

INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTS OF EARLY CHILDBEARING ON THE WELL-BEING OF THE YOUNG GIRLS IN PALORINYA REFUGEE CAMP OBONGI DISTRICT.

EMMANUEL LEJU

S23B15/015

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK OF
UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY**

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

DECLARATION

I, Emmanuel Leju hereby declare that this dissertation titled “INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTS OF EARLY CHILDBEARING ON THE WELL-BEING OF THE YOUNG GIRLS IN PALORINYA REFUGEE CAMP OBONGI DISTRICT.” is my original work and it has not been submitted for any award.

Signature.....
EMMANUEL LEJU

Date.....14/5/2026.....

APPROVAL

This dissertation was written under my supervision and has been submitted with my approval



Dr. Winfred Naamara

14/5/2026

Supervisor

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents my Dad Mr. Paul Duku and my mum Mrs. Susan Poya my sister Anna for their moral and financial support towards my studies may the good Lord continue to bless them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Winfred Naamara for her guidance during this writing.

I am also grateful to fellow course mates and friends who supported me in this academic journey and struggle.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	i
APPROVAL	i
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
ABSTRACT	ix
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Problem Statement	2
1.3 Purpose of the Study.....	2
1.4 Research Questions	3
1.5 Specific Objectives of the Study.	3
1.6 Scope of the Study.	3
1.7 Geographical scope	3
1.8 Significant of the Study.....	4
1.9 Justification of the Study	4
1.10 Theoretical and conceptual frame work.....	5
CHAPTER TWO	7
LITRATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Introducton.....	7
2.2 Nature forms and intensity of the early childbearing.....	7
2.3 The pattern and intensity of early child bearing	7
2.4 The current state and livelihood in palorinya refugee camp.....	8
2.5 The livelihood strategies in palorinya refugee camp.....	8

2.6 The livelihood outcomes and vulnerability	10
2.7 Relationship between early childbearing and livelihood	11
2.8 Early childbearing and food security in palorinya refugee camp.	12
2.9 Early childbearing and access to services.....	12
2.10 Early child bearing and livelihood coping strategies.....	15
2.11 Theoretical integrationN	15
2.12 Research Gap	15
2.12 Summary of literature.....	16
CHAPTER THREE	17
METHOLODOLOGY.....	17
3.1 Introduction	17
3.1. Study area	17
3.2 Research design	17
3.3 Researrch approach.	18
3.4 The study population	18
3.5 Sample size and sampling technique.	19
Table 3.1: Sample Size Distribution	19
3.6 Data collection method and tools.....	20
3.7 Key informant interviews	20
3.8 Data collection procedure	20
3.9 DATA ANALYSIS	20
3.10 Validity and reliability of research instruments	21
3.11 Ethical considerations.....	21
3.12 Summary	22
CHAPTER FOUR.....	23
<i>PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS</i>	23
4.1 Introduction	23
4.2 Response Rate	23
4.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	23

Table 4.1: Age Distribution of Young Mothers/Pregnant Girls.....	23
Table 4.2: Education Level of Respondents	24
4.4 Prevalence and Determinants of Early Childbearing	25
Table 4.3: Age at First Pregnancy	25
Table 4.4: Determinants of Early Childbearing	25
4.5 Effects of Early Childbearing on Physical Well-being	26
Table 4.5: Health Challenges Experienced.....	26
4.6 Effects on Emotional and Psychological Well-being.....	26
Table 4.6: Psychological Effects	26
4.7 Effects on Social and Educational Well-being	27
Table 4.7: Education Status After Pregnancy	27
4.8 Effects on Economic Well-being.....	28
Table 4.8: Sources of Livelihood.....	28
4.9 Existing Support Systems	28
Table 4.9: Support Services Available	28
4.10 Discussion of Findings	29
4.11 Summary of the Chapter	29
CHAPTER FIVE	30
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....	30
5.1 Introduction	30
5.2 Discussion of Findings on the Prevalence and Determinants of Early Childbearing	30
5.3 Discussion of Findings on the Effects of Early Childbearing on Physical Well-being	31
5.4 Discussion of Findings on the Effects of Early Childbearing on Emotional and Psychological Well-being.....	32
5.5 Discussion of Findings on the Effects of Early Childbearing on Social and Educational Well-being.....	33
5.6 Discussion of Findings on the Effects of Early Childbearing on Economic Well-being	34

5.7 Discussion of Findings on Existing Support Systems	35
5.8 Summary of the Chapter	35
CHAPTER SIX	36
CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	36
6.1 Introduction	36
6.2 Conclusions.....	36
6.3 Recommendations.....	38
6.4 Areas for Further Research	40
6.5 Summary of the Chapter	40
REFERENCES	42
APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR YOUNG MOTHERS / PREGNANT GIRLS	44
APPENDIX II: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE	47
APPENDIX III: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE.....	48
APPENDIX IV: STIGMA SCALE (ADAPTED TOOL).....	49

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of early childbearing on the well-being of young girls in Palorinya Refugee Settlement. The study was guided by the increasing concern over the high rates of teenage pregnancies and early motherhood among refugee communities, which continue to negatively affect the social, economic, physical, and psychological well-being of young girls. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of early childbearing on the lives of young girls living in Palorinya Refugee Camp in Obongi District.

The study was guided by the following objectives: to identify the causes of early childbearing among young girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp, to assess the effects of early childbearing on their well-being, and to suggest possible interventions for reducing early childbearing and improving the welfare of affected girls. The study employed a descriptive research design using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data was collected from young mothers, parents, community leaders, health workers, and humanitarian workers through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

The findings of the study revealed that poverty, lack of parental guidance, limited access to education, peer pressure, sexual violence, cultural practices, and inadequate reproductive health information were major contributors to early childbearing among young girls in the refugee settlement. The study further established that early childbearing negatively affected girls' education, health, emotional stability, social relationships, and economic well-being. Many young mothers experienced school dropout, stigma, depression, health complications, and increased dependency on aid and relatives for survival.

The study concluded that early childbearing remains a major social and public health challenge affecting the well-being of young girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp. The study recommended strengthening sexual and reproductive health education, improving access to youth-friendly health services, promoting girl-child education, enhancing parental and community support systems, and implementing programs aimed at empowering adolescent girls economically and socially.

