

Effect of Early Sex on Girl's Child Education in New Site Community (Bo City)

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ABSTRACT

The study aims at investigating the overall-effect of early sex on young girl's education and psychosocial well-being of the girl-child, and its implication for family life and the society at large; The education of girls contains global consciousness the education of girls is a pillar for societal change and human development. Studies consistently purport that girls' education enhances the welfare of the population and increases the country's economic productivity.

Therefore, investing in girls' education provides the highest returns, both economically and socially (UNESCO 2002-2018). Of course, women education is the key to societal development

Despite wide acknowledgment of the value of female education, women in Sierra Leone are still excluded from the educational system. Many researchers argue that efforts to promote gender equity in the educational system of developing countries are confronted by challenges including poverty, cultural beliefs and practices.

Early sex has been prove as one of the reasons why girl child education is in jeopardy in sub Saharan Africa, Young girls' education is interrupted without even completing their primary education after having their first sexual intercourse because it often leads to teenage pregnancy.

In the new site community (Bo city) this problem is aggravated by teachers, youth, N.G.O staff, and boys in their same age group who lure the girls into sex with their money. New site community is one of the most undisciplined communities in Bo and, therefore, most girls are deflowered before the age of eighteen (Save the Children, on the international day of the child 2018).

This paper talks about human rights that affect the education of the girl child which is found in various international treaties and conventions. It also throws light on the sustainable development

goals that also stress on girl child empowerment. This paper also look at early sex by making references to different countries in the world. Early sex has negative impact on the girl child education and also lead to sexually transmitted diseases, early pregnancy etc. The purpose of this study is to know the effect of early sex on the education of young girls in new site community (Bo city). This paper also highlights the important and also why the study is needed and how the results contribute to policy makers, social work and related social service agencies.

This study has investigates the effect of early sex on the education of young girls. However, looking at early sex effect on young girl's educational performance has gained attention in recent years considering the alarming rate in which it is happening.

The study used the case of new site section in Bo district southern Sierra Leone because they are eligible sample population to study issues of early sex and therefore, draw a representing findings as to other likely community in the district, where, men and women alike (male 65 percent and 35 percent female) were presented. However, with this gender wide figure, indication is that, men are now championing the fight against early sex because they are the perpetrators and the victims are their daughters.

KEYWORDS: Early sex, Early sex related problems, Adolescent

I. INTRODUCTION

Every child is entitled to basic education as their rights. It's an international and conventional treaty which also includes Sierra Leone, for example, article twenty six of the Human Rights states every child has the rights to education. The conventions on the eradications of all forms of discrimination against women (Marsha

et al, 2012) and the convention of the rights of the child (Marsha et al 2012) contains comprehensive set of commitments on the rights to education and gender equality.

On education, Sustainable development goal (2008) also pays more emphases on the need for gender equality. However, as much as this treaties and conventions are being enforced, early sex is in the rampage especially in sub-Saharan Africa countries, and this is disturbing the girl child education.

UNICEF (2001) states that in many developing countries, the transition from adolescent to adulthood is abruptly cut short and the fundamental rights of female adolescent are compromise by early sex, early sex is a human rights violation which disturb the girls education, health and long-term prospects (UNICEF,2001)

According to Article 1 of the convention on the right of the child, early sex refers to any sexual penetration of a child below eighteen years. This disturbs their growth as they take up activities which should be done by adults but are not physically and psychologically prepare for. Most of the early sex they are being coerced into it while others are too young to make informed decision. And this has disturbed their health, psychological well being and also their education.

Early sex is common in many part of the world, overall, 20-50 percent of women in developing countries had their first sexual intercourse by age 18, with the highest percentage in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (Singh and samara1996). Early sex is more common among poor rural areas than urban areas, and educational level also plays a critical role (UN.2010)

However, in the United States of America, 2.1 percent of all girls in the 15-17 years were engage in early sex. Early sex exists in some part of Europe, for example, in UK the age of sexual intercourse is 16 years, in Italy 14 years, Netherlands 13 and it varies in different country in the world (in Sierra Leone is 18 years UNICEF 2008)

Despite laws against early sex in Sierra Leone the practice is still rampant in the country. Early sex is high among girls than boys. Forty three percent of girls had their first sex before 18 years compare to boys. The national prevalence rate stands at 34 percent for females and 14 percent for males (plan international, 2011).

Different reasons are been put forward while children engage in early sex, some family because of poverty may regard the girl as a burden so giving her away into marriage will relieve her burden from the family and her responsibility will

be to her husband. Also, in some cases parents willingly sell off their young girls to receive bride price in order to increase the family income, sexual intercourse wealth is a cultural phenomenon among Africans and other part of the world (UNICEF2001).

Culturally, some parents in Africa give more preference to male education than girls education, educating the girls is seen as a waste since she will be married elsewhere.

This study bend to explore causes and effects of early sex on girl child education in new site community section Bo city.

