CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF EARLY MARRIAGE AMONG GIRLS IN MVITA SUB-COUNTY, MOMBASA COUNTY

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for examination in any other University.

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This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University supervisor.

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DEDICATION

Every challenging work needs self-effort as well as guidance of elders especially those who are very close to our hearts. My humble effort is dedicated to my family; my husband, Ibrahim Ahmed, my two wonderful children Abdulmunim and Ahmed; my mother and sister whose affection, love, encouragement and prayers of day and night makes me able to get such success and honour.

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ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
DISHA	Development Initiative on Supporting Healthy Adolescents
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GoK	Government of Kenya
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICRW	International Centre for Research on Women
KI	Key Informant
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
STDs	Sexual Transmitted Diseases
STI	Sexual Transmitted Infection
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the causes of early marriage as well as the consequences of the practice in Mombasa County with a focus on Mvita Sub-County. Specifically the study sought to establish the causes of early marriage and describe its effects on girls in the Sub-County. The study was guided by the radical feminist theory. Radical feminist beliefs are based on the idea that the main causes of women's oppression originates from social roles and institutional structures that are constructed from male supremacy and patriarchy. Data was collected through survey method, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and secondary sources. The studied sample comprised of 100 married women aged 15 to 25 years who were married before the age of 18. The study revealed that early marriage in Mvita Sub-County is rampant. The findings showed that the tradition of marrying girls at an early age to protect them from engaging in improper behaviour is the leading cause of early marriage in the Sub-County. Other causes of early marriage as revealed by the study are poverty, religious obligation and societal pressure. The findings further revealed that early marriage has negative effects on a girl's health. The young girls face serious complications during childbirth and are more at risk of death during childbirth since their bodies are not fully developed. The findings also revealed that early marriage denies children of school age their right to education. Based on the findings, recommendations are made for advocating for dialogue at community level with local administration, women groups and religious leaders around the issue of early marriage and coming up with interventions. Such interventions should aim at addressing complex and negative socio-cultural norms and expanding access to primary, secondary school and tertiary education. This can be achieved by offering financial incentives for disadvantaged girls to stay in school, More importantly, further studies on early marriage and its consequences need to be conducted all over the country and especially at the coast where the practice is common, to document the magnitude of the problem.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction

Early marriage is described as the marriage or union between two individuals where one or both persons are younger than 18 years old (ICRW, 2005; McIntyre, 2006). It is also known as child marriage. The practice applies to both boys and girls but young girls have been the major victims (UNICEF, 2005). In most cases, it takes place without the permission of both the bride and the bridegroom. A child's childhood is cut short and his or her fundamental rights are compromised as well when a marriage partner is imposed on her/him. The right to free and full consent to a marriage is acknowledged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR further recognizes that when one of the parties involved is not mature enough to make a choice about a spouse then the consent cannot be free and full (Ozier, 2015).

According to UNICEF (2001), the practice of early marriage is mainly widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Nonetheless marriage at or soon after puberty is common in the some parts of Northern Africa, Middle East and other parts of Asia especially among traditional communities (Mamad & Foubert, 2018). Marriages before puberty are not uncommon in certain parts of West and East Africa and South Asia while in Latin America and parts of Eastern Europe girls are married off between the age of 16 and 18 (Bantebya, Kyoheirwe, & Watson, 2015).

UNICEF (2015) affirms that the total prevalence of child marriage in Africa is higher compared to the universal average. By the year 2050, Africa will have the highest number and share of child marriage worldwide if the existing trends go on. Although child marriage is prevalent across Africa, prevalence is greatest in West and Central Africa where it is most likely that

amongst ten women aged 20 to 24; four were married before they were 18 years old (Mangeli, Rayyani, & Cheraghi, 2018).

Early marriage is still widespread in Kenya particularly in the rural areas regardless of the existence of a law banning the tradition. In Kenya 4% of girls are married by 15 years while 23% of girls are married before they attain 18 years (UNICEF, 2017). Child marriage rates differ across the country; North Eastern and Coast regions have the highest prevalence rates, whereas Nairobi and the Central region have the lowest rates. Studies illustrate that Kilifi has the highest prevalence of early marriages with 47.4%, Homa Bay at 38%, Kwale at 37.9%, Bondo at 29.5% and Tharaka at 25% (Plan International, 2011:1).

Marriage before the girl attains the age of 18 is a major infringement of a girl's rights. Among the factors that lead to early marriage are poverty, religion, 'protection' of the girl child, family honour, social norms, an inadequate legislative framework and the state of a country's civil registration system (Ahmed, Khan, Khan, & Noushad, 2014). Studies by Plan International have revealed that in most rural areas in Kenya girls are often viewed as an economic burden or valued as capital in terms of goods, livestock and money when a man asks for her hand in marriage (Hardiani & Junaidi, 2018). A combination of cultural, traditional and religious arguments is often put forward to validate such economic transactions.

As per UNICEF (2018), child marriage often affects a girl's development negatively. It results to early pregnancy and social isolation, cutting short a girl's education, restricting her employment opportunities and career progression and putting her at a higher risk of experiencing domestic violence. Furthermore, early marriage is related with higher total fertility rates (Raj et al., 2009; KNBS and ICF Macro, 2010). Besides posing challenges to

society as a whole, young women's fertility can have lifetime and potentially distressing effects on young women, as well as their children. High fertility rates among women tend to lead to child poverty and high fertility in the next generation, feeding an insidious cycle of poverty across generations (Ridzuan et al., 2018).

Early marriage is deeply embedded in tradition, gender disparity and poverty. It is a complex matter that has continued to exist for many years. According to UNFPA, factors that contribute to early marriage are poverty and economic survival tactic; protecting family honour; tradition and culture; gender disparity; resolving disagreements; and insecurity especially during war (Stark, 2018). It often occurs among girls who are poor, uneducated and residing in rural areas. It is largely due to the unequal power relations between man and women in most African countries because of cultural and social traditions, beliefs and attitudes due to patriarchy (Singh & Vennam, 2016). As a result, girls and women most of the times occupy a subordinate status in society (ICRW, 2007).

Marriage is considered as a time of happiness and festivities all over the world. However, early marriage practices do not give any reason for joy. Once married, young girls are expected to assume new roles, the girls are usually not ready psychologically or physically for such roles (UNICEF, 2001). As indicated by UNICEF (2001:7), early marriage is an intolerable infringement of human rights and denies girls opportunity to acquire education, affects health of the girls thus disrupting their achievements in life. Furthermore, early marriage has several consequences not only on the well-being of families, but also for the entire society (Singh & Vennam, 2016). There is a price to pay at each level, from the individual family to the entire nation all together when girls are not educated and are unprepared for their responsibilities as wives and mothers in the society (Birchall, 2018).

Early marriage certainly denies children who are supposed to be in school, their right to education that is essential for their individual development, their preparation for parenthood, and their valuable involvement in the wellbeing of their households and society as a whole in the future (Bhnji, 2014). Married girls who would like to go on with their education may not be allowed to do so, both legally and practically. Girls are compelled to drop out of school when a good marriage proposal comes up in Bangladesh. According to UNICEF (2001), many parents hold the belief that it is not worthy to educate the girl child since she will end up getting married and working at the in-laws home. They view spending on a girl's education as wastage of resources. Therefore the cost associated with education is what causes most parents to stop their school age children from going to school (Birchall, 2018).

Commonly, early marriage can have devastating consequences on a girl's health. Young married girls can face serious problems such as obstetric complications during delivery, unwanted pregnancies and even malnutrition in their children. Moreover early marriage results to increased risk for contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as HIV and AIDS among young girls. This is because child brides are not in the position to negotiate safer sex practices effectively; hence, they are at risk of sexually transmitted infections (STI) such as HIV, and early pregnancy as well (UNICEF 2014).

In addition, early marriage has immense psychological effects on the young girls. Research done in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh on child marriage reveal that in marriage girls go through more problems as compared to boys; withdrawal from school, disruption of their socialization process and physiological as well as emotional harm owing to numerous pregnancies just to mention a few (Singh & Samara, 1996). Becoming a wife and a mother tends to be a big responsibility for the girls because in most cases they are still young and

unprepared to take up such roles. This seems like a heavy burden on them and results to serious effects on their psychological wellbeing and how they view themselves and their relationships with others (Ogori, Shitu, & R, 2013). These girls are still young and not mature enough to be able to deal with maternal issues, marriage problems or in laws issues, this adds on the psychological and emotional trauma in child brides. The study therefore, investigated the causes of early girl marriages as well as the consequences of the practice in Mombasa County with a focus on Mvita sub-County.

1.2 Problem Statement

The early marriages pose a challenge to the social economic development of the country through its impact on the education, domestic violence and risk of sexually transmitted diseases. However, despite these consequences of early marriages and the enactment of the marriage act in 2014 setting legal age of marriage in Kenya at 18 years irrespective of religious or cultural affiliations of a community, early marriage is still prevalent in some communities. This study seeks to examine the causes and effects of early marriage in Mvita Sub-County. This will also be with a view of filling the prevalent literature gaps. For example studies by Nyamongo (2000), Undie (2011), Wabuti (2014) and Wodon (2015). Furthermore, studies by UNICEF (2005) and UNFPA (2012) amongst others have looked at early marriage within the context of rural areas. This study however seeks to examine the experiences of young girls with early marriage in urban and cosmopolitan settings such as Mvita Sub-County. The study was guided by the following research question:

i.   What are the causes of early marriage among girls in Mvita Sub-County of Mombasa County?

ii. What are the effects of early marriages on girls in Mvita Sub-County?

1.3   Study Objectives

1.3.1   Overall Objective

   i.   To assess the causes and effects of early marriages among girls in Mvita Sub-County.

1.3.2   Specific Objectives

   i.   To establish the causes of early marriage among girls in Mvita Sub-County.

   ii.   To describe the effect of early marriages on girls in Mvita Sub-County.

1.4   Assumption of the study

   i.   Tradition is a leading cause of early marriage among girls in Mvita Sub-County.

   ii.   Early marriages among girls in Mvita Sub-County have negative effects on their reproductive health.

1.5   Justification of the Study

Regardless of the efforts put forward by many developing countries to oppose and even ban the practice, early marriage still prevails in many nations. The matter of early marriage is profoundly deep-rooted in the patriarchal cultures, which see girls as vulnerable and marriage as most preferred destination. It is a widespread phenomenon at the Coast and must be given great attention on behalf of the girl child and for sustainable development.

The outcome of the study not only increases the knowledge on the drivers of the practice but also assist the child rights agencies to have an evidenced based approach to their programming. In addition, the Mombasa County assembly and the children department can use the findings to come up with local policies that can resonate well with the locals. The National government can also use the findings for their adolescent policies and programmes. Non-governmental

organizations and other stakeholders can also benefit from the outcome of the study by creating ground for them to come up with interventions to curb early marriage. Moreover, the findings can be used by policy makers while formulating policies to ensure that the policies address the crisis of early marriage so as to prevent this violation of girls' right and hopefully help bring down child marriage rates.

The outcome can also be used in creating appropriate awareness among the girls themselves and their parents on the problems associated with early child marriages and how the practice retards development at personal, familial and societal levels. In addition, the outcome will enable religious leaders as well as community leaders to understand broadly the negative results traditions such as early marriage bring about on the community as a whole. Finally, the findings of the study can contribute more information on the issue of early marriage and suggest possible culturally compatible ways of addressing the problem.

1.6   Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted in Mvita Sub-County of Mombasa County. It focused on the causes and effects related to early girl marriages. The respondents were limited to the natives of the Coast and had to ensure that the migrant labourers who may not be cultural practitioners of early girl marriages were not included. Another limitation has to do with language. Most of the informants were fluent in Swahili and lack adequate knowledge of English. Therefore, questions had to be translated from English to Swahili and the responses from Swahili to English. Due to sensitivity of the topic, it led to respondents not opening up, however, they were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality.

1.7   Definition of Terms

Cultural beliefs: The way of doing things amongst people who share a common culture.

Early Marriage: Any marriage between two persons where the girl is 18 years old or younger.

Hadith: The statements of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)

Patriarchy: A social practice where men dominate and exploit women. It is the men who make decisions for women.

Poverty: A situation where a person lacks basic needs that is, food, shelter and clothing.