Key words: Early childbearing, well-being, young girls, refugee settlement, adolescent pregnancy, Palorinya Refugee Camp, Obongi District.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The introductory part presents the research by providing the background, articulating the problem stating the objectives and outlining the scope of the study that were used during the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Early childbearing is a significant global issue, particularly in developing countries and Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the report by UNICEF (2023), globally, an estimated 13 percent of adolescent girls and young women gave birth before the age of 18. Early childbearing, pregnancy, and delivery during adolescence can derail girls' otherwise healthy development into adulthood and have negative impacts on their education; many girls who are pregnant are pressured or forced to drop out of school, which can impact their educational and employment prospects and opportunities. Early childbearing can also have social consequences for girls, including stigmatization and reduced status in their home community. It can also lead to violations by family members. Meanwhile, WHO (2023) reports indicate that early childbearing has declined, though unevenly, with an estimated 14.3 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19 in 2023. However, the issue remains a significant public health concern. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the situation remains the same; Africa's education system is facing a threat due to the number of school dropouts, which is threatening progress in classrooms. Approximately 30 percent of girls become mothers before the age of 18 (Development Aid, 2023). According to Development Aid, the most and worst-hit countries include Zambia, Morocco, Nigeria, and Mozambique, among others. The report indicates that Mozambique has the world's highest rate of early childbearing, with 180 out of 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19 years (Development Aid, 2023).

One in ten girls has a child before the age of 15; most pregnant girls drop out of school, and few finish secondary school, with just 4 percent finishing

upper secondary (UNICEF, 2023). The Minister of Primary and Secondary School Education, Torerayi Moyo, revealed that in 2023, 4,557 female students had been forced to abandon their education due to pregnancy (Moyo, 2023). Meanwhile, in East Africa, the national strategy to end child marriage indicates that East Africa and Uganda, with the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating the problem through increased pregnancy rates due to school closures (UNFPA, 2021). The overall teenage pregnancy rate in Uganda has stagnated at about 25 percent (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS], 2022). In Uganda, in the areas of the refugee camp in Palorinya, Obongi District, where a significant number of refugee girls are hosted, they are vulnerable to early childbearing due to socio-economic factors. It is revealed that sexual and gender-based violence is prevalent and leads to unintended pregnancy, with many girls not reporting such incidents due to fear and lack of support. According to the Palorinya Report (2025), SGBV was high among adolescent girls.

1.2 Problem Statement

Early childbearing among school girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp, Obongi District, Uganda, is a pressing issue that threatens their well-being and prospects. Despite efforts to address teenage pregnancy, the camp's vulnerable population continues to face numerous challenges, including limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. The consequences of early childbearing include school dropout, health complications, and poverty, perpetuating a cycle of vulnerability and undermining the girls' potential. This study aims to investigate the effects of early childbearing on the well-being of school girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp and identify areas for intervention to support their empowerment.

1.3 Purpose of the Study.

The purpose of the study is to assess the effect the effects of the early bearing on the livelihood in Palorinya Refugee Camp.

1.4 Research Questions

- 1) What are the prevalence and determinants of early childbearing among the school girls in paloriya refugee camp?
- 2) How dose early childbearing affect the physical, emotional and social well-being of the school girls in the camp.
- 3) What are the existing support systems for school girls who have children or who are pregnant?

1.5 Specific Objectives of the Study.

- 1) To determine the prevalence and determinants of early childbearing among school girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp
- 2) To assess the effects of early childbearing on the physical emotional and social wellbeing school girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp.
- 3) To identify the existing support for school girls who have children and also who are pregnant.

1.6 Scope of the Study.

The study will study focus on causes, effects and the cope mechanism related to early childbearing and impacts on the livelihood in Palorinya Refugee Camp.

1.7 Geographical scope

The study was conducted in Palorinya Refugee settlement is located in obongi district sub county Itula sub county the coordinated area 3. 4774 N 31.6121 E AREA 37.58 SQUARE Kilometer of the west Nile region in northern Uganda, approximately 18 kilometers [miles] from the border of South Sudan the settlement has a total surface area of 37. square kilometer [14. square miles the settlement its self is divided in to multiple administrative

Zones which include base camp Zone, Zone I Zone ii Zone iii, East and Zone iii West.

1.8 Significant of the Study

Government and policy makers. The findings may help in-designing better mechanism for preventing cases of early childbearing

Non-governmental organization. The study can provide useful information for organization to improve on the child livelihood and living as well

Community members. The study can contribute and help the community members in being inform and find a way of protecting the school girls from early childbearing.

Researchers and academic. The research helps the student and academicians understand the field of data collection and community development dynamics

They will serve as or can used for a future reference for future studies that may be related to the problems of early child bearing.

It enables social practitioners to understand the social economical and psychological impacts of early childbearing on the young school girls.

1.9 Justification of the Study

The Issue of Early Child Bearing Remain. The Pressing Issue in the Palorinya Refugee camp despite the fact that effort has been put by the organization to stop the cases but it remains the same

This study is justified on the following

Academic justification. The filed study is a critical knowledge gap by generating empirical evidences on how the early childbearing affects diverse livelihood such as mental physical emoticon accesses to services and coping strategies rather than providing general humanitarian overview

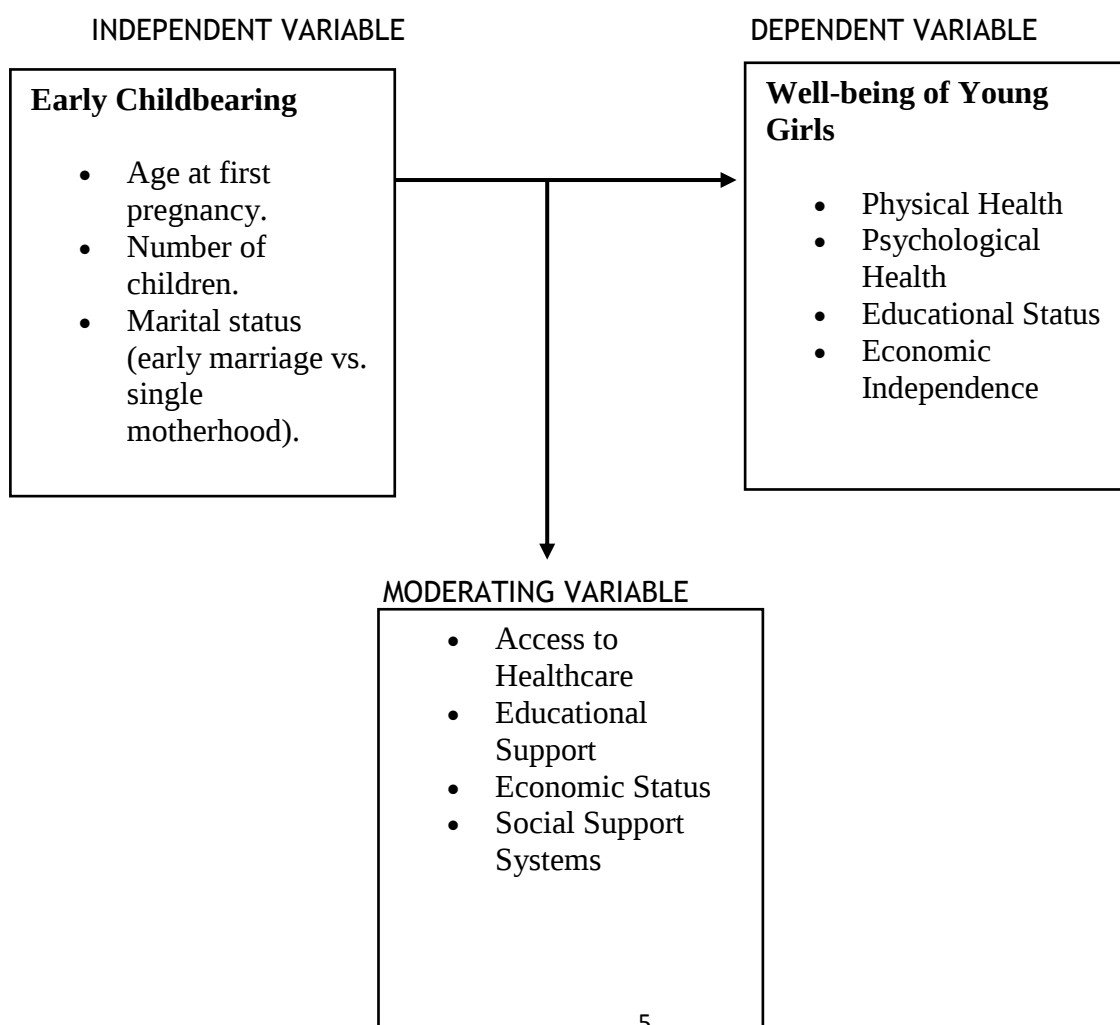
Policy justification. The findings may inform policy makers at both the district and national levels particularly the office of the prime minister and