Assessing the Gender Issues Relating to Girl-Child Education and Early Sex

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognized the right to education, stating that elementary education should be free and compulsory for everybody, and higher levels of education should be accessible to all (Santosh et al. 2011). On the one hand, education is seen as a human right that is essential in order to fulfill the rest of human rights and the overall world's development (UNESCO, 2016:). On the other hand, gender equality was recognized as a fundamental focus in development cooperation towards global progress (KVINFORM, 2016).

Parallel, educational inequality is an obstacle towards social and economic progress (Ibid). Education for girls and women is recognized by many authors to be the most effective investment in development, considering its significant benefits to human society as a whole (Rose 2003; UNESCO 2003, 2012, 2014, 2015 and 2016; DFID 2005; UN Millennium Project 2005; Aikman & Unterhalter 2005 and 2007; Huggins & Randell 2007; UNGEI 2009 and 2010 b/; Santosh et al. 2011; Gachukia 2012; UN 2015; UN General Assembly 2015; Sperandio & Kagoda 2015; and World Bank 2016). Concretely, it contributes towards prosperity in terms of health, safety, socioeconomic improvement, political stability and is recognized as the greatest driver towards eliminating poverty and achieving overall sustainable human development (Ibid).

Hence, gender equality in education (GEE onwards) is crucial to progress towards poverty reduction, since it enables women and girls to become part of the labor market, increasing economic productivity, and empowering them to participate in the decision-making at a community level, as well as to improve family health and well-being by reducing the fertility rates and infant and maternal mortality (Gachukia, 2012 and UNGEI, 2009). Moreover, education is fundamental to advance towards the achievement of the seven

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs onwards) (UNESCO 2016).

Specially, education is described by the UNESCO to be the strongest means to achieve gender equality and overall women empowerment (2016 and 2014). Following, it is essential to measure GEE to monitor progress towards these global objectives (UNESCO, 2014). Finally, ensuring access to and improving the quality of education for girls and women, as well as removing all gender stereotyping and further obstacles which impede their active participation, was stated as the biggest priority at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien in 1990 (UNGEI,2009).

In the area of education, gender equity and gender parity are perceived as a necessary but insufficient precondition to achieve the more complex gender equality (Wilson 2003; Aikman & Unterhalter, 2007; and UNGEI, 2010 b/). Many authors emphasize that gender parity (or informal equality) is a first step towards gender equality (or substantive equality) in education (Ibid; Subrahmanian, 2005; Unterhalter ,2006; USAID, 2007; UNGEI, 2010 b/; Santosh et al. 2011; and UNESCO, 2014).

Gender parity in education is a quantitative measure that aims to capture the number of girls and boys in a specific schooling age whom have access to education and participate in it. Whereas GEE is a qualitative measure that aims to capture the extent to which gender egalitarianism is embraced within and through education, by reinforcing or withstanding discriminatory dynamics inside of the education system, and influencing on the long-term girls' and women's overall future outside school.

Even if attention has often been given to gender parity (reporting the progress mainly based on the number of girls and boys enrolled to education), a shift of focus from merely ensuring the access to education for all girls and boys, to also considering the quality of this education and its impact in broader society, has taken place over the last decade (UNGEI 2010 b/ and USAID 2008).

The amount of boys and girls enrolled to education does not reflect the still remaining social discriminatory dynamics that may reinforce gender inequalities inside and outside of it (Wilson,2003). Hence, the authors consulted appoint to the necessity to also focus on the quality of education and its impact on the overall girls' and women's everyday lives (Wilson 2003; Herz & Gene 2004, in UNGEI 2009; Subrahmanian 2005; Unterhalter 2006; Aikam & Unterhalter 2007; USAID 2007; UNGEI, 2010 b/; Santosh et al. 2011; and

UNESCO, 2014). This involves an education which promotes equal roles, treatment and opportunities for girls and boys, within and through it.

To reach this gender-sensitive quality education, aspects such as the curricula, the learning content, methods and materials, as well as the school environment and the educational system' governance need to be free from gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices (UNGEI 2010 b/). Aikman and Unterhalter (2007) understand that the equality of genders in education entails boys' and girls' freedom to attend school, to learn and participate in a safe nondiscriminatory space, to develop gender-sensitive and democratic values, and to enjoy a range of economic, political, and cultural opportunities and valued outcomes (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2007).

Likewise, the UNESCO states that GEE is to be fully reached when girls and boys are offered the same opportunities to go to school, with a teaching method and curricula free of stereotypes, enjoy counseling free of gender discrimination, equality of outcomes, learning achievement and academic qualifications, and overall equal job opportunities based on having the same conditions for similar qualifications and experience, regardless of the gender (2003).

Causes of early sex

An early sexual debut is when a first consensual sexual experience for an adolescent has occurred prior to age 18 (Baumgartner et al., 2009; Guttmacher Institute, 2012; Houlihan et al., 2008). Current statistics show that approximately 13% of all adolescents have engaged in sexual activity by the age of 15 years old (Guttmacher Institute, 2012). Before age 13, only 6.1% of youth report having engaged in sexual intercourse (CDC, 2012). By age 19, approximately 85% of all adolescents are sexually active (CDC, 2012). These numbers indicate that an important point of intervention among adolescents with respect to sexual behavior is during the span of 13- 15 years of age.