Tradition: Long-established custom or beliefs that have been passed on from one generation to another.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

This chapter presents literature review on early marriage. The concept of early marriage is discussed at the global and regional level. Marriage among the Swahili of Mombasa is also discussed as well as the reasons and consequences of early marriage. Tradition along with customs, poverty, religious practices and protection of the girl are discussed here as the main causes of early marriage. Among the effects of early marriage discussed are health consequences, denial of education, greater exposure to domestic and sexual violence and psychological effects. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical framework that guided the study.

2.2   The Concept of Early Marriage

UNFPA (2006) describes early marriage as, any marriage that is carried out between two persons where one of the individuals is under the age of 18. In most cases, the girl is not prepared physically nor physiologically nor psychologically to bear the responsibilities that come with marriage as well as parenting. Early marriage has become a concern all over the world though rates differ considerably in different parts of the world (Haque, 2014).

Marriage of people who are under 18 years old is a common practice across the world nevertheless continues to prevail in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Southern Asia as well and girls are the ones who are primarily affected (UNICEF, 2010). An ICRW review confirms that some parts of Africa and South Asia have the highest rates of child marriage; one-half to three-fourths of girls are married off before they are 18 years of age. On

the other hand, the highest rates of forced child marriage in the world are seen in Niger, Mali and Chad, which range from 71 percent to 77 percent (ICRW, 2007).

Overall, in Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 40 percent of women go into marriage when they are 18 years old (UNICEF, 2012:5). However, South Asia (India and Bangladesh) has the highest number of child brides where of all the marriages conducted, 46 percent of the marriages happen when the girl has not attained 18 years (UNICEF, 2009). ICRW (2007) indicates the regional estimates of the occurrence of early marriage for girls at 48 percent in Southern Asia, 42 percent in Africa and 29 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to UNICEF (2007), globally over 60 million girls who are between the ages of 20-24 are already married before they reach 18 years. A hundred million girls (25,000 - 30,000 girls everyday) are going to be child brides in the following decade if the existing trend goes on (Bruce & Clark, 2004).

Girls and women are obliged to live with the harmful effects related to female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage in different parts of the world (Ogori et al., 2013). While Kenya has made progress in banning FGM, early marriage and ensuring protection of children's rights, the practice is widespread in spite of everything. FGM results to early marriage and health complications. It is the cultural beliefs that encourage such practices and is mostly done on girls of age seven to twelve (Plan International, 2012).

The prevalence of child marriages in Kenya varies in different areas; North Eastern and Coast have the highest rates, whereas in the Central region and Nairobi the rates are low. Studies reveal that the prevalence of early marriage is highest in Kilifi at 47.4 per cent, then Homa Bay at 38 per cent, followed by Kwale at 37.9 per cent, Bondo at 29.5 per cent and lastly Tharaka

at 25 per cent (Plan International, 2011:1). Research by Plan International (2012) indicates that the prevalence rates of child marriage were higher among girls as compared to boys (43.3% for females and 11.6 for males). Plan's report reveal that majority of the young girls who were forced to get married, were getting married to men who were much older than they are. Also evidence indicates that girls who are married off before they reach18 years will most likely be less educated and will end up having many children (Bhnji, 2014).

The Kenyan Parliament in March 2014 approved the marriage Act that established a minimum age of marriage, as 18 years for both women and men (GoK, 2014). Notably, the new legislation pertains to all kinds of marriage including both Islamic and customary marriages. Marriage under the age of 18 is banned by this act. It state that no one should get engaged or betrothed to a person who is below the age of eighteen years (GoK, 2014). Anyone who is engaged to a person who is below eighteen years shall face tough penalties as entailed by the law. In spite of enacting such a law, early marriage continues to prevail across the country.

2.3   Marriage among the Swahili in Mombasa

Mombasa is the second largest city in Kenya. It is situated in southeastern Kenya on the Indian Ocean and is the country's major harbour. The city is inhabited generally by the Muslim Swahili people (Berg, 1968). The Swahili people came from the Bantu people of the coast of Southeast Africa, in Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique. Kiswahili, a Bantu language, is their mother tongue and what unites the Swahilis. Arab traders, Persians and other migrants, who arrived at the coast in the 7th and 8th centuries, provided substantial cultural mix and several loan words from Arab. The name *Swahili* is derived from the Arabic word *Sawahil,* which means "coasts" (Gilbert, 2002)

Swahili traditions have been greatly influenced by the Arabic culture. The existence of the Islamic religion among the Swahili people is the most important heritage of the Arab culture. Almost every component of the Swahilis culture is governed by the Islamic traditions, from food to clothing and their way of life (Berg, 1968). The Swahili, as Muslims, look upon marriage as a great event in the life of a person. It is one of the three important dates in the life of a person, the others being, the day when one is born and the day one dies. In Islam, marriage is essential to family creation. There is no fixed age of marriage in Islam. There are just broad references made in the Quran concerning the age of marriage and the age at which one can make sensible judgment, not stating a specific age. Girls and boys may get married the moment they get to puberty among the Swahili, that is, around fourteen to seventeen years.

Normally, marriages are endogamous within the clan. Often parents look for a close relative or member of the clan for their daughter or son to marry. Marriages between cousins are allowed and it is a quite common practice in the area. If a young man has a girl of his own in mind, the parents would want to know about her family. The Swahili are particular about the social status or standing of the potential bride or groom. A woman is not supposed to marry a man who is socially inferior, but a man can marry a socially inferior woman. The question of social equality in marriage seems to have originated from the Arabs but is not an Islam tradition (Ali 1977:84:97).

Marriage signifies the shift to adulthood. Marriages are mostly pre-arranged by the parents among the Swahili. Although the bride's parents will usually pick a groom for their daughter, she is allowed to reject her parents' preference and choose her own groom. The weddings go on for a number of days and comprising of detailed planning, ceremonies and activities for men and women. For the official marriage vows, it is only men who are present since it is conducted

in the mosque. Several factors, mostly economic, influence the duration of the ceremonies and the amount of money spent on them. The normal duration of a wedding is three days, but it could be spaced to a week or even a month. However, nowadays, due to financial constraints some are opting out for a wedding that lasts for a day only (Strobel, 1974). Weddings at the Coast are not only an occasion of family get-together but also a great cultural event (Berg, 1968).

The state of purity is highly regarded among the Swahili people just like in many Muslim societies; it is believed to be a very important component in upholding the well-being of the person and the community as a whole. Despite the fact that both men and women are supposed to remain pure until marriage, the idea of purity is regarded as especially essential to the status of womanhood in the Swahili community. The women are expected to uphold the society's values and failure to do so brings about disgrace and embarrassment to the self and the entire family (Middleton, 1992). The belief that a girl must preserve her virginity until the day she is officially married is an example of such values.

Parents marry of their young daughters because they look at early marriage as a form of protection for their young girls against sexual violence and harassment and perceive it as a means of ensuring that their daughters will not get pregnant before marriage and bring shame to the whole family. Some religions for instance Islam support early marriage and most parents do this because of the fear that their girls might become pregnant before they are married hence the best option is marry them while still young (Giyan, 2009).

2.4 Causes of Early Marriage

2.4.1 Tradition and customs

The practice of forced child marriage is entrenched in tradition. In several societies, parents are compelled to get their daughters married at a tender age in an attempt to stop girls from engaging in sexual activities prior to marriage; a woman who becomes sexually active before getting married brings shame to her family as well as the community (Munyao, 2013). Parents are also concerned about not marrying their daughters early as required by the society because they may end up not getting married at all later yet a woman's status in most societies is determined by marriage (Ahmed et al., 2014). Many families decide to wed their young girls due to social pressure within the community. For instance, some cultures hold the belief that when girls are married before they attain puberty; it brings blessings on their families. Moreover, in some societies early marriage is viewed as providing the necessary protection for young girls against sexual violence and is regarded as a means of ensuring that their girls do not get pregnant before marriage and bring shame to the whole family (Montazeri, Gharacheh, Mohammadi, Alaghband Rad, & Eftekhar Ardabili, 2016).

Pathfinder International (2006) reports that customs and the fear that a girl might end up not being married at all when she becomes older and the need to make sure that a girl remains a virgin until the time of marriage, are the major causes of early marriage. Marriage past a younger age could not happen in some communities. A girl who is old enough and not yet married brings shame on her family, provoking humiliation of her entire family by the community members and discrimination of the girl that the family just cannot allow to happen (Ridzuan et al., 2018).

2.4.2 Poverty

Poverty plays a central role in perpetuating early marriages. Girls from poor families in the developing nations are twice more likely to get married before they turn 18 compared to girls from privileged families. UNICEF (2001) states that child marriage is mainly common in the poorest nations of the world and the prevalent of child brides is highest in poverty-stricken areas in these countries. A lot of parents actually think that their daughter's future is secured once they are married and it is the best option (UNFPA, 2012). Studies on HIV/AIDS in Eastern Africa reveal that orphaned girls are forced into marriage by those who look after them because they cannot provide the basic needs for them (UNICEF, 2000).

Young girls are regarded as an economic burden in the impoverished families thus many parents marry off their daughters to older husbands so that they can benefit financially and socially as well (Delprato, Akyeampong, Sabates, & Hernandez-Fernandez, 2015). Marriage is considered a survival strategy in societies that practice early marriage. Parents opt to wed their girls as soon as possible with the intention of satisfying their own economic needs (ICRW, 2007:98). Poverty makes parents who are not working to see their own children as economic burden, the amount of school fees as too expensive and young girls as prospective sources of income in the form of dowry (Walker, 2012). Families with abject poverty mostly feel like they have no other option other than child marriage. They do not have the funds to take their children to school and the society might not present any motivation when it comes to defending girls from early marriage (ICRW, 2007).

Marrying young girls is mostly accompanied with the exchange of goods, livestock and money between the bride's and the bridegroom's families – in the form of a dowry or bride price. This is widespread in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Such practices tend to motivate

underprivileged families to marry off their daughters while still young (ICRW, 2003). In several cultures, the main motivation is the bride price the potential husbands are willing to pay for young brides. Bride wealth can be defined as a cultural phenomenon observed in Africa and other regions in the world and it encourages parents to marry their daughters early (UNICEF, 2001: 97). For example, the bride's family can be given livestock from the groom's family, as the bride price for their daughter; this is seen in many traditional cultures in Sub-Saharan Africa(Singh & Vennam, 2016). In South Asia, the young girl's parents are required to provide presents to the husband and his entire family. Such marriage arrangements and conditions like paying dowry tend to encourage child marriage practices. Additionally, to cut down on the high costs associated with marriage ceremonies poor families have a tendency to conduct several weddings at the same time (Fahmidul Haque, 2014). In some societies, a lower dowry is offered if the bride is younger; such customs may compel families to take into consideration marriage at an early age (UNICEF, 2001).

2.4.3   Religious Practices

Religious practices have also played a role in early marriages. However, in its study ICRW (2007) indicated that, there is no specific religion that was linked to the practice. Nevertheless, various religions have been related to a high prevalence of forced child marriage, in many countries all over the world (ICRW, 2007). Most religions over history, influenced the marriageable age. Jewish scholars and rabbis strongly discouraged marriages before the onset of puberty but, at the same time, in exceptional cases, girls aged 3 through 12 (the legal age of consent according halakha) might be given in marriage by her father (Ahmed, Khan, Alia, & Noushad, 2013). For Catholics incorporated into the Latin Church, the 1983 Code of Canon Law sets the minimum age for a valid marriage at 16 for male and 14 for females (Mylne, 2013).

Religious scholars often view early marriage as a way of regulating immoral and indecent behaviour in society. In Islam, several hadith instruct Muslims to marry early. For instance, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said 'O young people! Whoever among you can support a wife should marry, for that is more modest for the gaze and safer for your private parts' (Marriage quotes from Sahih Muslim, Sahih Bukhari). A research conducted in 2001 in Pakistan by UNICEF established that 66.73 percent of the early marriages in Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa were practiced by people who were motivated by the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (UNICEF, 2001). Based on Islamic religious doctrine, when a person gets married, he/she indeed perfects half of his religion. Therefore, it can be considered that marriage promotes human spiritual maturity (Hassouneh-Philips, 2001).