other offices to come up with a sensitive strategy that protect the young mothers.

Practical justification. These results can ensure development partners and NGOs such as save the child, wind trust to find a good guideline that protect the children and the school girls at large.

1.10 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

The conceptual frame work illustrates the relationship between early childbearing [independent variable] and well-being of the school girls (dependent variable) the case s of early childbearing continue to manifest throughout the camp which increase the rate of school dropout among the young the girls and increases suffering on both the mother and newly born babies due to lack proper health services food and other essentials. However, effort has been put in place to reduce the matter by some of humanitarian agency.



This framework guides the study's data collection and analysis by linking early pregnancy to livelihood outcomes while suggesting intervening mechanisms that control and reduce the pressing factors (Chambers & Conway, 1992).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the reviewed literature related to the effects of early childbearing in Palorinya Refugee Camp Obongi District. It is structured around the three specific objective of study. The review draws on empirical evidence from Palorinya refugee and refugee camps like Pagirinya and other affected refugee camps in Adjumani, highlighting the key debates, knowledge gap, and the researcher's standpoint.

2.2 NATURE FORMS AND INTENSITY OF THE EARLY CHILDBEARING

Early childbearing is a complex issue often driven by various factors. Some common nature and forms include unplanned pregnancies and limited access to family planning and reproductive health services, lack of education and economic opportunities, sexual violence, and exploitation. Refugee girls and women may be vulnerable to sexual abuse (UNHCR, 2022; WHO, 2023).

2.3 THE PATTERN AND INTENSITY OF EARLY CHILD BEARING

The intensity of early childbearing in refugee camps can be significant, with high rates of teenage pregnancy due to limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities (UNFPA, 2021). Early childbearing can lead to increased health risks for both the mother and baby, including higher rates of maternal and infant mortality (WHO, 2023). The poor provision of adequate healthcare services exacerbates health risks associated with early childbearing. Addressing the problem of early childbearing requires a comprehensive approach, which may include access to education and economic opportunities, reproductive health services, support for refugees, and protection from sexual violence and exploitation for both girls and women (UNFPA, 2021; Save the Children, 2022).

2.4 THE CURRENT STATE AND LIVELIHOOD IN PALORINYA REFUGEE CAMP

The refugee camp faced numerous challenges impacting the livelihood of the refugees. These include overcrowding and poor sanitation; many camp areas are overcrowded with inadequate sanitation infrastructure, leading to the spread of diseases like cholera (OPM, 2023). The trauma of displacement, combined with the uncertainty of their situation, takes a significant toll on refugees (UNHCR, 2022). The economic challenges are also one of the major barriers to earning a living, with limited resources, few job opportunities, and often insufficient assistance, forcing refugees to rely on informal economies or sell rations, among other options (WFP, 2023).

2.5 THE LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES IN PALORINYA REFUGEE CAMP

The landscape of livelihood strategies within the Palorinya Refugee Settlement is not merely a collection of economic activities; rather, it represents a profound manifestation of human resilience and social work's "strengths-based" perspective. In the face of displacement, refugees from South Sudan have transitioned from a state of emergency survival to a complex system of diversified livelihoods that aim to restore a sense of agency and normalcy. From a social work lens, these strategies are essential interventions that address the psychosocial needs of the population by providing purpose, structure, and a path toward self-determination.

Agriculture and livestock rearing remain the foundational pillars of these strategies, deeply intertwined with the cultural identity of the residents. Under Uganda's progressive refugee policy, as noted by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM, 2023), households are typically granted small plots of land. While these plots are often too small for large-scale commercial farming, they facilitate "therapeutic horticulture." Social work literature suggests that engaging in gardening for consumption growing staple crops like maize, beans, and greens acts as a protective factor against depression and anxiety by allowing individuals to provide for their families. Furthermore, small-scale livestock rearing, such as poultry or goat keeping, serves as a "liquid asset" or a mobile form of insurance. In social work terms,

these assets represent "natural capital" that buffers households against the shock of aid reductions, ensuring that the right to food is upheld even when institutional support wavers.

Beyond the agrarian sector, the diversification into vocational trades and small-scale retail represents a critical shift toward economic empowerment. Vocational training programs focusing on tailoring, carpentry, and masonry are instrumental in transforming the "vulnerability context" of the camp into one of opportunity. For many youths in Palorinya, these skills offer an alternative to the hopelessness that often characterizes protracted displacement. Social workers emphasize that vocational acquisition is a form of "human capital" development that promotes long-term dignity. For instance, women who engage in tailoring or retail businesses within the camp's vibrant marketplaces are not just generating income; they are challenging traditional gender roles and enhancing their bargaining power within the domestic sphere. This economic agency is a vital component of social development, as it reduces the likelihood of exploitative labour and provides a sustainable foundation for household stability (UNHCR, 2022).

Moreover, the emergence of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) within Palorinya serves as a testament to the power of collective action and social solidarity. These informal financial structures are more than just micro-credit facilities; they are community-based support systems that embody the social work principle of mutual aid. By pooling their meager resources, refugees create a communal safety net that can be accessed during medical emergencies or for educational expenses. These groups foster "social capital," creating bonds of trust that are essential for communal healing in a post-conflict population. Through these multifaceted strategies, the residents of Palorinya are not merely passive recipients of aid but active participants in the reconstruction of their lives, utilizing every available resource to mitigate the harsh realities of their environment.