Socio-economic factors such as family size, income, type of housing and housing environment, social value, nature of job, affect the sexual behavior of adolescents. A study carried out in Ibadan reported that poverty, lack of parental monitoring and parents working long hours push the adolescents especially the out-of-school ones into unnecessary sexual relationships (Bankole,2007). It reported that children from poor homes are likely to be street children, hawkers and more likely to live in a neighborhood that will influence them negatively. The non-student

adolescents are most often found in such conditions and therefore more vulnerable to early sexual exposures compared to their student counterparts. Some studies support the proposition that adolescents are less likely to engage in sexual risk-taking behavior when they reside with a parent especially two parents or when they identify with the views of their parents (Bankole,2007).

A study carried out in Lagos among out-of-school female adolescents reported that more than 60% of those who reside with relatives or friends were sexually active compared to those who lived with both or either parents (38%) . There is growing evidence that various parenting dimension-connectedness or love, material support, behavioural control or monitoring and parent child communication are positively associated with reduced levels of risk-taking behaviour among adolescents (Onayade, 2008).

A survey based study in a slum in Kenya, found that when a father lived in the same household as his never married daughters, they were much less likely to have had sex than when neither parent nor only the mother lived in the household (Bankole,2007).

In Ghana, (Onayade,2008) and Cote d'Ivoire they reported that adolescent females who lived with both parents were less likely than females who had other living arrangements to have ever had sex, though, the same was not found for males. Two parents are more likely to provide a best emotional support and life lessons necessary for a child's development and psychosocial adjustment.

Also, adolescents living in two parent families take advantages of the presence of their parents in the home and can internalize from both father and mother about heterosexual love and commitment (Adebiyi, 2009). Research has also shown that adolescents whose parents are not married have a tendency to believe that premarital sexual intercourse is socially acceptable and thereafter to initiate sexual intercourse prematurely.

Other causes of family instability such as divorce, remarriage, parental death and mother-only families have been reported to increase the likelihood of sexual initiation among adolescents. These conditions are reportedly more prevalent among the out-of-school females compared to their in-school counterparts (Adebiyi, 2009).

Parents are the primary agent of socialization for their children. They are in a unique position to help adolescents have responsible attitudes and behavior towards sex, and to educate adolescents into healthy sexual habits. A study of the sexual behavior of adolescents in

Nigeria reported that low educational level of parents were associated with increased risky sexual behavior among them. A study also carried out among adolescents in Ibadan, agreed that parental educational level significantly affect the sexual behavior of their children. The author reported that children from highly educated home and conducive environment are prone to good behavior and acceptable norms and values of the society than children from illiterate homes and poverty ridden homes.

This finding is consistent with studies carried out among American adolescents where it was reported that higher levels of parental education have been associated with lower adolescent sexual activity, delay of intercourse initiation, greater use of contraception and lower risk of pregnancy. It is expected that parents with sound education exposure will direct their children towards positive sexual behavior.

Poverty is probably the underlying factor in most risky sexual behaviors. Poverty will lead to lack of education which may reduce earning power and lack of parental monitoring, and these may in turn lead to transactional sex, Tran's generational sex or pursuit of multiple sexual partners. A growing body of evidence points to the complexity of sexual behavior. Sexual risk behavior is influenced by factors at three levels; within the person, within the proximal context (interpersonal relationships and physical and organizational environment) and within the distal context (cultural and structural factors). The pervasive effects of poverty and social norms perpetuate women's subordination within sexual relationships (Sallah,2009). Poverty motivates both young males and females to engage in risky sex.

According to a study from Bamenda Cameroun, those whose fathers were unemployed and those who lived in poor households were more likely to have multiple sexual partners. Furthermore young people who did not live with both parents and had insufficient means were more likely to have multiple sexual partners (Sallah,2009). Out of school girls especially those who hawk on the streets or live on the streets fall into the last group.

A study among out-of-school girls in Nigeria reported that almost half of the respondents were expected to find the means to supplement the funds they were given to meet their basic needs and most of them were found to be sexually active (Alan Guttmacher Institute (2006).The economic circumstances in many developing countries have made the transition of young people into healthy adults difficult and may explain why transactional

sex is common among female adolescents. Looking at it from the context of HIV/AIDS evidence from South Africa showed that women from poorer households were slightly less knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS (Booyesen, 2003).

Another study from Uganda showed that financial pressures play a major role in influencing out-of-school girls to begin engaging in sex in order to meet basic needs. For girl's out-of-school and not living with their parents, basic needs could be as basic as a meal or two (Kipp,2004). Studies from 3 African countries showed that the wealthiest girls had later sexual debut compared to their poor counterparts, they are also more likely to have protected sex (Kipp,2004). In another study, females from poorer households were more likely to be sexually active and more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior (Kipp,2004). However, even in situations where poverty is prevalent there are modulating factors that may affect sexual behavior.