Religious validation for early marriage is seen in different countries in Africa. However, no specific religion has been linked to the practice (Jainet al., 2007). In some cultures, child marriage is associated with a religious beliefs and the need to protect girls from engaging in "improper" or "immoral" behaviour (Plan International, 2011). Many African countries that have high child marriage rates do have civil laws that forbid child marriage and set minimum marriage age. However, this state of affairs continues because of deep-rooted traditional and religious practices that make it hard to implement the laws (UNFPA, 2012). For instance, in Zimbabwe child marriage is widespread among the indigenous apostolic churches, charismatic evangelical groupings. They combine Christian values with traditional cultures and have about 1.2 million followers in the country. The Zimbabwe Council of Churches and the Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe acknowledge that the practice is more prevalent among apostolic followers than other religious groups (Human Rights Watch, 2015). In Ethiopia, child marriage is embedded in the customs of Orthodox Christian communities like those in the Amhara religion (UNICEF, 2001).

2.4.4 Protection of the Girl

Early marriage is one way of ensuring that a wife is 'protected', or placed firmly under male control; that she is submissive to her husband and works hard for her in-laws' household; that the children she bears are 'legitimate', and that bonds of affection between couples do not undermine the family unit (Caldwell & Caldwell, 1977). The main reason for getting girls married at a tender age is to avoid premarital sex. In many societies virginity is highly valued and this is evident in several practices that are put in place with the intention of preventing a girl from engaging in sexual activities before marriage (Ahmed et al., 2014). Consequently, such practices result in strict rules imposed on the girl. For instance, a girl may not be allowed to take part in social gatherings out of the family and she may be told the kind of clothes to wear (UNICEF, 2001).

The practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) – surgically restricting entry to the vagina (infibulation) or removing the clitoris (excision), is practiced in North-East Africa and Middle East as a means of controlling girls so as to limit their sexual desires (UNICEF, 2001). All these practices are put in place with the aim of safeguarding girls from unwanted sexual interest from the men. Furthermore most parents see marriage as offering the greatest 'protection' for their girls (Hardiani & Junaidi, 2018). In certain societies, the sense of independence developed by girls at some point in adolescence is perceived as detrimental (UNICEF, 2001). In these societies, women may be respected, however they are also expected to be submissive to the requests of the men - fathers, husbands, and sons – for their own good. Failure to do so calls for reprisal; for example, in Kenya violence against defiant wives is usually approved (Muthengi, 2000).

2.5　Effects of Early Marriage on Girls

Early marriage is a harmful practice and has many effects on the girl child ranging from health, education and general well-being of the girl.

2.5.1　Health Consequences

Girls who go into marriage at an early age are more at risk of death during childbirth since their bodies are not fully developed. UNICEF (2007) reports that a girl under the age of 15 is five times more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth than a woman in her 20s. The risks is extended to infants where a mother who is under age 18, her baby's chance of dying in the first year of life is 60 percent greater than that of a baby born to a mother older than 19. In addition to death, young girls face tremendous health risks in childbirth, including a serious condition known as obstetric fistula (Montazeri et al., 2016). Obstetric fistula results when a young mother's vagina, bladder and/or rectum tear during childbirth. Without surgical treatment to re-attach the tissues, fistula conditions can be permanent; such treatment might be difficult to access hence might not be sought after (Delprato et al., 2015). This condition leaves girls isolated and often abandoned by their partners, family and friends.

Child brides face increased risk for contracting sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV and AIDs. Marriage increases the exposure to the virus among young married girls, particularly because older husbands may become involved in unprotected sexual relationships with other people (Bankole et al., 2004). Young married girls are unable to negotiate safe sexual behaviours' because often they are married to older men. As such, young married girls are more at risk of getting infected compared to unmarried girls who are not engaging in sexual relations. A study carried out in Kenya and Zambia in 2004 found that 75 percent of married girls aged

15 – 19 were more likely to become infected with HIV than unmarried girls who are sexually active and are of the same age (Clark, 2004).

2.5.2 Denial of Education

Early marriages are a big threat to the human rights and well-being of the children. It challenges the basic right of these children to education. It denies the young an opportunity to access education that will help them in the future. Girls who get married are denied their childhood. Usually they are socially isolated, separated family and friends and with limited chances for education and employment (Montazeri et al., 2016). The family members make decisions about girls' education and marriage jointly, not sequentially and in most cases education looses. As a result, women who were married at an early age have low levels of education (UNICEF, 2014). For example, almost two thirds of women in Malawi, who do not have formal education were young brides compared to 5 percent of women who attend high school or higher levels of education (UNICEF, 2014).

2.5.3 Greater Exposure to Domestic and Sexual Violence

Early marriage creates a number of conditions that expose married girls to brutality. Young married girls are more likely to be abused physically, sexually and emotionally. Studies conducted in India reveal that girls married before they attained 18 years reported being subjected to physical violence twice as often as girls who are married later in life. They also stated experiencing sexual violence three times more compared to girls who married later (ICRW, 2005). Young married girls have no say at all when it comes to handling of family affairs. They cannot make their own decisions and in instances when they go against the husband's wishes they are battered. Majority of the girls who were married early experience domestic violence for a long time (Ridzuan et al., 2018). In addition, most girls are subjected

to marital rape. Owing to their tender age, other men in the family sexually exploit some of them but they are scared to complain about it.

2.5.4 Psychological Effects

The loss of adolescence, forced sexual relationship and the denial of freedom and personal development attendant on early marriage have profound psychological and emotional consequences. The impact can be subtle and insidious and the damage hard to access (UNICEF, 2001). In many countries, once married young girls move from their parents' house to live with their husband and his family. They usually have neither friends nor support in their in-laws home. They have no say in their own lives or in matters of the household (ICRW, 2007). Many girls who are in a forced marriage are not happy and tend to feel lonely. Since the people around them approve such marriages they don't have anybody to talk to or share their problems with (Delprato et al., 2015). Inter-African Committee researchers while in Ethiopia were surprised by the elders' lack of concern in the pain and suffering of little girls due to early marriages, untimely sex and early pregnancies. These distresses were considered as an "unavoidable part of life" (Berhane-Selassie, 1993:9).

Further discrimination is experienced by young brides who are widowed at an early age. Widows lose their status in society and they, together with their children, are frequently deprived of their property rights, and other various human rights. In some countries in Africa, a custom known as *levirate* is practiced whereby a widow is remarried to his brother-in-law. This custom is practiced with the intention of providing financial and social support in some way to the widow(Stark, 2018). The Luo community of Kenya does this and in case the widow defy, she might be thrown out of the family. Child widows with no education and no way of getting income are particularly helpless (Owen, 1996:9).

2.6 Theoretical Framework

2.6.1 Radical Feminist Theory

This study was guided by the radical feminist theory. Radical feminist is a branch of feminism that formed during the second wave of feminism in the 1960s (Willis, 1984). Radical feminist beliefs are based on the idea that the main causes of women's oppression originates from social roles and institutional structures being constructed from male supremacy and patriarchy (Charvet, 1982). Radical feminist define patriarchy as a social system in which men take up all social roles while women are kept in subordinate position. They further state that this social system has managed to survive for so long because its chief psychological weapon is its universality and its existence over the years (Charvet, 1982). McDowell and Pringle (1992) further state that, women are always defined in relation to men, and as dependent and subordinate to them as well. As a result, women are socialized to acquire those qualities, which fit them into a relationship of dependence on men. These qualities include gentleness, passivity and submission and striving to please men always, Radical feminist theory analyzes patriarchy as the primary causes of women's oppression (Pilcher and Imelda, 2008:50).

Radical feminists blame the exploitation of women on men because they see society as patriarchal – it is dominated and ruled by men (Walby, 1990:7). According to Walby (1990:9), patriarchy is indispensable for an analysis of gender inequality. She further argues that there are six patriarchal structures that restrict women and help maintain male domination, and these are paid work relations within the household, patriarchal culture, sexuality, male violence towards women and the state.

The patriarchal nature of our society is responsible for gender inequality thus tolerating male domination and female subordination in our societies. The socialization process present in our societies tends to fuel this sad situation. In the family, the male child is preferred to the female child. The female child is further discriminated upon because she eventually gets married and joins another family while the male child ensures the continuity of the family name. This is achieved through bringing additional members into the family (Human Rights Monitor, 2001). This mind-set has made some parents prefer to educate boys than girls, because girls' will just end up having children.

Also, many cultures are intolerant on female sexual behaviours while at the same time show lenience when it's male sexual behaviour (ICRW, 1996). Men are allowed to experiment and engage in sexual activities at will before they get married while women have to maintain their virginity until marriage or jeopardise the family name. Therefore, the honour of the family depends on the girl than the boy.

2.6.2   Relevance of the Theory to the Study

Radical feminism is relevant to this study because it helped to explain the traditions and beliefs of the people of Mvita that lead to early marriages. Young girls have been the major victims of early marriage since the society views girls as subordinate to boys. In terms of education, it is preferred to educate the boy child as opposed to the girl child. The men are rulers while women are supposed to be submissive to their rule. In most African cultures, girls are socialized to be homemakers, mothers and to perform domestic duties while boys are socialized to be household heads. Therefore, the gender roles assigned to the girls by the society are geared more towards marriage.

In most African societies, men are socialized to assume the role of a breadwinner, to be dominant and to make most, if not all, family decisions. Woman, in contrast, are raised to run the household – cooking, cleaning and clothing – and produce and care for the children, as well as the sick and elderly relatives. As such, women have no say when it comes to use of contraceptives and planning of the family since it is the men who make the decisions. Radical feminist analysis will help to establish the effect of early marriages on girls.

In addition, young girls who marry before the age of 18 have a greater risk of becoming victims of intimate partner violence than those who marry at an older age. This is especially true when the age gap between the child bride and spouse is large. Married women are required to be sexually passive and obedient to their husbands. Men, on the other hand, are the initiators of sex and set the conditions for the sexual encounters. As a result, women cannot negotiate safer sexual behaviours. This explains why in a marriage, a woman has no say at all; she cannot make decisions on the number of children to have. Thus, this theory will also help us to understand the male supremacy and women subordination in early marriages.

2.7   Conceptual Framework

The literature shows that there are several factors contributing to early marriage including traditions, poverty, religious sentiments and protection of the girl. On the other hand, the effects of the practice of early marriage are health related risks such as increased maternal and infant health risks and increased risk for HIV/AIDS, denial of education, exposure to domestic and sexual violence, and psychological effect on girls as shown in figure 2.1.

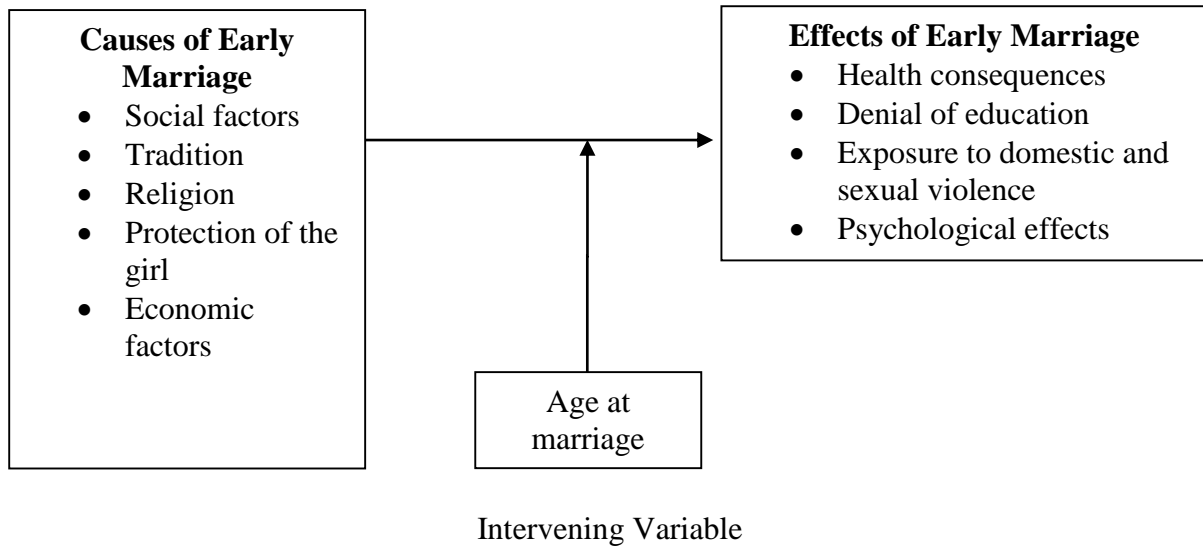**Independent Variable**   **Dependent Variable**

Causes of Early Marriage		**Effects of Early Marriage**

Intervening Variable

Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

This chapter describes the research site, research design, study population and unit of analysis, sample size and sampling procedures and the data collection methods. The chapter also discusses the ethical considerations that guided the study as well as the challenges experienced in the field by the researcher and how they were overcame.