2.6 THE LIVELIHOOD OUTCOMES AND VULNERABILITY

The assessment of livelihood outcomes in Palorinya required a holistic social work framework that looks beyond financial metrics to evaluate the overall well-being and social functioning of the refugee population. According to the foundational theories of Chambers and Conway (1992), a successful livelihood outcome is one that enhances the capabilities and assets of a household while ensuring they can cope with and recover from external stresses. In the context of Palorinya, these outcomes manifest as improved nutritional status, enhanced psychosocial health, and the strengthening of social cohesion between the refugee and host communities.

A primary outcome of these strategies was the attainment of food security and nutritional stability. As food rations are systematically reduced due to global funding gaps, the ability of a household to bridge the "calorie gap" through their own labour becomes a matter of survival. When social work interventions and livelihood strategies succeed, the outcome is a measurable reduction in malnutrition and "hidden hunger," which are critical indicators of child welfare. However, the pursuit of these outcomes is constantly threatened by a high "vulnerability context." Environmental shocks, such as the erratic rainfall patterns in the West Nile region, can instantly decimate a season's crop, plunging families back into acute food insecurity. From a social justice perspective, this highlights the fragility of refugee self-reliance and the need for climate-resilient agricultural support that protects the most vulnerable households from falling back into the cycle of poverty.

Furthermore, the social work perspective identified "social capital" as a transformative outcome of livelihood participation. The interaction between South Sudanese refugees and the Ugandan host community in Obongi District is often mediated through economic exchange. When livelihood strategies involve shared marketplaces or joint agricultural projects, the outcome is "social peace" and reduced xenophobia. These connections provide a form of "bridging capital" that allows refugees to navigate the local legal and economic systems more effectively. In this sense, the outcome of a small

business is not just the profit generated, but the relationships built and the integration achieved. This social networking acts as an informal protection mechanism, where neighbors look out for one another, thereby reducing the burden on formal security and social service providers.

Despite the resilience shown, the vulnerability of Palorinya residents remains deeply structural. The "person-in-environment" perspective allows social workers to see that many refugees are trapped in "survivalist" rather than "growth-oriented" livelihoods. The lack of freedom of movement, limited access to formal banking, and the high cost of essential goods create a "poverty trap" that is difficult to escape. For many, the outcome is merely "coping" skipping meals or selling essential assets rather than true "adaptation" and "graduation." This persistent vulnerability underscores the necessity for macro-level social work advocacy, which seeks to influence policy changes that grant refugees greater economic rights and more consistent access to markets. Ultimately, the goal of livelihood strategies in Palorinya is to foster a state of "resilient well-being," where individuals possess the tools, the rights, and the communal support to lead lives of dignity, regardless of the duration of their displacement.

VULNERABILITY

Despite the efforts, refugees remained vulnerable due to limited resources such as inadequate land for production and uncertainty. The temporary living situations, fear of repatriation or deportation, and dependence on aid undermine long-term planning and self-sufficiency. Environmental factors like climate change, natural disasters, and environmental degradation also affect their living conditions and concentration (UNHCR, 2022; WFP, 2023).

2.7 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EARLY CHILDBEARING AND LIVELIHOOD

The relationship between early childbearing can significantly impact a girl's livelihood, creating a cycle of challenges such as limited education, dropping out of school due to early pregnancy, reduced economic opportunities, limited job prospects, increased caregiving burden and responsibilities for young mothers, and poverty traps. Early childbearing can

perpetuate intergenerational poverty that may not only affect the mother but also the child (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004; UNICEF, 2023). The study therefore analyses economic and social factors that affect the livelihood of school girls.

2.8 EARLY CHILDBEARING AND FOOD SECURITY IN PALORINYA REFUGEE CAMP.

Food security had been a major factor that affects the refugees in Palorinya Refugee Camp. Most of the refugees depend on food rations provided by humanitarian agencies, which do not sufficiently meet their needs, increasing the level of hunger and suffering among them, leading to frustration, trauma, and depression, particularly among parents (WFP, 2023). The limitation on access to land for agriculture has limited their food crop production, which could have reduced the high rate of hunger. Limited access to resources such as money also restricts them from exploring entrepreneurial or business skills for their survival (OPM, 2023). Therefore, the study will also focus on considering the environmental factors that limit their concentration and contribute to their survival.

2.9 EARLY CHILDBEARING AND ACCESS TO SERVICES

The researcher noted that the global humanitarian crisis had resulted in the displacement of millions, with Uganda hosting one of the largest refugee populations in Africa. Among the most vulnerable within these populations are adolescent girls, for whom the intersection of displacement and early childbearing creates a cycle of socio-economic and health-related precarity. In the Palorinya Refugee Camp, located in the Obongi District, the challenges of navigating motherhood as a minor are compounded by systemic gaps in service delivery. While both humanitarian agencies and government-led facilities, such as the Okuni Primary Health Care center, strive to provide essential services, the lived reality for many refugees remains one of "suffering and underserved needs" (OPM, 2023; UNHCR, 2022). This essay examines the barriers to healthcare access for young mothers in Palorinya, exploring how resource scarcity, cultural norms, and

infrastructural limitations hinder the delivery of reproductive health services.

The refugees at Palorinya Refugee Camp depended heavily on services provided by international humanitarian agencies; however, some government health facilities like Okuni Primary Health Care also play a crucial and important role in service delivery to the refugees. This integrated approach, known as the Settlement Transformation Agenda (STA), aims to merge refugee services with national systems to ensure sustainability. However, research highlights that these services have not been fully delivered due to the existing suffering of the refugees and the immense pressure placed on local infrastructure (OPM, 2023; UNHCR, 2022).

Existing data suggested that while knowledge of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) remains relatively high among youth in Palorinya with approximately 75% being aware of family planning methods this knowledge does not always translate into service utilization (R Discovery, 2025). The disconnect between awareness and action is often rooted in the systemic "triple burden": a lack of medical supplies, a shortage of trained healthcare personnel, and the significant physical distances between the camp sectors and the centralized health facilities (Amone, 2021). For a pregnant adolescent, traveling several kilometers on foot to reach Okuni Primary Health Care is not merely an inconvenience; it is a physical and financial barrier that often results in the avoidance of prenatal care until an emergency.

Beyond physical and logistical hurdles, the social fabric of the refugee and host communities in Northern Uganda presented significant obstacles. Early childbearing is often driven by a combination of limited economic options and traditional beliefs that equate menstruation with readiness for marriage (UNICEF, 2023). In many instances, the "culture of silence" surrounding adolescent sexuality prevents young girls from seeking contraceptives or

reproductive advice for fear of being labelled as "promiscuous" by elders or peers (Kaba et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the experience of seeking care at facilities is often marred by perceived discrimination. Studies in Northern Uganda indicate that refugee mothers are 4% more likely to feel discriminated against during antenatal care compared to host community members (EPRC, 2021). For an adolescent girl who is already facing the stigma of early pregnancy, the fear of judgmental attitudes from healthcare providers creates a hostile clinical environment. This institutionalized stigma, combined with the "clandestine nature" of seeking reproductive health services, leaves many young girls to rely on traditional birth attendants or unregulated local healers, significantly increasing the risk of maternal mortality (Dateline Health Africa, 2024).