Interventions with parents and other guardians to increase monitoring and communication about sex and sexual risks seem to be promising health promotion strategies for adolescent high risk setting (Madise,2007). Even in a liberal society like the United States, parental monitoring and communication appeared able to influence sexual activity positively (Madise,2007).

Like siblings, friends are "socializing agents," who set standards of conduct and serve as role models, thus shaping the development of sexual attitudes and norms (East, Felice et al. 1993). A study of minority adolescents found that the number of sexually active girl friends was positively associated with permissive sexual attitudes, intentions for future sexual activity, and non marital childbearing (East, Felice et al. 1993). Other risk behaviors have an impact as well. When a teen's friends are not attached to school, have poor grades, abuse drugs or engage in delinquent behaviors, there is a greater likelihood that the teen will become sexually active at an early age (East, Felice et al. 1993; Brewster 1994; Bearman, Bruckner et al. 1999; Kirby 2001).

Peers Adolescents appear to respond strongly to peer influences on their reproductive health behaviors. Teens with sexually active friends are more likely to have sex themselves and to have had multiple partners. In contrast, adolescents whose friends favor delayed initiation tend to delay sexual debut themselves. Not only are actual peer behaviors important, but even the perception of peer behaviors is also influential. Teens experience earlier sexual initiation if they believe their peers are having sex. Adolescents who perceive that their peers dislike or avoid condom use are less likely to

use condoms themselves. Actual or perceived substance use by friends is also linked to earlier age of sexual initiation and lack of contraceptive use. The characteristics of one's peers are important as well. Having older friends is related to increased risk of sexual activity. Teens report less sexual activity and lower risk of pregnancy if their friends have high educational aspirations. Finally, the benefits of positive parent-child relationships are not limited to one's own individual experience. Teens report healthier, more responsible reproductive behaviors if they have friends who enjoy close relationships with their own parents.

Examining the Nature and Context of Early Sex and exploring the root-causes for its social acceptance

Nature and Context of Early Sex

The initiation of early sexual activity is a major milestone for many adolescents on the road to adulthood. Whereas only 13–15% of African teens report having sexual intercourse before turning 15, the rate climbs steeply after that. Forty-five percent report having sex before turning 17, and approximately 70% have had sex by the time they reach age 19 (Guttmacher Institute 2006; Leitenberg and Saltzman 2000).

Early initiation of sexual intercourse (i.e., occurring during preadolescence or very early in adolescence) is associated with a variety of concurrent risk factors for girls, including school maladjustment and substance use (Kotchick et al. 2001; Martin et al, 2005).

In addition, girls who initiate intercourse early are at higher risk for unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases compared with girls who delay intercourse until late adolescence (Crockett et al, 1996; Leitenberg and Saltzman 2000).

A basic, though not well-tested, tenet of problem behavior theory is that some children enter adolescence with a history of socialization difficulties that predispose them to take an alienated stance toward adult authority and conventions (Udry et al. 1995; Willoughby et al. 2004). Based upon this general under socialized and rebellious orientation, these at-risk youth initiate a range of rule-breaking behaviors as they achieve greater autonomy in early adolescence, including substance use, antisocial behaviors, and sexual activity (Boles et al. 2006; Willoughby et al. 2004; Zweig et al. 2001). There is substantial longitudinal evidence that childhood aggressive-disruptive behaviors exhibited at school entry predict elevated risk for antisocial behavior later in adolescence (Fergusson et al. 2005). Longitudinal

studies have also demonstrated that a childhood history of aggressive–disruptive behaviors is associated with early initiation of intercourse and elevated rates of adolescent sexual activity among boys (Barkley et al. 2006; Moffitt 1993; Ramrakha et al. 2007), and early initiation of intercourse, multiple sex partners, and increased rate of teen pregnancies among girls (Ramrakha et al. 2007; Woodward and Ferguson 1999). One prospective study found that girls who were described as “domineering” when they were 9 years old were likely to initiate intercourse at a younger age (Udry et al. 1995), suggesting that aggressive and domineering behavior may directly predict early sexual activity.

Childhood conduct problems may also increase risk for early sexual activity due to co-occurring impulsivity and attention problems, which are frequently associated with aggression and reflect deficits in inhibitory control, planning, and decision-making skills. Prior research has linked childhood inattention with adolescent risk behaviors, including smoking (Nadeau et al. 1999) and substance use (Biederman et al. 1999).

In one prospective study, impulsivity assessed at age 3 predicted age of first romantic relationship and alcohol use at age 16, which in turn led to a greater accumulation of sexual partners by age 19 (Zimmer-Gembeck et al. 2004). Similarly, Crockett et al. (2006) found that low levels of self-regulation at age 8–9 predicted risky sexual activity at age 16–17, including early sexual debut, multiple partners, and sex without condoms. Overall, research suggests that early inattention and impulsivity may increase involvement in rule-breaking behaviors directly, as well as through their association with childhood conduct problems.