3.2   Research Site

The study was conducted in Mvita Sub-County of Mombasa County found on the Kenyan Coast. The County borders Kilifi County to the North, Kwale County to the South West and the Indian Ocean to the East (Fig 3.1). It covers an area of 229.7 km^2 excluding 65 km^2 of water mass. The County has a population of 939,370 comprising of 486,924 males and 452,446 females and the population density is 4,293 per sq km (KNBS, 2010). It consist of 6 constituencies (sub-counties) namely Changamwe, Jomvu, Kisauni, Nyali, Likoni and Mvita. Mvita constituency is located within Mombasa Island area (Fig 3.2).Mvita sub-county has a population of 143,128 and it covers an area of 14.80 km^2 (KNBS, 2010). The Sub County is divided into six sub-divisions i.e. Ganjoni, Railway, Tononoka, Tudor, Old town and Majengo.

Education is a key pillar to any development. However, for many years, Coast region in Kenya has been behind in education levels. According to the 2009 census report, at least 40 per cent of young people in Mombasa County have never attained secondary schooling. The report shows that the region has over 440, 000 people aged between 18 and 45 living within the county whereby 176,000 never made it through class eight (KNBS, 2010). Although poverty has been

among the problems that slowed or prevented progress in education, some socio-cultural factors and practices also influence girl's education negatively.

Map 3.1: Location of Mombasa County in Kenya

(Source: GOK/AUTHOR/…etc)
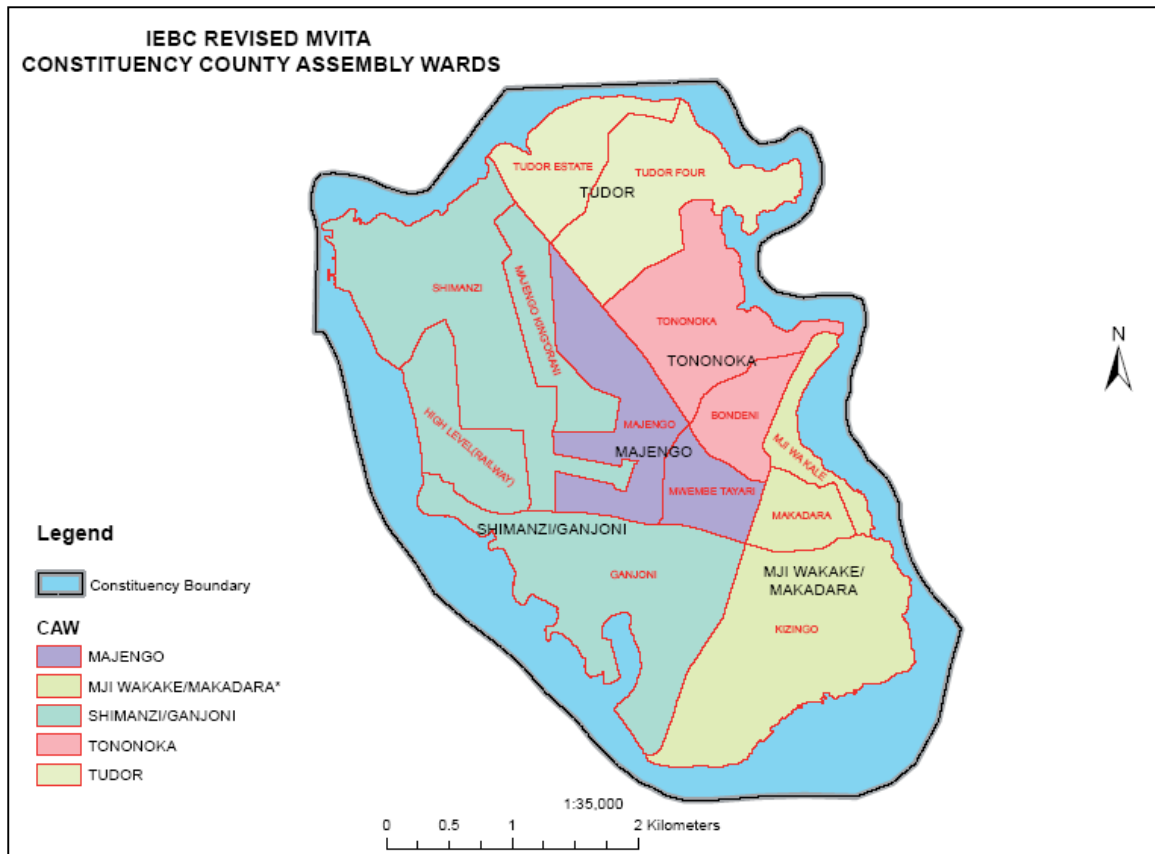
Map 3.2: Map of Mvita Sub-County

Source:http://softkenya.com/constituency/wp-content/upload/sites/19/2011/06/Mvita-

Constituency-Map.png

3.3 Research Design

Welman et al. (2009) describe a research design as, the overall plan according to which the respondents of a proposed study are selected, as well as the means of data collection or generation. The current study employed a cross-sectional design. This methodology was chosen due to the low costs and little time associated with it, as well as the fact that it presents the respondents with very little ethical concerns (Baranyi, 2011). This study also applied both quantitative and qualitative research methods in collecting data. Quantitative data was collected through survey questionnaire while qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews. Quantitative data was analyzed using

Microsoft Excel. On the other hand, qualitative data was analyzed in line with study objectives. Also, verbatim quotes were also used alongside the qualitative presentations to amplify the voices of the participants.

3.4   Study Population and Unit of Analysis

Akinade and Owolabi (2009) describe population of study as the total set of units from which a sample is obtained. The study population of the present study consisted of married women within Mvita Sub-County. The researcher chose married women as participants in the study because they have firsthand information on the issues revolving around the causes and effects of early marriage as well, which is the objective of the study. These women have been victims and as such, their responses provide useful information to the study. The unit of analysis is the unit from which information is obtained (De Vaus, 2001). In this study, the unit of analysis was the individual married woman. They are considered as the major source of information since they have been the victims of the practice of early marriage.

3.5   Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

It is due to the inability of researchers to test all the individuals in a given population that the need to select a sample arises. A sample can be described as a small part of the population that is selected for purposes of observation as well as analysis (Best & Kahn, 2006). The sample must be representative of the population from which it was drawn. For the purpose of this study, a sample was obtained from married women aged 15-25 years. The following formula was used to calculate the sample size (Fisher et al; 1991).

$$n = \frac{Z^2 (1 - P) P}{d^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

z = standard deviate corresponding to 95% confidence intervals = 1.96

p = expected prevalence being determined (in proportion of one)

d = 0.1

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \,(1- 0.5)0.5}{0.1^2}$$

$$= \frac{3.8416 \times 0.25}{0.01}$$

$$= \frac{0.9604}{0.01}$$

n = 96.04 = 100

Burns and Grove (2003) described sampling as a process of selecting a group of people, events or behaviour that will participate in a study. Non-probability and purposive sampling techniques were used in this study. A non-probability sampling technique was utilised to select knowledgeable and qualified participants (Cozby, 2009). A purposive sample was used for this reason. Parahoo (1997) explained purposive sampling as a method of sampling where the researcher intentionally selects who to incorporate in the study on the basis of their ability to present relevant data. This approach was used so as to select information-rich cases for study in-depth. The objective of the study was to assess the causes and effects of early marriage among girls in Mvita sub-County therefore the researcher selected married women precisely so as to gain a great deal of information about matters of fundamental significance to the objectives of the study.

Most importantly, it is crucial to establish what selection criteria are necessary in selecting the individuals to be studied before commencing purposeful sampling. For this current study, the following selection criteria were applied when choosing the participants in the sample; the married women must have been married before the age of 18 and a native of Coastal communities.

Sampling of the participants was done with the assistance of the elders in the area to enable the researcher to identify potential participants. With their help the researcher went door to door in the selected sub divisions, talked to the women so as to get the sample participants. For the researcher to include the women in the study some screening question were applied to ensure that they are eligible for the research and that they meet the inclusion criteria. Some of the questions asked that were of great importance were at what age they got married and whether they were native of coastal communities. One hundred married women were purposely selected as the study sample once the researcher selected participants in accordance with the above stated criteria. These participants were purposively selected because of their knowledge and experience on the issues of reasons as well as consequences of early marriage because they are victims of the practice. The researcher explained to them the objectives of the study; then they were asked personally whether they wanted to participate in the study. The researcher then proceeded to scheduling for interviews and focus group discussions. In the situation where there was a problem identifying participants who met the criteria for selection for the study, each qualified participant was requested to refer other people they know with similar experience.

3.6   Data Collection Methods

As mentioned earlier, the study used both quantitative and qualitative techniques to collect data. A combination of these research design helps provide more data to work with and ultimately a more accurate evaluation (O'Neil, 2006). Primary data was collected by use of questionnaires, key informant interviews and focus group discussions while secondary data was obtained from books, journals as well as reports published by other researchers and other international institutions.

3.6.1   Survey

A standardized questionnaire was used as the instrument for the survey. The questionnaire was developed, covering the items that point to achieving the objectives of the study. In designing the questionnaire great attention was given to the questions, it was short, direct and clear to ensure getting the right data. It comprised of both closed and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into three sections namely demographic information of the respondent, causes of early marriage and the effects of early marriage on girls (Appendix II). These were three categories of questions that were asked so as to meet the set objectives. A total of 100 questionnaire were then administered to the respondents who were purposively sampled. A consent form detailing the study being undertaken and declaring that participation is voluntary accompanied the questionnaires. The respondents were requested to return them once completed.

3.6.2   Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

A focus group is a discussion among a small number of target population members guided by a moderator (Krueger and Casey, 2000). In focus group discussion researchers interview participants with common characteristics or experience for the purpose of eliciting ideas,

thoughts and perceptions about specific topics or certain issues linked to an area of interest (Holloway and Wheeler, 2002). In this study, five focus group discussions were held with married girls of age group 18 − 25 years who were married before the age of 18. Each focus group comprised of seven participants and lasted for about an hour. The FGDs were held at Mewa Centre Library in Majengo in the afternoons when there were not so many people around.

The researcher introduced herself to the participants to establish rapport then the participants were informed about the purpose of the study. The researcher further explained to the participants that ethical issues in particular, confidentiality and anonymity were addressed. A focus group discussion guide (Appendix III) was used to aid in data collection. The purpose of the discussions was to assess attitudes and opinions the women have on the practice of early marriage. Questions were asked following the guide. The researcher tried to be social as much as she could so as to put the participants at ease and encourage them to discuss freely. The researcher also used probing technique to encourage participants to continue speaking; each and every one of the participants was involved. From the discussions, the researcher was able to get the views and opinions the women have about the reasons and the negative impacts of early marriage on girls in Mvita.

3.6.3   Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews were conducted with people who are knowledgeable on matters of the community. These include elderly women, a representative from a woman's group in the area and a non-governmental organization that deals with child rights. They helped in providing information since they have first-hand knowledge about the practice in the area. The interviews were conducted depending on their convenience and each session lasted for about an hour. To

ensure confidentiality, the interviews were conducted privately and were recorded so that it can be transcribed later on. The interviews were conducted with the aid of a key informant interview guide (Appendix IV). The interviews sought their views and perceptions towards early marriage and its effects on the girl child and the society at large. The researcher also took notes to make sure that the respondents' comments, opinions and views were noted down.

Information from the elderly women helped to understand the traditional beliefs of the local people that lead to them engaging in early marriage practices. On the other hand, the women representative provided information on the negative effects of early marriage girls experience and what strategies have been put in place to rescue girls from such marriages. The NGOs provided information on the causes of early marriage, challenges as well as the strategies that are put in place to eradicate the practice in the area. The responses of the respondents were later translated from Swahili language to English language by the researcher. The interviews resulted in a number of emerging themes that were later grouped, themed and summarized accordingly.