The administrative and logistical challenges at facilities like Okuni Primary Health Care cannot be overlooked. The ratio of clinicians to patients in refugee-serving areas often exceeds 65 patients per day, well above the standard of 50 (Ministry of Health, 2019). This overcrowding leads to long waiting times, which discourages regular attendance. As one participant in a similar settlement study noted, "We wait for hours... and sometimes we leave without getting treatment because the queue is too long" (PMC, 2025).

For young mothers in Palorinya, these gaps result in missed opportunities for early intervention. Maternal mortality in refugee settlements is frequently linked to "the third delay" the delay in receiving adequate care once a facility has been reached (Ministry of Health, 2019). When facilities lack essential surgical equipment or emergency obstetric kits, the "crucial role" they are intended to play is undermined, leaving the refugees in a state of heightened vulnerability.

2.10 EARLY CHILD BEARING AND LIVELIHOOD COPING STRATEGIES

The residents of Palorinya Refugee Camp have adopted several coping strategies in response to the issues that affect them at the camp. For example, women participate in making local breweries such as alcohol, boda-boda riding by the youth, and small retail businesses. Meanwhile, those with friends who are Ugandan nationals. The refugees at Palorinya Refugee Camp depend on services provided by humanitarian agencies; however, some government health facilities like Okuni Primary Health Care also play a crucial and important role in service delivery to the refugees. Although research highlights those services have not been fully delivered due to the existing suffering of the refugees (OPM, 2023; UNHCR, 2022).

The study assessed the coping strategies in relation to their sustainability and contribution to resilience building, thereby enhancing analytical understanding of livelihood adaptation in the context of early childbearing (Chambers & Conway, 1992).

2.11 THEORETICAL INTEGRATION

The vulnerability and resilience framework explains how early childbearing complicates livelihood outcomes and living conditions. Therefore, a prior study integrates both frameworks to offer a comprehensive understanding of how structural and proximate factors jointly shape livelihood vulnerability and resilience in Palorinya Refugee Camp (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004; Chambers & Conway, 1992).

2.12 Research Gap

Although many studies have examined teenage pregnancy in Uganda and other African countries, few have specifically focused on the effects of early childbearing on the wellbeing of young girls in refugee camps such as Palorinya. Most studies concentrate on prevalence rates and causes but give less attention to emotional wellbeing, social exclusion, and long-term livelihood outcomes.

There is therefore need for a focused study that explores how early childbearing affects physical health, education, emotional stability, social

relationships, and economic wellbeing among girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp.

2.12 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE

The reviewed literature provided valuable insights into early childbearing dynamics and livelihood vulnerabilities in Palorinya Refugee Camp. However, some critical gaps emerge, such as the lack of empirical linkage between the intensity of early childbearing and specific components such as essential services and food security.

There was also insufficient attention to long-term adaptation and resilience mechanisms, as most studies focus on immediate support by humanitarian agencies (UNHCR, 2022; UNFPA, 2021).

Addressing these gaps requires a holistic and analytical approach that examines how different dimensions of livelihood are simultaneously affected by early childbearing in Palorinya Refugee Camp.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology approach that was employed to achieve the objectives of the study. It outlines the research design study population sampling techniques data collection methods and tool, procedure and data analysis method. This study adopted a mixed method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches and techniques to ensure comprehensive understanding of the effects of the childbearing child on the wellbeing. This chapter was guided by the three main areas derived from the study objective.

3.1. Study area

The study was conducted in Palorinya Refugee Camp located in Obongi District in Northern Uganda. The refugee settlement hosts mainly refugees from South Sudan who fled war, violence, and insecurity in their home country.

Palorinya Refugee Camp was selected because it has a large population of refugees, including adolescent girls who face serious social and economic challenges. The settlement experiences issues such as poverty, unemployment, school dropout, inadequate healthcare, food shortages, and exposure to sexual exploitation. These conditions make young girls more vulnerable to early pregnancy and childbearing.

The camp was divided into several zones and blocks. Social services such as schools, health centers, and water points exist, but they often operate under pressure because of the high population. Most residents depend on humanitarian aid, small-scale farming, petty trade, and casual labor for survival.

3.2 Research design

The study employed a cross-sectional research design. A cross-sectional design is appropriate because it allows the research to collect data from

respondents in time therefore enhance an assessment of existing condition and relationships between variables within the study area. The correlation aspect will help to determine the degree and direction of the relationships between the independent variable (early childbearing) and dependent variable wellbeing or livelihood. Correlation research design investigate relationships between variables without manipulating them. This design will possibly contribute to the statistical examination on how variation in early childbearing correspond with changes in wellbeing or livelihood outcomes such as food; income food security and access to essential services such as health.

3.3 Research approach.

The research utilized a mixed method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to achieve complementary between numerical data and in-depth contextual understanding.

The qualitative component generated measurably data through structured questionnaires administered to block leaders to enable statistical analysis of early child bearing and wellbeing indicators. The qualitative component will involve key informant interviews and focus group discussions from both parents and children to get detailed information and their perceptions and experiences on how early childbearing affects their well-being and resilience coping strategies. This combines method enhances the richness of data and ensure both breadth and depth of analysis according to literature mixed method.

3.4 The study population

The study population refers to all individuals from whom the researcher expects to obtain information. The target population for this study will include girls who experienced early childbearing and key stakeholders who understand the issue in Palorinya Refugee Camp.

The study population consisted of adolescent mothers, pregnant girls, parents or guardians, teachers, health workers, block leaders, NGO staff,

and probation and social welfare officers. These groups are selected because they have direct knowledge about the causes, effects, and management of early childbearing.

Young girls affected by early childbearing are the primary respondents because they provide first-hand information about their experiences. Parents and guardians provided family perspectives. Teachers explained the impact on education. Health workers provided information on health risks and service use. NGO staff and leaders explained available interventions.

3.5 Sample size and sampling technique.

A sample size of 60 respondents was used for the study. The sample was considered manageable within the researcher's time and financial capacity while still being sufficient to generate meaningful findings.

The sample size was distributed among categories of respondents as shown below:

Table 3.1: Sample Size Distribution

Category of Respondents	Target Number
Young mothers / pregnant girls	25
Parents / Guardians	10
Teachers	5
Health workers	5
Community leaders	5
Probation / Social Welfare Officers	5
NGO / Humanitarian staff	5
Total	60

The distribution ensured that both affected girls and stakeholders are represented.

Sampling Techniques

The study used purposive sampling, simple random sampling, and convenience sampling.

Purposive sampling was used to select teachers, health workers, NGO staff, leaders, and probation officers because they possess specialized knowledge relevant to the study.

Simple random sampling was used to select some young mothers, pregnant girls, and parents to reduce bias and give equal chance of participation.