Three longitudinal studies have examined the relative roles of early inattention/hyperactivity and conduct problems in predicting risky sexual activity. In one (Ramrakha et al. 2007) childhood conduct problems were the primary predictor of early sexual debut, and hyperactivity ratings did not contribute to this prediction after conduct problems were controlled. Similarly, in another longitudinal study, youth diagnosed as hyperactive in childhood engaged in more risky sexual activity (e.g., earlier initiation of sexual activity, significantly higher rates of sexually transmitted disease) than non-hyperactive youth, but co-occurring conduct disorder emerged as the primary predictor of early sexual debut (Barkley et al. 2006). In contrast to these two studies, Flory et al. 2006 found that childhood attention problems and conduct problems made independent predictions, each increasing the likelihood that boys would

participate in risky sexual behaviors and experience early parenthood.

It is well established that early aggressive–disruptive behaviors and attention problems often occur concurrently, and that children with these combined problems are at particular risk for academic and social difficulties in elementary school. This may set them up for school maladjustment and deviant peer involvement during adolescence, thus increasing the likelihood of peer-facilitated rule-breaking activities during that time period (Moffitt 1993). It is less certain from existing research whether these two early behavioral risks function jointly to increase risk or whether they make independent contributions towards predicting early sexual activity.

Many children who show high rates of externalizing behavior problems and attention problems at school entry continue to experience conflict with parents, teachers, and peers throughout their elementary years (Moffitt 1993). As these youth make the transition into middle or junior high school, they typically experience a reduced level of monitoring by teachers and parents, along with increased mobility and unsupervised free time (Dishion et al. 1997). Early adolescents who are bonded to school—that is, academically engaged, connected to peers and teachers, and engaged in extracurricular activities—are at reduced risk for early sexual activity (Kotchick et al. 2001; Resnick et al. 1997). In contrast, youth who are alienated from school are at heightened risk, perhaps due to the reduced social control of adult authorities or mainstream peers. As alienated youth gather with other similarly disaffected youth in unstructured and unsupervised settings, they experience increased opportunity (and often peer encouragement) for rule-breaking and norm-breaking behaviors, including substance use, antisocial behavior, and early sexual activity (Bearman and Bruckner 2001).

Extensive research suggests that early sexual activity typically occurs in the context of other risky adolescent behaviors (Elliot and Morse 1987). For example, cross-sectional studies of early adolescents reveal strong associations between sexual activity and delinquent behavior among boys (Bingham and Crockett 1996; Farrell et al. 1992) and status offences among girls, such as school truancy and running away from home (Lanctot and Smith 2001). In addition, smoking and the early use of alcohol and other substances often accompany sexual activity in early adolescence (Lanctot and Smith 2001; Whitbeck et al. 1999).

The Root of Early sex Social Acceptance

There are not only one, but many different factors influencing the root cause for the societal acceptance of early sex and these may vary from place to place. According to UNFPA, poverty and early sex are connected, where poverty exists, early sex is likely to also be present. The girl is often considered as an economic burden, where families are often eased when finding a spouse for the girl. This tends to take place when the child is still very young (UNFPA, 2006).

Along similar line, the World Health Organization (WHO) argues that poverty is one of the main reasons for early sex. Other factors being referred to are the inequality between men and women and the stigmatization of women across the globe (WHO, 2013).

According to the World Bank, the underlying continuation of the trend despite restrictions is due to social standards and what is expected behavior from girls (World Bank, 2012). Furthermore, there are additional factors that tend to affect the existence of early sex, they are

Religion

The association between religion and early sex varies in the reports. According to the ICRW, there is no correlation between a specific religion and early sex across the world. But various religions can have an impact on early sex in different countries (ICRW, 2007).

UNFPA (2012) states in the report *Marrying too Young: End early sex that religion does in fact have an impact on the prevalence of early sex, but is not further and deeper discussed in the report* (UNFPA, 2012). Religion is not mentioned in the majority of the reports regarding the subject.

Tradition and culture

Early sex is an old tradition in many regions and continues being practiced. In some European countries the age at early sex is different. For example the age for early sex in the United Kingdom is sixteen, while in France is fifteen, Italy placed theirs at fourteen and Holland at age thirteen (Unicef,2012).

In Sub-Saharan Africa the husband or the family of the husband usually offers the young girl's family cattle as compensation for the marriage which leads to early sex, which is tempting for a poor family. Virginity is also an important part of marriage and the younger the girl, the greater chance of being a virgin. Therefore, the

age of early sex tends to be lower among communities where these forms of religious traditions are represented. The man usually prefers virginity and a non-virgin is likely to be left with no spouse. Menstruation is also a part of early sex in some communities since the girl is then considered being ready for carrying a child and is therefore considered an adult (UNICEF, 2001). The girls often start early to claim adulthood. This is important for the family to keep the relationship with the rest of society and not breaking the social norms. Also different myths encouraging early sex are to be found in Africa, which are still influencing practice in some areas (UNFPA, 2006).