3.6.4 Secondary sources

Thorough examination of secondary data commenced and continued throughout the study to obtain a great deal of data on the issue of early marriages as well as its effects. Analysing secondary data gave great insights into the issue at hand. This process aided in improving the understanding of the problem of early marriage. Sources of secondary data included books, journal articles, government statistics and the Internet as well as reports published by other researchers and other international institutions such as UNICEF and UNFPA

3.7   Data Processing and Analysis

The process of analysis transforms data into findings by bringing order, structure and meaning to the collected data (Patton, 2002). Both the qualitative and quantitative analysis was undertaken. Cohen et al. (2007) described qualitative data analysis as a process that involves organization and accounting for data as well as making sense of the data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation. They further explained that analysis involves observing patterns, themes, groups and regularities. Data processing and analysis within this study has been conducted in stages. In this study qualitative data collected from interviews with key informants and FGDs was analyzed thematically. Firstly, the researcher inspected the collected data by observing amount of information in order to ensure the adequacy of collected data. Data collected from the key informant interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed and translated. The recording of the interview data took place by means of note-taking and audio recording. In addition, verbatim transcripts of the interviews were compiled for analysis and interception. The researcher was able to identify significant patterns and trends from the responses of the participants as the data was being transcribed and translated. The data was then categorized according to themes. The themes that surfaced from the data corresponded with the research questions that were asked.

Subsequently, the researcher used a process of coding to create order out of the different patterns that were identified. The researcher thoroughly read the data in order to have an idea of how patterns could be clustered and coded. Neuman (2011) describes codes as the names or labels given to certain units or segments whose meanings are related found in the field notes and transcripts. The process of coding involved the identification and naming of the identified patterns, closely examining them and comparing them for similarities and differences. The researcher sieved, sorted and grouped the collected data in accordance with the question

numbers that acted as the coding system to establish certain patters in all the answers. The researcher further named each theme depending on its subject matter. The name given to each theme or category is the one that seems most logically related to the data it represents and is catchy enough to draw the researcher's or reader's attention to it (de Vos et al., 2005). Related codes were then listed in categories according to the research objectives.

The data obtained was also subjected to editing. In this stage, the data collected was edited for the purpose of achieving the following objectives; detecting any errors and omissions, correcting any errors or omissions where possible and ensuring that data quality standards are met and achieved. The researcher then proceeded to cleaning the collected data. During cleaning phase, the researcher inspected the collected data thoroughly to ensure the validity of data and point out useful information. To summarize the data collected, the findings were represented in graphs, charts and frequency tables. In addition, verbatim quotes from the informants and FGD participants were used to amplify their voices.

On the other hand, quantitative data was analyzed using the spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel to give meaning to descriptive data. After receiving the completed questionnaires, all questions were analyzed individually taking into considerations all the available factors and supported with descriptive and inferential analysis. The responses of each respondent was further organized, coded and entered in the spreadsheets in Microsoft Excel. It was then analyzed by using the appropriate techniques. The results were summarized and presented in tables and figures after analysis. Every data presentation presented an overview of the percentages of the related categories to give a general idea about the specific grouping of information. By visually presenting data – charts, tables and graphs – in numbers and percentages, the researcher was

able to provide an analytical description and interpret data using descriptive statistical procedures.

3.8   Ethical Considerations

The focus of a number of educational researches is mostly human beings. As maintained by McMillan and Schumacher (2011) a researcher is has the responsibility to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of the participants taking part in the study. In this study, ethical principles for informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality were followed. The researcher explained to the women respondents that this study was set out to determine the causes and effects of early marriage. Further, the respondents were notified that they had a right to disqualify themselves from answering any questions they felt uncomfortable about. The participation of the respondents in the research was voluntary and based on informed consent as such the respondents were required to fill up a consent form before commencing, agreeing to participate in the study. The researcher kept the information provided by the respondents confidential, this was achieved by allowing only the research team accessibility to the information and the answered questionnaires were not released to any unauthorized person. To ensure anonymity of the participants, the researcher used pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. In addition, a research clearance permit was sought from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and a permit number NACOSTI/P/18/73301/23372 was obtained after the approval of the application.

If the situation allows, feedback will be done to inform the community of the effects of early marriage. The County government of Mombasa will be a recipient of the report and attempts will be made to publish the results in peer-refereed journal for the consumption of the larger scientific community.

3.9   Challenges Experienced in the Field by the Researcher

While in the field, the researcher experienced some challenges. The major challenge faced had to do with language. The respondents were fluent in Swahili and lack adequate knowledge of English language. Therefore, questions had to be translated from English to Swahili and the responses from Swahili to English. In some cases interviewees failed to turn up despite having scheduled the time of the interview prior. The researcher had to reschedule to a time when the participant would be available. The availability of the library hall where the researcher conducted the FGDs posed a challenge. The space was not available sometimes especially when there were many students around, however the researcher carefully planned and scheduled the discussion to a more convenient time.

CHAPTER FOUR

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF EARLY MARRIAGE AMONG GIRLS IN

MVITASUB-COUNTY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings carried out on the causes and effects of early marriage among girls in Mvita sub-county. The chapter is organized into three sections; the first presents demographic characteristics of the respondents, followed by discussions on the drivers of early marriages as well as the effects of early marriage on girls in Mvita sub county. Discussions have been carried out alongside each of the thematic areas presented.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

4.2.1 Age of the respondents

Determining the age of the respondents is important to understand which age bracket was at risk of early marriages. The findings indicate most of the respondents 49% were aged between 21-25 years, 26% were aged between 31-35 years old, and 22% were aged between 15-20 years old while 3% of the respondents were above 36years old. Therefore, majority of the respondents were aged between 21-25 years. This shows the maturity and experience level of these women in regards to early marriages and that their response is substantial to this study. The findings are summarized in figure 4.1 below.
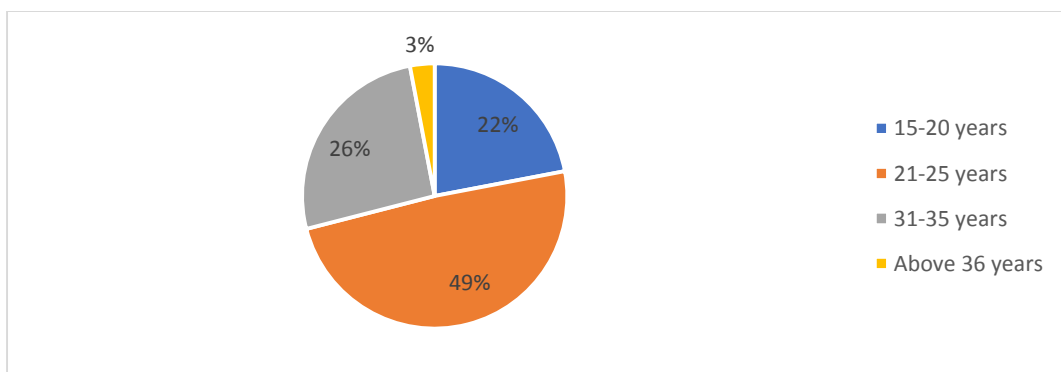

Figure 4.1: **Respondents Age**

From focus group discussion, it was very clear that girls are married off either in primary school or after primary school or before they reach puberty. This is in tandem with studies by Gynecol (2009) who found that marriages for girls under the age of 18 years occur worldwide but mainly seen in Africa, South Asia and Latin America.

The researcher was also interested to know the age at which the respondents reported getting married. This was of importance because by comparing the age of the respondents and the age at which the respondents reported getting married, the researcher was able to get the length of stay in marriage of the respondents. This has been discussed in the following sub sections.

4.2.2   Age at Marriage

Different societies have different beliefs when it comes to the age at which girls reach puberty. As a result, the age at marriage was classified by taking into consideration all the factors associated. Age at marriage is important because it is a pointer of the occurrence of early marriage in any given area. The researcher had to know the age at marriage so that to be able to assess the prevalence of early marriage practices in Mvita sub-County. The findings reveal that majority of the women 56% are married at age 13-14 years, 32% of the women were married within 15-17 years and only 12% are married within 9-12 years. The results therefore reveal that most girls are getting married below the age of 18 as summarized in figure 4.2.
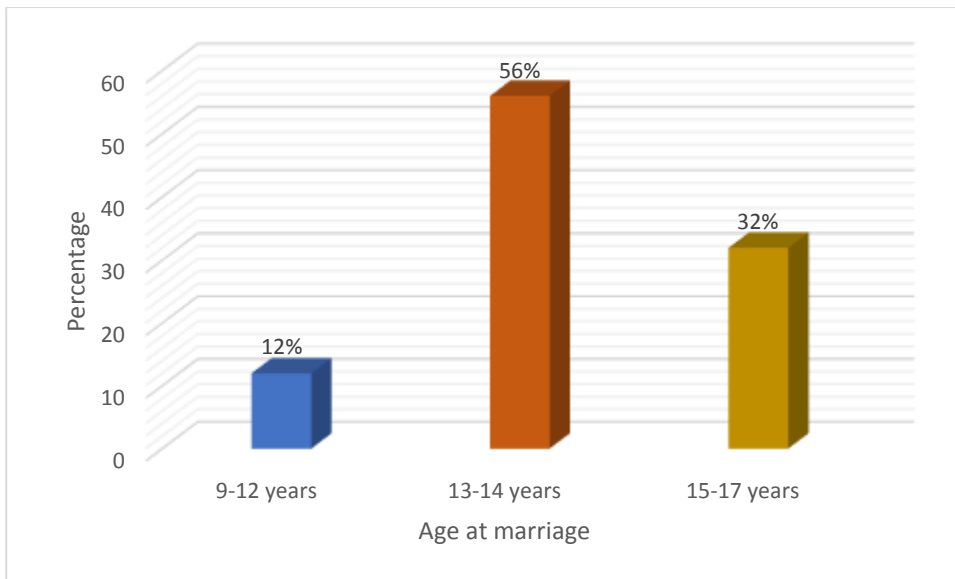
Figure 4.2: Age at Marriage

Level of education affects the prevalence of child marriages; for instance, early drop out in school forces a lot of children especially girls to move into marriage. Statistics revealed that married men and women with higher level of education did not move into an early marriage. Similarly, Panos Institute Southern Africa (2014) established that limited access to formal education for many children often leaves them impoverished and thus vulnerable to early marriage because they have limited options for survival. Another study by Nangoma (2013) established that girls who got pregnant could not continue with schooling and instead were forced into an early marriage with the view that marriage could be the best alternative to take care of themselves.

Data from the FGDs discussion also disclosed that for girls it is acceptable to marry as early as 14 years while others reported that some girls get married at the age of 16.

> *Around here, girls get married when they are between 14 and 16 years. It is a common thing such that it has become normal. As long as the girl is matured, can perform house chores and can be able to have children, she is married off (FGD discussant).*

41

The findings from this respondent indicate that there is cultural acceptance of the aspect of marriage between young girls due to their ability to perform house chores. The criteria for determination of the house chores seem to be the ability and capacity to perform house chores.

4.2.3   Length of Stay in Marriage

The researcher was also keen to find out the length of stay in marriage for the married women. It refers to the length of time one has been in a marriage. By comparing the age of the respondents and the age at which the respondents reported getting married, the researcher was able to get the length of stay in marriage of the respondents. This will help understand the loose arrangements in such marriages and how it affects social lives of the young girls. This will also enable the researcher to know relationship between early marriage and divorce cases if any and to establish whether those married at early age are at high risk of being divorced or not.