Convenience sampling may be used where respondents are readily available and willing to participate, especially in situations where movement is restricted.

3.6 Data collection method and tools

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods

Questionnaires were used to find information from the block leaders and other members to find information concerning the implication on both physical and emotions.

3.7 Key informant interviews

This was carried out with the block leaders district offers humanitarian agency officer and other members through interviews to explore insights the early childbearing cases in the measures being put in place to control the cases of the early childbearing.

3.8 Data collection procedure

The researcher first sought necessary permission and clearance from the concern institution that is Uganda Christian University research ethic and committee and permission from Obongi District Local Government to avoid inconvenience the block leaders were engaged to allow the researcher entered into the block and pick consent from all the needed people for easy access to the information and encourage participation.

3.9 Data analysis

The collected data was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques corresponding to mixed method design. Data from questionnaires was coded and entered in to the statistical package for social

sciences. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and mean summarized the demographic characteristics and wellbeing indicators. Correlation analysis (persons) was used to measure the strength and direction of relationship between early childbearing variable such as frequencies in early childbearing issues arise in access to service, food education among others.

Qualitative Analysis data from interviews and focus groups transcribed and analyzed thematically. Themes were developed based on recurring pattern related to the study objectives for example the nature forms early child bearing well-being disruption and coping strategies so the thematic analysis will help to interpret the meanings and social context behind the qualitative trend.

Integration. The line with mixed methods logic, findings from quantitative and qualitative strange were compared, contrasted and integrated to provide a holistic understanding of the relationships between early child bearing and wellbeing in Palorinya Refugee Camp.

3.10 Validity and reliability of research instruments

To ensure validity, the research instruments such as questionnaires interview guides, Women group guide were pretested in some selected block to assess clarity relevance and cultural activities. Input from the research supervisor and field professional were consulted to refine the instruments. Reliability was enhanced by maintaining consistency in data collection procedures using trained assistants, standardizing interview and women groups, cross checking responses for accuracy and completion.

3.11 Ethical considerations

Ethical checkup and approval were obtained from Uganda Christian University research team or committee. Participants were fully informed about the study purpose confidentiality their rights, response and how data

would be used for the academic purposes. Identifiers were excluded and proper names used appropriate data were securely stored.

3.12 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the methodological frame work that guided the study. It adopted a mixed method cross sectional correlational design to examine the effects of early child bearing in Palorinya Refugee Camp by integrating quantitative data from household surveys and qualitative insight from interviews and women groups; this helped to generate a comprehensive understanding of early childbearing and effects in Palorinya Refugee Camp Obongi District.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive and analytically grounded discussion of the findings on the effects of early childbearing on the well-being of young girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp in Obongi District. The presentation follows the study objectives and integrates both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a holistic understanding of the issue. While quantitative data provides measurable patterns through frequencies and percentages, qualitative insights deepen the interpretation by capturing lived experiences and contextual realities of the respondents. The findings are interpreted in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks such as the sustainable livelihood framework (Chambers & Conway, 1992), which emphasizes the role of assets and capabilities in shaping well-being.

4.2 Response Rate

The study achieved a response rate of 100 percent, with all 60 targeted respondents successfully participating in the research. This high response rate enhances the reliability and validity of the findings by minimizing non-response bias. In humanitarian contexts, such as refugee settlements, high participation often reflects the relevance of the research problem to the affected population (UNHCR, 2022). This suggests that early childbearing is a pressing issue within Palorinya Refugee Camp that resonates strongly with the community.

4.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.1: Age Distribution of Young Mothers/Pregnant Girls

Age Group (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
13-15	6	24%
16-17	9	36%
18-19	10	40%
Total	25	100%

The findings indicate that the majority of young mothers fall within the 16-19 age bracket, confirming that adolescence is a critical period for early childbearing. However, the presence of pregnancies among girls aged 13-15 highlights extreme vulnerability and early exposure to reproductive risks. This aligns with global findings that adolescent girls, particularly in vulnerable settings, face increased risks of early pregnancy due to limited protection systems (UNICEF, 2023). From a developmental perspective, early childbearing at such ages disrupts physical growth and psychosocial development, further deepening vulnerability.

Table 4.2: Education Level of Respondents

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No formal education	8	32%
Primary incomplete	11	44%
Primary complete	4	16%
Secondary level	2	8%
Total	25	100%

The data shows that a significant proportion of respondents have low educational attainment, with 76 percent not completing primary education. This supports the argument that education serves as a key protective factor against early pregnancy (UNFPA, 2021). The findings further suggest a cyclical relationship, where early pregnancy leads to school dropout, and school dropout increases vulnerability to early childbearing. Similar findings have been reported in Uganda, where teenage pregnancy is closely linked to school discontinuation (UBOS, 2022).

4.4 Prevalence and Determinants of Early Childbearing

Table 4.3: Age at First Pregnancy

Age at First Pregnancy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 15 years	5	20%
15-17 years	14	56%
18-19 years	6	24%
Total	25	100%

The findings indicate that 76 percent of respondents experienced their first pregnancy before the age of 18, confirming a high prevalence of early childbearing. This is consistent with national statistics showing high adolescent fertility rates in Uganda (UBOS, 2022). Early pregnancies before the age of 15 raise serious concerns about child protection, as they may be associated with coercion or abuse (UNICEF, 2023).

Table 4.4: Determinants of Early Childbearing

Determinant	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poverty	18	72%
School dropout	15	60%
Sexual violence/exploitation	12	48%
Early marriage	10	40%
Lack of reproductive knowledge	14	56%

The findings reveal that poverty is the leading determinant of early childbearing, influencing 72 percent of respondents. This aligns with Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004), who argue that economic vulnerability increases exposure to risky coping mechanisms such as transactional sex. School dropout further exacerbates this vulnerability by removing girls from structured environments that provide supervision and information (UNFPA, 2021).

Sexual violence and exploitation are also significant contributors, reflecting the heightened vulnerability of refugee girls in humanitarian settings (UNHCR, 2022). Cultural practices such as early marriage further reinforce

the normalization of early childbearing. Additionally, the lack of reproductive health knowledge highlights gaps in sexual education and access to family planning services (WHO, 2023).

4.5 Effects of Early Childbearing on Physical Well-being

Table 4.5: Health Challenges Experienced

Health Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Anemia	14	56%
Complicated labor	10	40%
Lack of antenatal care	16	64%
Malnutrition	18	72%

The findings show that early childbearing has severe physical health consequences, with malnutrition and lack of antenatal care being the most prevalent challenges. This is consistent with WHO (2023), which notes that adolescent mothers face higher risks of pregnancy-related complications due to biological immaturity. The lack of access to antenatal care further increases these risks, particularly in resource-constrained settings such as refugee camps (UNHCR, 2022).

Qualitative findings revealed that barriers such as long distances to health facilities and lack of transport discourage utilization of maternal health services. This aligns with previous studies highlighting structural barriers to healthcare access in refugee settings (WFP, 2023).