Gender inequalities

Gender inequalities are found across the world. As for example, the laws regarding the legal age of early sex can differ depending on gender in Africa and the World over. This is to be found in Sierra Leone, where girls are by law prohibited to have sex before the age of 18 (UNFPA, 2012). In most cases, girls located in the developing world are at a higher risk of unequal treatment. When being neglected from such rights as the right to education and health, this will cause further disempowerment and the trend is likely to be transferred to future generations, causing the phenomenon of early sex to carry on.

Not only inequalities between boys and girls are to be found, but also between rich and poor. In combination, a poor girl is often the most vulnerable and exposed (UNICEF, 2011).

Moreover, inequalities between the developed and the developing world shall also be noted. The developing world is struggling with attaining access to knowledge and also adequate medical treatment. The deaths or life-long difficulties of young mothers and their children are not always unavoidable, but lack of medical resources is occasionally preventing improvements (UNFPA, 2006).

Poverty

The typical family in Africa often consists of a large number of children. The reason for this is due to the lack of safety net available for poor families. Instead, parents are often relying on their children for support when growing old, and through child marriage which leads to early sex, there is a greater chance of more children. Due to poor conditions (UNFPA, 2006) and insufficient medical care (UNFPA, 2006), not all children are likely to survive, therefore is the need of having a large number of children an essential measurement.

To reduce the cost of having girls, child marriage is often an option when dealing with financial deficits. One tradition associated with child marriage is the fact that the girl's family will receive a form of "payment" for the girl - either an amount of money or other form of support from the spouse to be and his family. For that reason, it can be more profitable for the family when girls start sex very young in order to get rid of the cost of the girl and possibly receive an amount of money in exchange. (UNFPA, 2006) .

There is a foregoing discussion regarding the correlation between gender equality and poverty. Women are found to be key actors when striving for development. It is therefore of high importance to use resources of all people, also women since they are representing 50 per cent of the resources available, and if not achieved, economic and social development will stagnate. When women are allotted with more capital, education is usually prioritized which further contributes to development. (Witcher Jackson, 2009) .

Power and keeping the family from disgrace

As already mentioned, early sex is an old tradition in many societies and if not keeping to the traditions, it can disgrace the whole family. If the girl does not follow the social norm of entering an early marriage, the whole family can risk being excluded from their community. Also, decreasing the risk of shaming the family through the daughter having a child out of wedlock or other inappropriate behavior for girls are important factors in the matter. In the countryside, where many of the young female spouses are located, girls are often pulled out of school at the time of their first menstruation in order to safeguard their sexuality. Education for the girl can also be seen as unfavorable when the central point is being a spouse and mother in the future, not focusing on attaining more knowledge. This trend is continued through generations and is maintaining the legitimization of early sex. (UNFPA, 2006) .

Protection of the girl

Since the HIV and AIDS epidemic was brought to our attention, the number of child marriages which leads to legitimate early sex has increased significantly. The most plausible reason for the encounter is the families attempting to protect the girls from such infections and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) by child marriage. In some unsecure warfare areas are

young girls in hazard of being captured by "freedom fighters" and forced into the sex industry or slavery. In these possible scenarios, having a spouse is considered the best option to keep the girl safe. In areas where sexual assaults are common, marrying a man with a higher position is desirable for safeguarding the young girls. Therefore, early sexual debut can be seen as protection of the girl for various reasons. (UNFPA, 2006) .

Research objectives

This study has the following objectives which are:

- Profile of the respondents
- To assess gender issues relating to girl's education and early sex in the study area;
- To examine the nature and context of early sex and then to explore the root-causes for its social acceptance in the study area ;
- To explore the nature of formal schooling as well as the trend of early sex in the study area;
- To determine the extent on how early sex affects girls' access to and success in the locally available formal education; and
- To suggest locally appropriate strategies for challenging the negative aspects of early sex and then promoting girls' education in the study area.

II. METHODOLOGY

Methodological approach of this study is inspired by Silverman's (2005) observation: "methodology refers to the choices we make about cases to study, forms of data analysis, methods of data gathering, etc. in planning and executing a research study." But it is not possible to simply choose a method and adhere to it in research study because of some limitations of a particular method. Therefore, this chapter discusses the relationship between the various parts of the research project, the implication of the choices made and the limitations of the methods chosen.

This study outlines the methods that were used and the following structures were adopted

- Study area and descriptions
- Research design
- Sample population and/Sample size
- Research instruments/methods/strategy
- Sample selection technique
- Data analysis/techniques
- Scope limitations and constraints of the study

Study area and descriptions

The study area for this research is new site community in Bo city (Bo District), this area is

found in Bo city in the southern part of Sierra Leone. New site section is one of the largest sections in Bo city both in terms of its geographical area and its population size. According to the 2015 Sierra Leone national census, the population of new site section was 15, 646 (SSL, 2015).

The population of new site section is ethnically diverse, although Mende and the Temne and fullah form the largest ethnic groups but the Mendes dominate. The population of the new site section is predominantly Muslim, with a large Christian minority. Like the rest of people living in Bo, the main economic activities of the people are petty trading and also employ in private and public sectors. There is a Community Health Centre and peripheral health units in the section, and a small market where people buy their food stuff.