The findings illustrate that 49% of the respondents had been married for less than 5 years, 33% indicated 5 - 10 years as the duration they had been married while 18% indicated 10 - 15 years as the duration of marriage. The findings reveal that most of the married women had only stayed in marriage for less than 5 years. Due to high prevalence of early marriages, young girls are forced to marry at an early age and this explains why majority of the marriages within the area are only a few years old. The data in figure 4.3 illustrates the length of stay in marriage of the respondent.
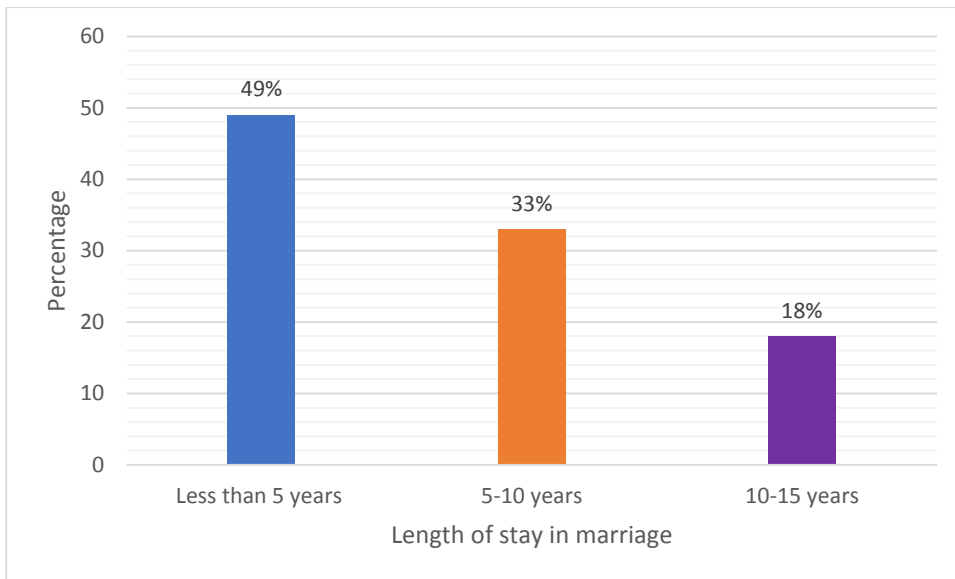
Figure 4.3: **Length of stay in Marriage**

The study findings further revealed that 85% are still in their first marriages while only 15% have been divorced and remarried again. This shows that there are few divorce cases; this is associated with the belief that marriage raises a woman's status in society therefore most women do not want to be divorced. A divorced woman is looked down upon in the society. Religion also plays a role in this as the religion of Islam condemns divorce. From the discussion, it was noted that most women would rather stay in an unhappy marriage than being divorced. Due to large family sizes, women are reluctant to seek for divorce because they think of their children, they might end up marrying someone else who might mistreat the children and for fear that, they might not get men to marry them at all because of the many children they have. This was supported by one of the respondents, she states as follows,

> *I have been married for years and I have five children now. Even though we have issues in our marriage, I choose to stay because where will I go with all these children. I cannot even dare go home with them because it will be a huge burden on me and my family. Who will provide for them? Beside who will marry me with all these children? So, I would rather just stay here and let him strive to provide for his children.*

The results of this respondent capture the challenge that the girls in early marriage face as a result of the children. This indicates that the children at young age places a burden to the girls married off early and are captured in their roles of children upbringing. The feeling is that going back home would present a burden to their parents and guardians due to their children.

From the study, it was also observed that women who have been in marriage for a longer period adapted to challenges associated with marriage and have come up with different mechanisms to tackle the problems. On the other hand, those who have been in marriage for a shorter period face more challenges when it comes to marital problems and in-laws issues. Some young couples even end up divorcing. A key informant reported,

> *"Young girls end up being divorced because of failure to cope with marital problems. Marriage comes with a lot of responsibilities as well as challenges. Sometimes the life girls get after marriage is not what they expected. Taking care of a home and children may be too much for the young girls because they are not matured enough. Also, in-laws related issues contribute to divorce cases. Girls complain of the in-laws interfering with their lives. When the girls cannot cope with the problems, they opt to leave their husbands."*

The theme of divorce has been explored and cited due to differences in marital expectations and responsibilities and the relationship of spouses with their in-laws. This implies that girls who have been married for a short duration may opt for divorce in cases where the marital problems are too much to bear.

4.2.4 Education Level of the Respondents

Education is often seen as key to preventing child marriage (UNICEF, 2004). This implies that girls with higher levels of schooling are less likely to marry at an early age. The levels of education provided were primary education, secondary education, college and university. The primary and secondary education level was further categorized into complete and incomplete.

The study findings indicate that 54% of the respondents had obtained primary education, 30% of the respondents attained secondary education, 10% of the respondents had attended college and only 6% had attained university level of education. This shows that majority of the respondents had only attained primary education by the time they were getting married. The findings are summarized in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Level of Education of the Respondents

Level of Education	Frequency	Percent (%)
Primary Education	54	54%
Secondary Education	30	30%
College	10	10%
University	6	6%
Total	**100**	**100%**

The women indicated that they could not continue with post primary education because of the responsibility of rearing children. The study found that girls dropped out of school after primary level because their parents/guardians could not afford school fees for their education. As a result, they ended up marrying early since they had no other available options to venture into.

One of the respondents said:

>*"I was married at the age of 15 years just after completing primary school. My parents were very poor and they could not afford to take me to secondary school despite that I really wanted to continue with my education as I had scored very well in KCPE and I had a dream of becoming a doctor. After staying one year at home, I was married off to one of the middle-aged man. I really got depressed since I had no otherwise but to accept to be married to an old man and that was the end of my dream of becoming a doctor" (FGD discussant in 18-25 group).*

Young girls are forced to get married at an early age not allowing them to continue with higher levels of education. Due to lack of education, young girls are denied opportunities to better themselves in the future. Better education would benefit not only the women but also their children and society as a whole.

However, we had few cases of women who were supported by their husbands to do some technical courses as narrated by one of the respondents.

"1 was married after completing form four. My husband took me to vocational training where I studied tailoring. Since completing the course, I have set up small family business which I get income to feed my family".

Another respondent narrated, *"I had completed my secondary education when I got married. After some time I received a calling letter from the university, my husband allowed me to continue with my education after we got married and even supported me financially. He is very understanding and supportive. I am pursuing Bcom and I am now in my third year"*.

The level of education received by girls is a strong predictor of the age at which they marry (ICRW, 2013). This is in line with the results showed in table 4.1 concerning the levels of education among respondents. Most of the respondents stated that their families did not value educating the girl child and that is why they could not acquire high level of education. Many parents still hold the view that investing in a girl's education is pointless while she is just going to get married and work in another family. This conforms to previous studies by UNICEF (2001).

The cost of investing in education is what drives many parents to withdraw their daughters from school (UNICEF, 2001). Marriage is viewed as the best option. As such, majority of parents choose to wed their girls at an early age rather than allowing them to go to school.

Some of the respondents mentioned that they had to dropout from school because their parents could not afford to pay for their school fees. This statement is in agreement with a previous study by Walker (2012) that poverty makes unemployed parents to view children as an economic burden, school fees as too expensive and girls as possible sources of income in form of dowry. One respondent stated that she had to stop schooling after completing primary education because her father could not afford school fees for secondary school.

> *I could not continue with my studies after I completed class eight. My father said the fees for secondary education were too high, he could not afford it. He did not have a stable income so raising the fees was a problem. I stayed at home and eventually got married (FGD discussant in 18-25 group).*

The cross tabulation between level of education and age at marriage were undertaken and the results presented below.

Table 4.2: Cross Tabulation of Level of Education against Age at Marriage

	Primary education	Secondary education	College diploma	University degree	Total
9 – 12 years	12 (22.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0	12
13 – 14 years	40 (74.0%)	16 (53.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0	56
15 – 17 years	2 (3.8%)	14 (46.7%)	10 (100.0%)	6 (100.0%)	32
Total	54 (100.0%)	30 (100.0%)	10 (100.0%)	6 (100.0%)	100

The results indicated that the majority of the respondents with primary level education were married with less than 14 years of education, with below 12 years being 22.2% and between 13-14 years being at 74.0% of the respondents. The results also revealed that girls who were 9-12 years of age at marriage had primary level of education only. Girls who had acquired secondary level of education at marriage were 53.3% at 13-14 years of age. About 46.7% of the respondents aged 15-17 had also obtained secondary education. The study noted that women who had attended college and attained university degree are likely to get married late in life compared to those who did not acquire higher levels of education.

4.2.5   Decision Making in Fertility

Women who were married at a young age are subjected to lower sexual and reproductive rights compared to women who get married at the right age later in life. This is the case because of differences in age, lack of education, economic dependency, among other related factors. They do not have the capability to make a choice on issues associated with their reproductive health. For instance, rights over sexuality i.e. the power to say "No" when asked for sex by their husbands and use of contraceptives. As a result, women who marry early have a minimal possibility of spacing and preventing unwanted pregnancy (Pathfinder International, 2006).

The results revealed 40% of the respondents had a choice in deciding how many children they want to have, 52% had no choice at all while 8% of the respondents indicated they were somehow involved in deciding on the number of children they want to have. The results are outlined in table 4.2 below.

Table 4.3: Choice in Number of Children in Marriage

	Percent
Had a choice in the number of children	**40%**
Had no choice in the number of children	**52%**
Somehow feel involved	**8%**
Total	**100%**

In developing countries majority of the girls in early marriages do not have access to contraception and delayed pregnancy may not be tolerable to most husbands and in-laws (Barbara S. et al. 1998). In addition, married girls often lack the ability to negotiate sexual activity, contraceptive use, or birth spacing with their husbands (Raj 2010; UNFPA 2013). Similarly, it was observed from the discussion that women had little or no say at all when it comes to the number of children they have in a marriage. Discussion from key informants shows that most women had no choice on the number of children to have. The lack of choice in deciding on the number of children to have influences her maternal health. The findings above clearly show that the girl child has no right to her reproductive health. WHO (2008) states that women's consent for childbearing is an important factor in the physiological and emotional wellbeing of both mother and child. However, they do not have that choice to make as their husbands make the choice.

According to the research done by Pathfinder (2006), early marriage prolongs the duration of a woman's reproductive period. Thus, women who get married early are more probable to be forced to bear a larger number of children than others. It was also apparent from the FGD's that the higher number of children one has the higher the likelihood of majority of them not going to school or dropping out of school. It is for this reason that most girls are married off if they are not attending school. It was further reported that early marriages swayed low levels of education, as most of the people in the area could not complete primary education or further their education because they got married early.

It was observed that 89% girls who had attained secondary education had some knowledge of contraception compared to 11% of girls who only received primary education. Education exposes women to family planning knowledge and practices. Women who married early were less likely to use contraception unlike women who married late with higher education have a better knowledge of contraception.

Interestingly, in this study, married women in the area disclosed that early marriages were significantly affecting their lives in that it contributed to larger family size due to long period of exposure to fertility. Parents struggle to provide for their many children because of lack of a stable income. One of the respondents who is a mother of nine children narrates to us as follows;

> *"I was married when I was 16 years old and I have nine children now. My husband is working as a driver; the money he brings home is never enough. Life is very hard for us. Providing for all the children - feeding them, clothing them, educating them - is very difficult. Our children go to public schools because it is affordable but still they are sometimes sent home for tuition fees arrears. Sometimes even putting a meal on the*

table is hard; we end up skipping some meals. So all in all it is a struggle for us but we try our best to provide for them".

It was further reported that early marriages resulted to low levels of education, as most of the girls in the sub-county could not complete primary education or further their education because they got married early.

4.2.6 Source of Income

Employment activities contribute to the provision of basic needs and means for household survival (Wrigley-Asante, 2008 & Foster, 1998). Sustainable living ultimately requires individuals to participate in productive economic activities. Study findings revealed that majority of the respondents 70% reported that their source of income was from informal employment only 30% reported that their source of income was from formal employment. The results are as summarized in figure 4.4 below.

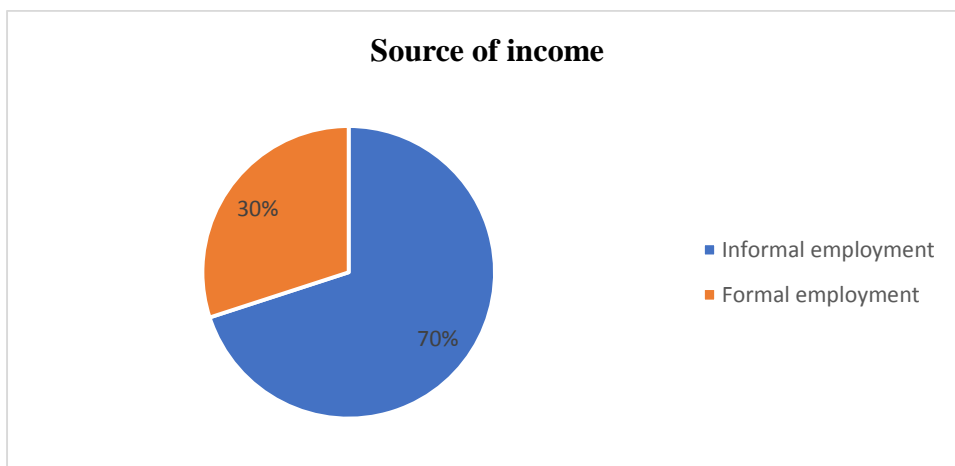**Figure 4.4: Source of income**

The findings insinuate that most women source of income is from informal employment. This is probably due to the respondents' low levels of education. Therefore, majority of the women in the area opt to get married so that they can get financial support from their husbands. These findings correspond with previous literature that early marriage influenced illiteracy and this

further affected the employment condition of women. Acquisition of education is a determinant in securing a better job in the formal sector (Kwankye et al., 2007). Early marriage limits young women's access to education, which in turn affects employment opportunities. Low education is a barrier to entry into formal, paid employment (Grown et al. 2005).

