls with knowledge, skills, and support networks through collaboration with organizations. This aligns with Austria et al. (2016), who emphasized the significance of empowerment programs that teach girls about life skills, health, and financial literacy. Similarly, Fieldman Jacobs and Hervish (2011) advocated for promoting awareness among girls as a means to challenge societal norms surrounding child marriage. Consequently, governments and organizations should provide financial support to young girls.

2. Offering financial assistance and incentives

Interview respondents noted that reducing child marriage could be facilitated through economic support and incentives for girls and their families. They highlighted the importance of government programs that empower girls and their households, such as social cash transfers and youth development initiatives. As one participant expressed;

"For girls and women to lead safe, healthy, and empowered lives, they must secure economic stability. Implementing financial incentives like conditional cash transfers can encourage families to consider alternatives to child marriage by alleviating financial pressures and perceiving daughters as valuable assets rather than financial burdens, as society often regard unmarried girls."

3. Raising awareness

Early marriage tends to occur in communities grappling with poverty, elevated birth and death rates, and limited access to education and healthcare. It may be viewed as a means of immediate financial security, often exchanged for goods or resources that help sustain other family members. Girls from impoverished households are particularly vulnerable to being forced into marriage. To address this issue, some participants suggested that educating parents and community members about the social and health repercussions of child marriage might help alleviate the problem. They underscored the need for a comprehensive approach to combat child marriage, as articulated in the following statement:

"Enhancing multi-sectoral efforts is vital to reducing children's vulnerability to marriage. Government collaboration with various organizations is essential for educating the public on the consequences of child marriage."

Compounding the issue are challenges related to accessing reproductive health services. For instance, a girl seeking services might encounter judgmental attitudes from healthcare workers, deterring her from returning. In some instances, she may require permission from a parent, husband, or other authority figures to access these services. Additionally, the cost of travel and the distance to the nearest clinic can pose significant obstacles.

4. Improve Girls' Access to Quality Education

Improving access to school and high-quality education is frequently cited as one of the most effective strategies for preventing child marriage and safeguarding girls from the severe social, economic, and health repercussions of marrying at a young age. Participants highlighted that a key approach to eliminating child marriage is to enhance girls' access to quality education. They stressed the importance of the government continuing to provide educational programs through

the Ministry of Education, such as school clubs and other initiatives that foster a nurturing environment for girls. As one participant stated:

"The government should ensure the availability of child-focused services to reduce children's vulnerability to child marriage. Relevant ministries must collaborate to deliver services that address child marriage in schools, where teachers can emphasize the significance of clubs centered on poetry, drama, and anti-AIDS education, as these raise awareness about the risks associated with child marriage."

This underscores the need for government services that aim to lower children's susceptibility to early marriage, aligning with Fieldman-Jacobs and Hervish (2011), who argue that combating child marriage necessitates multifaceted approaches that empower girls through increased educational opportunities, enhanced income, and better access to sexual and reproductive health information and family planning resources.

5. Promote Supportive Laws and Policies

Participants in this segment expressed that strengthening supportive laws and policies against child marriage is essential. They noted that current laws often prove ineffective, reducing the deterrent effect on parents and guardians considering early marriage for their daughters. This issue could be mitigated by enforcing existing laws and making policies regarding case reporting more accessible to girls. One participant remarked,

"We need to develop and review policies and legislation to ensure a consistent interpretation and implementation of child-related interventions, which can promote positive changes in negative attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and practices to help decrease child marriage rates."

This view is supported by Malhotra et al.(2011), who suggested that organizations tackling child marriage should create initiatives and interventions aimed at ending the practice, including programs focused on altering the attitudes and behaviors of young people.

Discussions

The prevalence rates of early marriage and school dropout were 75.8% and 64.5%, respectively which is higher than Amhara region (Tekile et al. 2020). This difference can be attributed to various factors such as economic disparities, cultural variations, and differences in educational opportunities between Ethiopia and these countries. These findings were consistent with a study conducted by Agerenehu et al. (2021) which also identified these regions as hotspots for early marriage. Additionally, the study found that the prevalence of school dropout after marriage 64.5% is lower than 75.4% in Ethiopia among girls aged 15–49 (EDHS, 2016).