In addition, the section has primary schools and they are all in full operations and are supported by government and other non-governmental organizations. Primary education is free and compulsory in government sponsored public schools.

The study looks into the effect of early sex on girl child education.

Research Design

A research design by definition refers to the programmed of events that directs the research process; it is the plan of the research which the researcher uses as a blue print to remind him of the various tasks that lie ahead in effecting the research process. Thus the research design includes the research strategy or approach, the research subjects, population and sampling procedures, research instrumentation, pilot study, data collection procedures, data cleaning and data analysis Bernard, 2000; Punch, 1998).

The main purpose of this study is to understand and analyze the effect of early sex on girl child education. Moreover, emphasis has been place on the gender aspect of education and how sex contributes to rapid school drop outs.

The study simply described the influence of these social indicators along with implications of gender ideology in their participation. Thus design of this study adopts dictates a social research design.

Sample population/Sample Size

The number of population of the study area during field study was infinite because of different reasons. Therefore, the minimum required sample size was estimated at 80 (Male-30, Female-30 and youth: Male-10, Female-10) assuming 95% confidence interval as suggested by Fink (2003),

Lwanga and Lemeshow (1991) and Sufian (1998). Apart from this, to avoid some difficulties such as missing of some information, overwriting of responses, and unwillingness to provide information, a sample size was determined with 10% over sample so that the responses from the minimum required number of sample could be ensured. Therefore, the total number of sample of this study was determined at 80 and the equal number of respondents was selected from each sex.

Research instruments/methods/strategy

The choice of any research strategy or approach used by the researcher is often contingent upon certain variables which include the nature, the orientation of the researcher and the social context of the research subjects and the research objectives. To reach at any logical conclusions in ascertaining the effect of early sex on the education of the girl child requires the use of multiple sources of evidence. Thus mixed method approach was followed to pursue the research work. The reasons behind using this approach lay in merits and demerits of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Basically, quantitative approach is such an approach in which the investigator primarily uses post-positivist claims for developing knowledge, employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and survey, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data (Creswell, 2003). It is also concerned with correlation between dependent and independent variables, but could not go into the inner aspects of social phenomena. On the other hand, qualitative approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based on mainly constructivist perspectives i.e. the multiple meaning of individual experiences and meanings that are socially and historically constructed. It also uses strategies of inquiry such as narrative, phenomenology etc. The researcher collects open-ended and emerging data (ibid). "It provides a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data," (Silverman, 2001 & 2005). But it could not make correlation or causal relationship between independent and dependent variables. Considering the advantages and limitations of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the mixed method approach was employed in this study with using concurrent triangulation procedures as research strategy (Creswell, 2003:16) and social survey as strategy of inquiry.

Moreover, quantitative approach provides the frequencies of any observation but neglects interrelationship of verbal and non-verbal behavior

and obscures the contingent nature of interaction (Mehan, 1979 cited in Silverman, 2001). But in exploring people's life histories or everyday behavior, qualitative methods may be favored. In the matter of flexibility, it encourages qualitative researchers to be innovative as events get unfolded.

But in quantitative approach it is less likely since it is predefined. In addition, any research that follows a purely quantitative logic would simply exclude the study of many interesting phenomena related to what people actually do in their daily lives, whether at homes, offices or other public and private places (Silverman, 2001). In quantitative approach, researchers administer interview schedules or questionnaires to random samples of the population. 'Fixed-choice' questions, e.g. yes or no, are usually preferred because the answers they yield lend themselves to simple tabulation (ibid) that could not be able to explain experiences of everyday life. Therefore, the above-mentioned limitations and advantages encouraged the researcher to choose the mixed-method approach.

Nonetheless, both the quantitative and qualitative methods were integrated in this study to overcome the limitations that lie in using merely single method – whether it is quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative data such as age, gender, occupation etc. were collected through structured interview with closed-ended predetermined questions.

In addition, quantitative approach employs survey method as strategy of inquiry that include the questions such as who, what, where, how many, how much etc. (Yin, 2003) in exploring social issues.

Concurrent triangulation strategy was used as an attempt to corroborate the findings of qualitative and quantitative data. This strategy was also used as a means to offset the weaknesses inherent within one method with the strengths of others (Creswell, 2003).

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently by administering questionnaire composed of both closed-ended and open-ended questions where the respondents provided their oral statement describing their everyday life experiences. Although data were collected concurrently, field visits and informal discussion with the affected people and key informants (KIs) were made along with literature review before designing the questionnaire. Although both qualitative and quantitative data are very important in a study that follows mixed-method approach, priority was given to qualitative data considering the nature of the study.

Sample selection technique

Because of geographical proximity, the researcher chose new site community in Bo city (Bo Districts) as the study area.