Women who are employed not only have access to money but also are exposed to a lot of information. Employed women are open to the elements of the world beyond besides interacting with other people apart from their own community members. Thus, they are likely to delay the age at which they will get married.

4.3   Causes of Early Marriage

The findings from the study revealed that most of the respondents 41 (41%) indicated family traditions as the major reason for early marriage in Mvita Sub-County, 39 (39%) indicated religious obligation as a reason, while 20 (20%) indicated poverty at home as the reason for early marriage. The findings are summarized in the figure below.
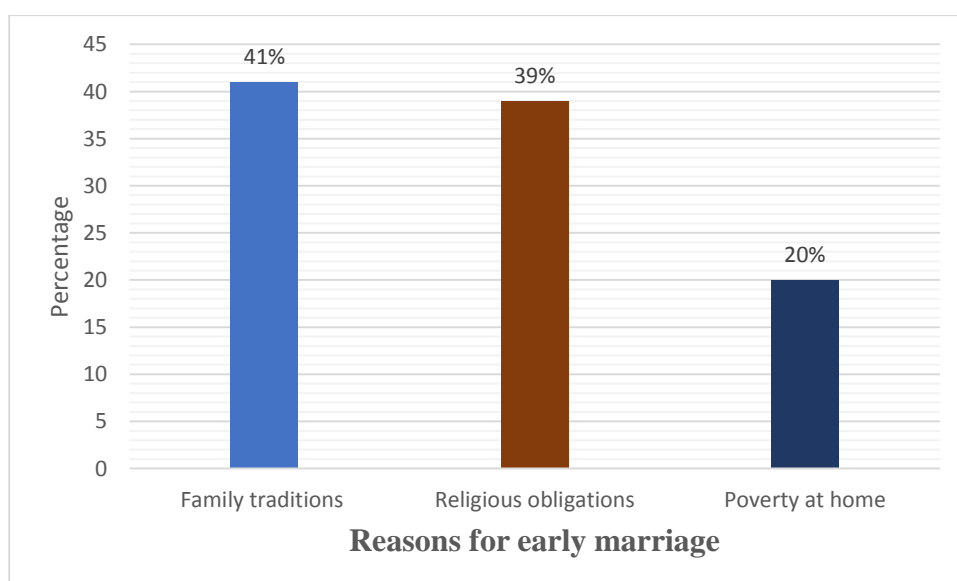

Figure 4.5: Reasons for early marriage

In many societies, parents are under pressure to marry off their daughters as early as possible in an effort to prevent her from becoming sexually active before marriage; a woman who does so brings dishonour to her family and community (ICRW, 2007). Because marriage often determines a woman's status in many societies, parents also worry that if they don't marry their daughters according to social expectations, they will not be able to marry them at all (ICRW, 2007). The study confirmed this as most parents are forced to marry off their daughters at a tender age to protect them and for fear that, they will become unmarriageable later in life as observed in the FGDs.

It was also observed that the society prize virginity before marriage. Therefore, to ensure this family marry their girls at an early age to ensure that their daughter will not become pregnant out of wedlock and bring dishonour to the family. For most concerned parents, marriage is believed to provide the greatest protection to a girl. Giyan (2009) argued that some religious practices, such as Islam encourage early marriage and parents imbibe this for fear of their daughters being pregnant out of wedlock and the only available option could be marriage at an early age. Early marriage has been defended as clearly permissible by the Islamic religion. This is in agreement with the study findings, which revealed that majority of the respondent strongly believed that marrying early is best as it prevents young people from engaging in improper behaviour.

4.3.1   Family's Traditional Beliefs

Traditional norms are still observed in the area. Traditional beliefs play a major role in early marriage practices within the area. The strength of the customs and beliefs of respondents' family background partially explained the reasons for their early marriages. Parents are compelled to get their daughters married early to prevent girls from becoming sexually active

before marriage. A woman who does so brings shame to her family and community (ICRW, 2007). One of the respondents supported this.

> *I got married when I was 17years. I was a virgin at the time of marriage. This made my parents very happy and they were so proud of me. I received many gifts from my husband, my family and even neighbours. Well...I think it is wise for one to abstain until marriage, you get the respect you deserve as a woman (FGD discussant in 18-25 group).*

The belief that older girls had difficulty in getting married also influenced some respondents' marriages (Svannemyr et al., 2012). The fear that their daughters might end up not getting married at all later on in life and ensuring that their daughters are virgins when they are married forced most parents to get their daughters married at a tender age as observed from the focus group discussions. From the discussions, the traditional beliefs and practices had some level of influences on early marriages. For example, one of the respondents in the focus group discussion mentioned,

> *As a parent I have to make sure that my daughter is married while still young because if she delays she might end up not getting a husband. People will gossip. They will laugh at her and criticize her. I cannot let that happen to my girl (FGD discussant).*

From the discussions, it was observed that socialization process within the society also influenced early marriage. From an early age girls are socialized to become wives and mothers. It is instilled in their minds that their work is to take care of the household through gendered division of labour. Most of the respondents mentioned that as women they have to take on their roles as wives and mothers.

4.3.2 Poverty

Poverty is another factor underpinning early marriage. In families with acute poverty, young girls are considered an economic burden and their marriage to an old man is believed to benefit them and their family both financially and socially. Poverty makes parents who do not have employment to consider their children as an economic burden, school fees as expensive and girls as potential sources of income in the form of dowry (Walker, 2012). Most parents genuinely believe that marriage will secure their daughters' future and it is in their best interest (UNFPA, 2012). According to most respondents, getting married was fuelled by the increased economic vulnerabilities of their poor families. One of the participants in the FGDs confirms this and reports as follows,

> *I got married not because I wanted to but to help my family. My parents are old and we are a big family. My father does not have a stable income; it was hard for him to provide for all of us. I have younger siblings and my parents could not cater for us so I decided to get married so as to reduce the burden on my parents. Whatever I get from my husband - money, food – I am able to support my family (FGD discussant in 18-25 group).*

4.3.3 Religion

Religious beliefs play a key role in perpetuating early marriage practices. Religious scholars often regard early marriage as a means to restrain the young generation from immoral and indecent behaviour. In Islam, many hadith encourage followers to marry early. Based on the Islamic religious doctrine, when a person gets married; he/she indeed perfects half of his religion. Therefore, it can be considered that marriage promotes human spiritual maturity (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001). This was supported by one of the respondents.

In my religion when one gets married he/she fulfils half of the deen (religion). Ills encouraged for young people to marry so as to avoid getting involved in immoral behaviour. Once married, you are able to satisfy your desires with your spouse and get reward for that (FGD discussant in 18-25 group).

Child marriage is associated with a religious belief and the need to protect girls from engaging in "improper" or "immoral" behaviour (Plan International, 2011). Once a girl or boy has reached puberty he/she must marry. Marriage is viewed as the only solution to protect children from engaging in improper behaviour. The strong religious message also promotes the belief that it is best to marry early. This is confirmed by the following views of one of respondents.

I come from a very strict religious home. I stopped going to school when I reached puberty. My parents feared that I would be exposed to male students and teachers. Then this man came to ask for my hand in marriage, I accepted and married him (FGD discussant in 18-25 group).

In a nut shell, early marriage remains highly prevalent despite efforts by many developing country governments to discourage and even outlaw the practice. The factors put forward by the respondents as reasons for the early marriage practice are traditional beliefs, poverty, religious beliefs, and lack of education.

4.4   Effects of Early Marriage Practices

Early marriage has negative effects on the girl and the society as a whole. It has far- reaching health, economic, education and psychological implications for the girl and the community. The need to document precisely the effects of early marriages is important for best intervention strategies. The study revealed health related problems, denial of education, poverty and

psychological effects as the effects of early marriage in the area. The figure 4.6 below summarizes the findings on the effects of early marriages.
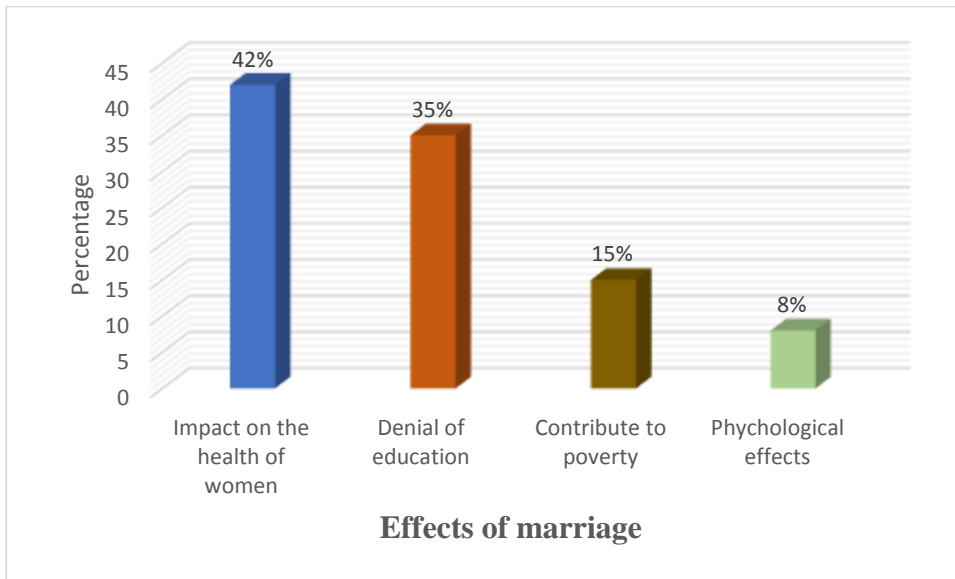
Figure 4.6: Effects of early marriages

4.4.1 Negative Impacts on the Health of Women

Most respondents (42%) reported that early marriage negatively affect the health of women. Early marriages can have harmful consequences on girls' health. Among the health-related problems experienced by young married girls are; physical pain during intercourse, obstetric fistula especially when girls are not yet matured enough physically and other problems that arise during pregnancy. Discussants in FGDs and key informants strongly imply that girls who were married at a young age are likely to have birth related problems. Their bodies are not ready to hold a pregnancy and other occasions cannot have a normal vaginal birth because they are too small as explained by one of the respondents.

> *Early marriage has negative effects on girls' health. Once married, the girls are pressured to get pregnant so that they can prove their fertility. When they become pregnant, they face many pregnancy and delivery - related problems because they are still young. Their bodies are not developed to carry a pregnancy. Some end up*

delivering via c-section because they are too small. This brings problems for the girl

for the rest of her life (key informant).

Another respondent stated the following,

"I got married when 1 was 16 years old and had my first son when I was 17 years. I

experienced a lot of problems when I was pregnant. 1 was ill every now and then. When

it was time for delivery, my whole body was in pain. I was in labour for three days. I

could not endure the pain anymore it was too much. At last, the doctor said I had to

undergo a c-section. This was very painful, but it had to be done in order to save my

life and my baby's life (FGD discussant in 18-25 group)".

4.4.2   Denial of Education

Similarly, 35% of the respondents stated that early marriage denies the girl child opportunity to further her education. This study revealed that early marriage has negative impacts on women's education. As mentioned earlier, findings from the study showed that 54% of the respondents had obtained primary education, 30% attained secondary education, 10% of the respondents had attended college and only 6% had attained university level of education. Majority of the respondents had only attained primary education. This is an indication that young teenagers are required to get married at an early age not allowing them to continue with higher levels of education.

Education at the personal level, builds better opportunity for employment and earning, therefore diminishing the habit and enhancing self-sufficiency. Early marriage confines female educational chances, thus sinking their employment opportunity and economic sovereignty. According to the data gathered in Mvita, early marriage is among the reasons why girls drop

out of school. Once a girl stop going to school, it is most probably that she has been wedded which forces negatively on the entire community and on the wellbeing of future generation. A number of the respondents cited marriage as their major cause of withdrawal from school. For example,

> *I was married when I was 15 years old. I had just finished class 8 when my family decided that I get married. My father said I was old enough at the time and he could not let me go to school and interact with male students. I got married so I could not continue with my secondary education (FGD discussant in 18-25 group).*

In cases where the girls want to continue with their education after marriage, their husbands will not agree to them using family planning methods, and as a result, they are meant to drop out of school once they become pregnant. One of the respondents confirms this.