The current study shows that early marriage was the most common reason given for girls' school dropout. Overall, the risk of school dropout due to early marriage heightens among grade four and five girls. The results of the empirical multivariate analysis demonstrate the effects of socio-demographic characteristics on the likelihood of early marriage and school dropout. The analysis indicates that several variables were statistically significant predictors for both early marriage and school dropout simultaneously. Specifically, religion, wealth index and place of residence were found to be significant predictors for both outcomes (early marriage and school dropout). In contrast, religion, husband/household head education, husband or head occupation, wealth index, place of residence, ethnicity, and decision to marry were significant predictors for early marriage, while early marriage, religion, place of residence and wealth index were significant predictors for school dropout.

Early married girls were 84.8% more likely to leave out of school due to early marriage as compared to unmarried girls. The findings on the significant effect of early marriage on girls' education is consistent with earlier studies by Omoeva et al (2014) and Field (2008) suggesting that marriage curtails girls' schooling. The incompatibility between marriage and schooling is partly attributed to social norms towards married girls in Berhale Woreda

The study confirmed that girls living in rural areas were 17.4 times and 92.0% more likely to experience early marriage and school dropout as compared to urban girls. These findings were consistent with previous research conducted in Ethiopia Tezera Abebe, (2019) and Tekile et al (2020) and Boyacı (2019) in Turkey on the determinants of early marriage and school dropout.

The study also highlighted the influence of parental decision-making on early marriage and

school dropout. Girls whose parents made the decision to marry them were 3.3 more likely to experience early marriage as compared to girls who had a say in their own marriage. This can be attributed to parents not considering the age and educational aspirations of their daughters when making marriage decisions (Roy, 2022).

Moreover, the study found that wealth index played a significant role in early marriage and school dropout. Girls from the poor wealth index category were 96.0% higher and 15.8 times more likely to experience early marriage and school dropout as compared to girls from the rich wealth index category. These findings were consistent with previous studies conducted in Ethiopia Aychiluhm (2021) & Tezera Abebe, (2019) and Boyacı (2019) in Turkey, and Mehra, (2018) in India on the factors influencing early marriage and school dropout.

Finally, the study revealed that girls with uneducated partners/husband were more likely to experience early marriage as compared to those with educated husbands or partners. Early marriage is 83.1%, 86.4% and 89.9% more prevalent among girls with illiterate, primary and elementary school heads/husbands as compared to girls who had secondary school attended heads/husbands, respectively. This is consistent with a study conducted in Nepal, suggesting that safety concerns, such as fear of rape and abduction, as well as restrictions imposed by husbands, particularly in rural areas with limited secondary school access, contribute to absenteeism and subsequent school dropout (Sekine, and Hodgkin, 2017).

The prevalence of early marriage is 75.3% higher among girls who had heads/husbands with informal employment, than their counterparts. Finally, early marriage is 86.9% more prevalent among afar ethnic girls as compared to other ethnic girls which is consistent with the study (Roy, 2022). Furthermore, girls belonging to the Muslim religion were 5.7 times and 4.06 times more likely to experience early marriage and school dropout due to early marriage than Christian girls, respectively.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This study is undertaken to examine the impact of early marriage on girls' education in Berahle Woreda, Afar Regional State of Ethiopia. The study shows that early marriage is the most common reason given for girls' school dropout. The prevalence rates of early marriage and school dropout were 75.8% and 64.5%, respectively. The probability of school dropout was 94.9% higher among early married girls. However, after adjusting confounding variables, the probability of school dropout was estimated to be 84.4% higher among early married girls as compared to unmarried peers. Overall, the risk of school dropout due to early marriage heightens among grade four and five girls. The results of the empirical multivariate analysis demonstrate the effects of socio-demographic characteristics on the likelihood of early marriage and school dropout. The analysis indicates that several variables were statistically significant predictors for both early marriage and school dropout simultaneously. Specifically, religion, wealth index and place of residence were found to be significant predictors for both outcomes (early marriage and school dropout). In contrast, religion, husband/household head education, husband or head occupation, wealth index, place of residence, ethnicity, and decision to marry were significant predictors for early marriage, whereas early marriage, religion, place of residence and wealth index were the significant predictors for school dropout. Therefore, the study concluded that early marriage is the most significant factor that increases the rate of primary school out school/dropout girls.