4.6 Effects on Emotional and Psychological Well-being

Table 4.6: Psychological Effects

Psychological Effect	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Stress	20	80%
Depression	15	60%
Anxiety	17	68%
Social isolation	18	72%

The psychological impact of early childbearing is profound, with high levels of stress, anxiety, and social isolation reported among respondents. These findings are consistent with UNICEF (2023), which highlights the emotional burden associated with adolescent pregnancy. Stigma and lack of social support further contribute to psychological distress, particularly for unmarried young mothers.

The absence of adequate mental health services in the settlement exacerbates these challenges, leaving many girls without access to professional support. This underscores the need for integrated psychosocial interventions in refugee settings (UNHCR, 2022).

4.7 Effects on Social and Educational Well-being

Table 4.7: Education Status after Pregnancy

Education Outcome	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Dropped out completely	19	76%
Continued schooling	3	12%
Never attended school	3	12%

The findings demonstrate that early childbearing significantly disrupts education, with 76 percent of respondents dropping out of school. This supports existing literature which identifies adolescent pregnancy as a major barrier to educational attainment (UNFPA, 2021). The low rate of school re-entry reflects both structural barriers and social stigma.

Socially, young mothers face discrimination and exclusion, which limits their participation in community life and reduces their social capital. This further reinforces cycles of vulnerability and marginalization.

4.8 Effects on Economic Well-being

Table 4.8: Sources of Livelihood

Source of Income	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Humanitarian aid	20	80%
Small-scale business	10	40%
Casual labor	8	32%
Family support	15	60%

The findings reveal high economic dependency among young mothers, with the majority relying on humanitarian aid. This reflects limited access to sustainable livelihood opportunities, consistent with findings by Chambers and Conway (1992) on livelihood vulnerability.

Childcare responsibilities and limited skills further restrict economic participation, trapping young mothers in poverty. This highlights the need for targeted economic empowerment programs for adolescent mothers.

4.9 Existing Support Systems

Table 4.9: Support Services Available

Support System	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Health services	22	88%
Food aid	20	80%
Counselling services	12	48%
Educational support programs	8	32%
VSLAs	14	56%

While several support systems exist, gaps remain in service delivery, particularly in psychosocial and educational support. Similar challenges have been documented in refugee settings where resources are overstretched (UNHCR, 2022; WFP, 2023). Barriers such as stigma and lack of awareness further limit service utilization.

4.10 Discussion of Findings

The findings confirm that early childbearing is a complex issue driven by structural inequalities such as poverty, limited education, and gender-based violence. These results align with the sustainable livelihood framework, which emphasizes the role of socio-economic factors in shaping well-being (Chambers & Conway, 1992).

The study also demonstrates that early childbearing has multidimensional impacts on health, education, psychological well-being, and economic status. These findings are consistent with global and regional studies on adolescent pregnancy (UNICEF, 2023; UNFPA, 2021).

4.11 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has presented and interpreted the findings, demonstrating that early childbearing remains a significant challenge affecting the well-being of young girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp. The next chapter will provide conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth discussion and interpretation of the study findings on the effects of early childbearing on the well-being of young girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp, Obongi District. The discussion is structured according to the study objectives and critically engages with existing literature and theoretical perspectives. Unlike the previous chapter, which focused on presentation and analysis of results, this chapter interprets the findings by explaining their meaning, implications, and relevance within the broader context of adolescent reproductive health and refugee livelihoods. The discussion is anchored in the sustainable livelihood framework (Chambers & Conway, 1992), which emphasizes how vulnerabilities and limited assets shape individual well-being.

5.2 Discussion of Findings on the Prevalence and Determinants of Early Childbearing

The findings of the study confirm that early childbearing is highly prevalent among young girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp, with a significant proportion of respondents experiencing their first pregnancy before the age of eighteen. This pattern reflects a persistent public health and social challenge that is consistent with national and regional trends in Sub-Saharan Africa, where adolescent fertility remains high (UBOS, 2022; UNICEF, 2023). The high prevalence observed in this study suggests that refugee settings intensify existing vulnerabilities, making adolescent girls more susceptible to early pregnancy compared to their counterparts in more stable environments.

The study identified poverty as the most dominant determinant of early childbearing, which aligns with the broader literature that positions economic deprivation as a key driver of adolescent pregnancy (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). In the context of Palorinya Refugee Camp, poverty is not only a household condition but also a structural reality shaped by

displacement, limited livelihood opportunities, and dependence on humanitarian aid. The findings suggest that many girls engage in transactional relationships as a survival strategy, highlighting the intersection between economic vulnerability and reproductive risk. This reinforces the argument that early childbearing cannot be addressed in isolation from broader socio-economic conditions.

Furthermore, the role of school dropout as a determinant of early childbearing reflects a bidirectional relationship between education and pregnancy. The findings support existing research which indicates that girls who leave school are more likely to become pregnant, while those who become pregnant are less likely to return to school (UNFPA, 2021). In Palorinya, this relationship appears to be intensified by structural barriers such as lack of school resources, financial constraints, and gender norms that deprioritize girls' education. This suggests that interventions aimed at reducing early childbearing must prioritize educational retention and re-entry programs.

Sexual violence and exploitation also emerged as significant determinants, underscoring the heightened vulnerability of girls in refugee settings. This finding is consistent with UNHCR (2022), which highlights increased risks of gender-based violence in displacement contexts due to weakened protection systems. The normalization and underreporting of such violence further complicate efforts to address early childbearing, as many cases remain hidden within the community. Similarly, early marriage as a determinant reflects cultural and economic coping mechanisms, where families may perceive marriage as a form of protection or economic relief. These findings demonstrate that early childbearing is deeply embedded in both structural inequalities and socio-cultural practices.

5.3 Discussion of Findings on the Effects of Early Childbearing on Physical Well-being

The study findings indicate that early childbearing has significant adverse effects on the physical health of young girls, particularly in relation to

maternal health complications and nutritional challenges. These findings are consistent with the World Health Organization (2023), which emphasizes that adolescent mothers face higher risks of complications such as anemia, obstructed labor, and maternal mortality due to biological immaturity. In the context of Palorinya, these risks are further exacerbated by limited access to quality healthcare services, highlighting the intersection between biological vulnerability and structural constraints.

The inadequate utilization of antenatal care services observed in the study reflects systemic barriers such as distance to health facilities, lack of transportation, and overstretched health systems. These findings align with previous research indicating that access to healthcare in refugee settings is often constrained by infrastructural and logistical challenges (WFP, 2023). The reliance on traditional birth attendants reported in the study further illustrates gaps in formal healthcare provision, which may compromise the safety and well-being of both mother and child.

Malnutrition among young mothers also emerged as a critical concern, reflecting broader issues of food insecurity within the settlement. This finding supports existing literature that links adolescent pregnancy with increased nutritional demands that are often unmet in resource-constrained environments (UNICEF, 2023). The combination of early pregnancy and inadequate nutrition not only affects maternal health but also has long-term implications for child development. From a sustainable livelihood perspective, these findings suggest that physical well-being is closely tied to access to basic resources such as food and healthcare, which remain limited in refugee contexts.