> *I was in form two when I was married off. I stopped going to school even though I really wanted to finish my secondary education. I wanted to study, go to university, and get a degree so that I can get a good job in the future. However, my husband refused to let me use contraceptives. After sometime, I got pregnant and my dreams were shattered (FGD discussant in 18-25 group).*

4.4.3 Contributes to Poverty

From study findings, 15% of the respondents reported that early marriage contributes to poverty in the society. Early married girls are mostly required to end their education while still very young. Due to their lack of education, these girls cannot get employment hence they cannot improve their lives. The girls are denied the opportunity to empower themselves, to become independent and successful women. Due to its effects on educational achievement,

child marriage is likely to result in lower income among women. As indicated by Quentin Wodon et al. (2015), child marriage consequently leads to poverty not only by increasing the resources required by households (because of a higher number of children in the family), but also by reducing income.

It was observed that most of the women in the area are employed as shop attendants selling gowns, shoes, cosmetic products. The women cannot get better employment opportunities due to their low level of education. This in turns leads to the women getting a low income, which makes them dependant on their husbands. Whatever they get is not enough to cater for their day-to-day needs thus rely on their husbands to provide for them financially.

> *I work as a shop attendant in some shop in town but the salary is very low. I am not educated so I cannot get a better job. It is hard for me to meet my daily needs because the money is not enough. As a result, I am forced to rely on my husband (FGD discussant in 18-25 group).*

4.4.4 Psychological Effects

Marriage involves decision-making introducing lots of responsibilities, serious commitments and most importantly, it introduces one into independency. However, young married girls fail to deal with it, as marriage entails adequate level of maturity and substantial sense of responsibilities. The least of the respondents (8%) reported that early marriages have serious psychological effects on the girls' lives. In many countries, once married young girls move from their parents' home to their in-laws home to live with their husband and his family. They often have no friends nor support and little say when it comes to matters of their lives and the household as well. Research illustrates that girls who are married at an early age often feel lonely and defenceless (ICRW, 2010). It is a great responsibility for the girl to become a wife

and mother. Since young girls are in most cases not ready for these responsibilities, this heavy burden affects their psychological wellbeing, how they view themselves and their relationship as well. Girls who marry early are denied their childhood. One of the respondent's mentions,

> *I was married when I was young. My family chose the man for me. He was older than me, I did not like him. I went to live with my in laws. There I felt very isolated. I did not have anybody to talk to since I was not used to them. I was unhappy in the marriage but I endure in silence. Eventually we ended up divorcing (FGD discussant in 18-25 group).*

There are many stresses and tension that come along with marriage and young married girls are more likely to have marital problems since their freedom has been disrupted. In addition, because they are not matured enough they cannot deal with maternal, marital or in-laws issues, they experience high mental and emotional stress. Majority of the respondents could relate to this because most of them lived with their in laws. There are many challenges that come with marriage young girls who are not even matured cannot cope with the challenges, they end up living an unhappy life.

> *Marriage comes with a lot of responsibilities and challenges. This can be too much for young girls because they are not mature enough to cope with such marital issues. Taking care of the house, raising children and making decision for the family is hard for young women. This ends up stressing the girls. Early marriage denies young girls their childhood. They also experience problems with in-laws. Such issues leave them stressed and unhappy (FGD discussant in 18-25 group).*

Regarding the effects of early marriage, discussants in FGDs reported that young married girls are at higher risk of having complications during childbirth. This is because their bodies are not fully developed hence not ready to hold a pregnancy and in some cases, cannot have a

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normal vaginal birth since they are too small. This is in agreement with previous studies. UNICEF (2007) reports that a girl under the age of 15 is five times more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth than a woman in her 20s.

Early marriage challenges the basic right of children to education. It denies the young an opportunity to access education that will help them in the future. As a result, women who get married at an early age have low levels of education (UNICEF, 2014). Data from the study showed that majority of the respondent 54% had only attained primary education as their highest level of education. Due to their low levels of education, these girls cannot get employment hence they cannot improve their lives. Early marriage imposes fundamental challenges on the advancement of the girl-child's education. The girls are denied the opportunity to empower themselves, to become independent and successful women.

The study has further proved that early marriage has serious psychological consequences on the girls' life. Early marriage forces young girls to assume responsibilities and handle situations for which they are often physically and psychologically unprepared. Studies show that girls married at an early age usually feel isolated and helpless (ICRW, 2010). When they are married, they move to their in-laws home to live with their husband and his family. They do not have friends to talk to and have little say when it comes to their personal lives (ICRW, 2010). Majority of the respondents could relate to this.

Creating awareness on the consequences of early marriages, mobilizing and educating the society on the effects of early marriages may help in preventing and eventually eradicate the practice. Putting an end to child marriage needs the approval of all those involved, including fathers, religious and community leaders.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This section represents the summary, conclusion and recommendations of study findings. The first section describes the summary of the research; the second section presents the conclusion while the last section presents the recommendations of the study.

5.2 Summary

This study's objective was to assess the causes of early girl marriages as well as the consequences of the practice in Mombasa County with a focus on Mvita Sub-County. The specific objectives were; to establish the causes of early marriage among girls and to describe the effects of early marriages on girls in Mvita Sub-County. This study was guided by the radical feminist theory.

This study used cross-sectional design combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Two sub-divisions namely Majengo and Old town were selected at random. A sample of 100 women was selected purposively from married women. The sample size was then distributed evenly across the selected areas. Quantitative data was collected through survey questionnaire while qualitative data was composed through focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews. Information from questionnaires were coded into specific categories then presented in frequencies and percentages to summarize the facts. On the other hand, data collected from interviews with keys informants and FGDs was analyzed thematically. Verbatim quotes from the informants and FGD participants were used to amplify their voices.

From the study, it was revealed that traditional beliefs, religious beliefs and poverty are the leading causes of early marriage in Mvita Sub County. Early marriage is believed to have negative outcomes on women and girls' well-being and personal development. The findings further revealed health related problems, denial of education, poverty and psychological effects as the results of early marriage in the region.

5.3   Conclusion

In 21st century, the incidence of early marriage is really one of the serious and important issues regarding child protection because it is still happening throughout the world. The practice of early marriages is an actual problem in Mvita sub-County and it is rooted more in traditional and religious customs. Therefore, ethnically suitable programs that provide families and communities with education can facilitate bring to an end the practice of early marriage in the area. In terms of their health and education rights, the consequences of early marriage are awful for girls because most of the girls dropout from school after getting into marriage. They face isolation and depression. In addition, many young girls die during delivery due to complications in the absence of proper maturity. The time comes now to start the campaign to stop early marriage with strong implementation of laws. Putting a stop to child marriage requires a comprehensive approach paying attention to young girls, their families, the community and the government.

5.4   Recommendations

The following are recommendations based on the findings of the study:

5.4.1 Policy and Programme Recommendations

(i)   Advocate for dialogue at the grassroots or community level with local administrators, women groups, youth groups, NGOs and other interests groups around the issue of early

marriages to be understood in relation to gender difference, education and violence experienced by women and girls, then come up with interventions. Such interventions should tackle negative and harmful socio-cultural customs, thoughts and behaviours that will succeed in dealing with early and forced marriages. This should be developed on the basis of supporting girls' education.

(ii) Undertake programmes that are geared towards belief change amongst the community through teaching young girls alternative ways to protect them against early sexual debut other than marriage. The community needs to be educated on the progressive religious beliefs on the institution of marriage.

(iii) Sensitize the community and the young girls on the effects of early marriage on diverse aspects such as health related problems, denial of education, poverty and psychological effects as the effects of early marriage in the area.

(iv) Provide economic opportunities to the girl child. Among the factors contributing to early marriage as revealed by the study is poverty. Expanding employment and entrepreneurial opportunities should be the focus while attempting to enhance the access of economic resources to young girls, both married and unmarried. This will help girls become economically independent.

5.4.2 Suggestions for Further Research Recommendations

This research was done mainly in Mombasa County in Kenya. Therefore, it is suggested that more studies to be carried out all over the country and especially at the coast where the practice is common, to document the magnitude of the problem.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORM

I am Asha Yunis, a student undertaking Master of Arts degree in Development Anthropology from the University of Nairobi. I am carrying out a study on the causes and effects of Early Marriage among girls in Mvita Sub-County, Mombasa County.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be required to respond to questions asked in interviews. The interview will take about twenty to thirty minutes to complete. I do not anticipate any risks during this study; however, your rights as participants will be protected. There are no incentives provided as the research is specifically for academic purposes. Information obtained shall not be disclosed to others other than the research team. In case I need to identify recorded information, codes or pseudonyms shall be used.

Taking part in this study is voluntary, as such withdrawal from the study will be allowed at any point. If you have any questions you can ask now or you may contact me later.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I do agree to take part in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX II: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the questions according to the instructions:

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION (PLEASE TICK ONE)

1.   Sex:

      M   ( )

      F   ( )

2.   Age group (years):

      Under 15   ( )

      15 – 20   ( )

      21 – 25   ( )

      26-30   ( )

      31 – 35   ( )

      36-40   ( )

      41 – 45   ( )

      Above 45   ( )

3.   Education level:

      Certificate level: Primary education ( )

                       Secondary education ( )

      College level   ( )

      University level   ( )

4.   Marital Status:

      Single   ( )

      Married   ( )

      Divorced   ( )

      Widowed   ( )

5. Age at marriage:

9 – 12 years   ( )

13 – 14 years ( )

15 – 17 years ( )

6. If married, how long have you been in the marriage?

Less than 5 years   ( )

5-10 years   ( )

10 – 15 years   ( )

15-20 years   ( )

20 – 25 years   ( )

25 – 30 years   ( )

30 years and above   ( )

7. Do you have children?

Yes   ( )

No   ( )

8. If yes, where did you give birth?

Public hospital   ( )

Private hospital   ( )

Birth attendant   ( )

9. How many children do you have?

10. What was the nature of birth?

Normal delivery   ( )

C-section   ( )

11. Employment status:

Employed   ( )

Unemployed   ( )

12.   If unemployed, what is the source of your income?

………………………………………………………………………………………

SECTION B: CAUSES OF EARLY MARRIAGE

Please tick appropriate box provided for the answers.

1.   In your opinion, what are the causes of early marriages?

(a)   Poverty   ( )

(b)   Religious obligation   ( )

(c)   Societal pressure   ( )

(d)   Family traditions   ( )

2.   Are you married?

Yes   ( )

No   ( )

3.   If married, at what age did you get married?

9-12 years   ( )

13-14 years   ( )

15 – 17 years ( )

4.   Why did you get married?

(a)   Poverty at home   ( )

(b)   Religious obligation   ( )

(c)   Family traditions   ( )

(d)   I was matured   ( )

(e)   Any other, please specify……………………………………………

5.   What does your religion say about early marriage?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

6.   Did getting married solve the financial problems you had at home?

....

SECTION C: EFFECTS OF EARLY MARRIAGE ON THE GIRL-CHILD

Please tick appropriate box provided for the answers

1.   Does early marriage have effects on the girl?

Yes   ( )

No   ( )

2.   What are the effects of early marriage on the girl?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

3.   What do you think can be done by the government to eradicate the practice of early marriage in Mvita Sub-county?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

4.   What do you think the people should do to eradicate the practice of early marriage in Mvita Sub-county?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

5.   What advice do you have for young girls who would like to get married?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

APPENDIX III: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIN GUIDE

1. What are your perceptions on the status of early marriage in society?

2. What are the reasons leading to early marriage among girls?

3. What are some of the problems related to early marriage?

4. What are the effects of early marriage?

5. In your view, does early marriage impact girl's health? How?

6. Does early marriage affects girl child's education? How and what are the effects?

7. How do you perceive girls who drop out of school to get married?

8. What are some of the strategies that can be put in place to avoid early marriages?

APPENDIX IV: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What is your view on the issue of early marriage?

2. In your opinion, what are the reasons for early marriage?

3. What is your perception regarding the effects of early marriage on the girl?

4. In your opinion, does early marriage contribute to increased population growth?

5. What is the prevalence of early marriage in this sub-county?

6. What are some of the existing interventions and laws against early marriage?

7. What are your suggestions on measures that can be put in place to eliminate early marriage?