5.2 Recommendations

Given the concrete evidence of the link between early marriage and school dropout among Berahle Woreda girls, the following valuable recommendations were forwarded for the concerned stakeholders and future researchers:

a. Recommendations for stakeholders:

- Given that early marriage in Berahle Woreda is strongly influenced by gender and social norms within a patriarchal society, it is essential to engage male relatives (such as fathers, fathers-in-law, and husbands) of girls at risk of early marriage, as well as male teachers.

- ✚ Additionally, expanding non-formal education programs is necessary to support the significant number of girls who marry and leave school, in order to reduce the negative consequences of early marriage and break the cycle of school dropout and child marriage across generations.
- ✚ Policymakers ought to develop comprehensive strategies that enhance the economic, social, and educational status of girls. This could involve initiatives that support girls' education, create better job opportunities for women, and raise awareness about the detrimental effects of early marriage.
- ✚ Furthermore, acknowledging the importance of factors like wealth, decision-making freedom, and educational achievement in influencing girls' susceptibility to early marriage highlights the necessity for comprehensive interventions.
- ✚ Finally, it is essential to tackle the socio-economic and demographic elements outlined in the study. Efforts should focus on facilitating educational access for girls in Berhale Woreda, particularly those from rural and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This may include enacting policies that offer financial incentives or scholarships to encourage families to prioritize their daughters' education.

b. Recommendations for future researchers:

- Future investigations could examine how socio-economic factors, cultural beliefs, and educational policies interact and affect the likelihood of early marriage and subsequent school abandonment.
- Furthermore, longitudinal studies that follow girls over time could offer valuable insights into the long-term effects of early marriage on educational success and overall well-being. By broadening the research focus on this subject, it becomes possible to develop targeted interventions and policy measures that effectively tackle the challenges girls face in the Afar region, particularly in Berhale Woreda, ensuring they have access to quality education and opportunities for a brighter future.

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Appendix

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DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT

The following questions are based on the aim of the study on “**Assessing the Impact of Early Marriage on Girls Education in Afar Regional State: In Case of Berhle Woreda, Afar Regional State, Ethiopia**”. The study result will be determined by your response quality about it. In this regard I kindly request your time to provide me with reliable information so that the findings of the study will be meeting the intended outcome. I strongly assure you for the confidential treatment of your answers. There is no need to write your name and if you have any question or comment please write at the end of this paper on space provided. I would like to say thanks for your voluntary participation for the success of my study.

General Instructions:

- Noneedof writing yourname.
- Foressayquestions,write your conciseresponsesonthespaces provided.
- In all cases where answer options are available please tick (√) or circle the number () in the appropriate box.

Annex1:Socio-demographicCharacteristics

S.N	Questions	optionsforareponse	Code
1	MaritalStatus	1. Married 2. Unmarried	
2	DecisiontoMarry	1. Myself 2. Family/parents 3. Other	
3	Ageat marriage	1. Under14years 2. 14-16years 3. 17-18years	
4	Ageat birth	1. Lessthan18 2. ≥ 18years	
5	Placeofresidence	1. Urban 2. Rural	
6	Religion	1. Muslim 2. Christian	
7	Husband/household education head	1. Illiterate 2. Read& Write 3. Primary	

		4. Elementary 5. Highschool&above	
8	Husband/household head occupation	1. Formalemployment 2. Informalemployment	
9	Wealthindex	1. Poor 2. Middle 3. Rich	
10	Ethnicity	1. Afar 2. Amhara 3. Oromo 4. Tigrie 5. Other	

PartII:Reasonstomarry

S.N	Questions	Categories	Code
1	Reasons for early marriages among girls	1. Economicreason/poverty 2. Securityreason 3. Socialenvironment 4. Lackof awareness/education 5. Socio-cultural&traditionsnorm 6. Excessivefreedom &ignorance 7. Fearofremaining unmarried	

PartIII:Educationallattainment

S.N	Questions	Categories	Code
1	Schooling	1. Dropout 2. Inschool	
2	Highestgradecompletedwhiledropout-----		
3	Reasontodropout -----		