The respondents were selected by using mixed method sampling procedure suggested by Teddlie and Yu (2007). At first 10 community elders were selected purposively from the study section. Then one elder was selected randomly from those 10 community elders. After that the rest of the elders were selected from their respective streets in the study area it continued until the selection of required number of respondents. Apart from this, the chairman, members and women members of their respective unions were considered as key informants and data were also collected from them to understand the effect of early sex on girl child education. Moreover, members of the new site section education committee, government agencies and NGO representatives were considered as key informants.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the largely and bulky quantitative data obtained from the structured questionnaires, computer assisted programmed such as Microsoft Access, Microsoft Excel were employed. Therefore descriptive statistics was followed in coding, editing and processing numeric data. Techniques of descriptive statistics (percentage and frequency) were used in analyzing data.

However, qualitative data analysis approach was also followed in analyzing qualitative data. It has been mentioned earlier that the concurrent triangulation strategy has been used in this study from data collection to interpretation phase. Therefore, data transformation process was followed to analyze the data. At first, data were organized into categories on the basis of themes, concepts or similar features (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003: 176) and codes were created to qualitative data to quantify (Creswell, 2003: 221) in order to count their frequency.

In addition, other approaches to qualitative data analysis such as narrative description and explanation have been presented. Some long extracts of data as well as verbatim quotations from the respondents' oral statements have also been presented.

IV. CONCLUSION

Early sex is largely linked to behavior; social science plays a major role in trying to change behavioral patterns. This study demonstrates the

effect of early sexual debut amongst female adolescents, as a contributing risk factor to early school dropouts. Reasons contributing to early sexual debut were identified as: peer pressure, easy access to alcohol, pornographic videos, media and social networks, Prostitutions, poverty, crowded living conditions, sexual abuse and lack of parental supervision and communication with children.

This study illustrates the importance of education. Education holds a vital role in the development of a society. There needs to be continuous provision of information which is up-to-date and appropriate to its target population. The health sector plays a vital role in educating all members of society on the effect of early sex.

Health sector needs to collaborate with the Ministry of Education in developing effective programs for educating young girls on early sex and reproductive health. Parents play a vital role in educating their own children and need to overcome their socio-cultural views about sex. They are the first source of education for their children. They also need to live by example as they shape their children's behaviors, beliefs and views. Adolescents and the youth in general hold crucial sources of information for policy and program makers regarding issues that concern them. In the era of early sex, communication and education is imperative.

Sierra Leone can learn from another country by feeling comfortable and confident in adopting preventative measures on early sex and tailor them to the local setting. Our populations, socio-economic backgrounds, gender norms, cultural practices and beliefs are all similar. Social researchers are in the best position to investigate these social norms and practices as they can identify with them and the population. Sierra Leone government through the Ministry of Social Welfare can bring about and implement new strategies to help reduce the incidence and prevalence of early sex among its young girls which in turn will improve girl child education in the study setting and the country as a whole.

Recommendation

The following were recommended:

- Governing bodies at schools should hold parental seminars and guidance with regards speaking to their children about sex. Parents need to hold support groups where they share ideas on how to approach the subject of sex with their children. They need to be open and not be defensive and disciplinary when children enquire about issues of a sexual nature. Honesty is the best behaviour when it

comes to discussing sex with children as they are not naïve.

- Parent need to know and be aware of what is on their children's cell phones.
- We live in a technological and digital age and new ways need to be invented to restrict and prevent access of pornographic material to children and adolescents. We can use this technology in positive way to educate youth on sexual and reproductive health.
- Department of Social Welfare needs to be more active in schools and communities as they have a vital role to play where dysfunctional family situations exist where children are vulnerable to abuse.
- Some girls deceive men with their body and height, so government through the Ministry of Social Welfare should reduce the universal adult suffrage to 16 years from 18 years and teenage mothers should be encourage returning to school after delivering the child.
- There needs to be proper parental guidance when watching television at home. The media and TV stations can recommend parental guidance but parents do not use the facility.
- The ministry of education needs to regularly evaluate the content of sex education and STI information being taught to scholars and update it should the need arise
- Sexual and reproductive education in primary school should be implemented. There needs to be a dialogue between child psychologists, social workers and the ministry of education where they reach consensus on which class and age would be appropriate to initiate sex education, keeping in mind that children as young as 13 years have been reported to be sexually active.
- TV station needs to screen series and movies with explicit sex during late evening times when children are supposed to be asleep.
- Government should enact strict laws on early sex and levied heavy fines on perpetrators of early sex.
- The role of religious bodies in sex education needs to be encouraged. Religious groups offer a great opportunity to deliver education and guidance to developing minds. They hold an importance stance in society and should use this to educate youth on safe sex practices.
- There needs to be better reinforcement of regulatory laws that prevent vendors selling drugs to children; heavy fines or imprisonment of merchants who sell drugs to minors.

Suggestions/recommendations for further studies

It is suggested that, research should be carry out to address the following

- More investigations are needed on the method used to address early sex on girls in school and in various part of Sierra Leone because the methods used to address the problem may differ according to different circumstances.
- Given guidance and counseling is emphasized as a method of addressing early sex in schools its effectiveness in addressing the problem should be investigated. Such studies would contribute towards strengthening guidance and counseling in schools.
- Research is needed to ascertain the relationship between school policy and early sex among pupils.

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