5.4 Discussion of Findings on the Effects of Early Childbearing on Emotional and Psychological Well-being

The study findings reveal that early childbearing has profound psychological and emotional effects on young girls, including stress, anxiety, depression, and social isolation. These findings are consistent with UNICEF (2023), which highlights the emotional burden associated with adolescent pregnancy,

particularly in contexts where social support is limited. The psychological distress experienced by respondents can be attributed to multiple factors, including stigma, rejection, and the overwhelming responsibilities of early motherhood.

The stigma associated with early childbearing emerged as a significant factor influencing emotional well-being. Many young mothers experience social exclusion and negative labelling, which undermines their self-esteem and sense of belonging. This finding is supported by Kaba et al. (2022), who argue that societal attitudes toward adolescent pregnancy often reinforce discrimination and marginalization. In the refugee context, where social cohesion is already fragile, such stigma further isolates vulnerable individuals.

The lack of adequate psychosocial support services within the settlement exacerbates these challenges, leaving many young mothers without access to counseling or mental health care. This gap highlights a critical limitation in current humanitarian interventions, which often prioritize physical needs such as food and shelter while overlooking mental health. From a social work perspective, addressing the psychological effects of early childbearing requires a holistic approach that integrates mental health services into existing support systems.

5.5 Discussion of Findings on the Effects of Early Childbearing on Social and Educational Well-being

The findings demonstrate that early childbearing significantly disrupts the social and educational trajectories of young girls. The high rate of school dropout observed in the study confirms that adolescent pregnancy remains a major barrier to educational attainment. This finding is consistent with UNFPA (2021), which identifies early pregnancy as a leading cause of school discontinuation among girls. The limited opportunities for re-entry into the education system further compound this challenge, as young mothers often face stigma and lack of institutional support.

Socially, early childbearing leads to marginalization and reduced participation in community life. The findings suggest that young mothers are often excluded from peer networks and community activities, which limits their access to social capital. This aligns with the sustainable livelihood framework, which emphasizes the importance of social networks in enhancing resilience and well-being (Chambers & Conway, 1992). The loss of social capital not only affects immediate well-being but also reduces long-term opportunities for personal and economic development.

These findings highlight the need for inclusive social policies that promote reintegration of young mothers into education and community life. Without such interventions, early childbearing will continue to reinforce cycles of exclusion and vulnerability.

5.6 Discussion of Findings on the Effects of Early Childbearing on Economic Well-being

The study findings indicate that early childbearing has significant negative implications for the economic well-being of young girls. The high level of dependence on humanitarian aid observed among respondents reflects limited access to sustainable livelihood opportunities. This finding is consistent with Chambers and Conway (1992), who argue that lack of access to assets and income-generating opportunities leads to livelihood insecurity.

The economic burden of early motherhood, including childcare responsibilities, limits the ability of young mothers to engage in productive activities. This reinforces cycles of poverty and dependency, particularly in refugee settings where economic opportunities are already scarce. The engagement of some respondents in informal income-generating activities such as petty trade and casual labor suggests resilience, but these activities are often unstable and insufficient to meet household needs.

These findings underscore the importance of economic empowerment programs that target adolescent mothers. Without access to skills training, financial resources, and livelihood opportunities, young mothers are likely

to remain trapped in poverty, which in turn increases the risk of intergenerational vulnerability.

5.7 Discussion of Findings on Existing Support Systems

The study findings indicate that while support systems such as healthcare services, food aid, and community-based groups exist within Palorinya Refugee Camp, their effectiveness is limited by structural and social barriers. This aligns with UNHCR (2022), which notes that humanitarian services in refugee settings are often overstretched due to high demand and limited resources.

The limited availability of psychosocial and educational support services highlights a critical gap in current interventions. While immediate needs such as food and healthcare are addressed, long-term support mechanisms aimed at empowerment and resilience building remain inadequate. This suggests a need for more integrated and comprehensive approaches that address both immediate and long-term needs of young mothers.

Additionally, barriers such as stigma, lack of awareness, and cultural norms limit access to available services. This indicates that improving service delivery requires not only increasing availability but also addressing social attitudes and enhancing community engagement.

5.8 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has provided a detailed discussion of the study findings, demonstrating that early childbearing in Palorinya Refugee Camp is driven by a complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and structural factors. The findings further reveal that early childbearing has far-reaching consequences on physical health, psychological well-being, education, social integration, and economic stability. Although support systems exist, they are insufficient to fully address the needs of young mothers. These insights provide a strong foundation for the conclusions and recommendations presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the study on the effects of early childbearing on the well-being of young girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp, Obongi District. The conclusions are derived directly from the study findings and are aligned with the research objectives. The chapter further provides practical and policy-oriented recommendations aimed at addressing the identified challenges. Finally, it outlines areas for further research to guide future scholarly inquiry and intervention planning. The discussion is grounded in the sustainable livelihood framework, which emphasizes the importance of enhancing human, social, and economic assets in improving well-being (Chambers & Conway, 1992).

6.2 Conclusions

The study established that early childbearing remains highly prevalent among young girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp and constitutes a significant social, economic, and public health concern. The findings demonstrate that the majority of adolescent girls experience pregnancy before the age of eighteen, indicating persistent vulnerability within the refugee setting. This high prevalence reflects broader structural inequalities, including poverty, limited access to education, and weak protection systems, which collectively increase the risk of early childbearing (UNICEF, 2023; UBOS, 2022).

The study further concludes that early childbearing is driven by a complex interplay of determinants, with poverty emerging as the most dominant factor. Economic hardship within the refugee settlement compels many girls to engage in survival strategies such as transactional relationships, thereby increasing their exposure to early pregnancy. In addition, school dropout significantly contributes to early childbearing, as girls who are out of school lack both protective environments and access to reproductive health information (UNFPA, 2021). The prevalence of sexual violence and early

marriage further reinforces the vulnerability of adolescent girls, highlighting the role of gender-based inequalities in shaping reproductive outcomes (UNHCR, 2022).

In relation to physical well-being, the study concludes that early childbearing has severe health implications for young girls. Adolescent mothers face increased risks of complications such as anemia, malnutrition, and obstructed labor due to biological immaturity and inadequate access to healthcare services (WHO, 2023). These challenges are further compounded by structural barriers within the refugee setting, including limited health infrastructure and long distances to facilities, which hinder timely access to maternal healthcare.

The study also concludes that early childbearing has profound psychological and emotional effects on young girls. The experience of stigma, social isolation, and rejection contributes to high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among adolescent mothers. The lack of adequate psychosocial support services within the settlement exacerbates these challenges, leaving many girls without the necessary emotional support to cope with early motherhood (UNICEF, 2023).

In terms of social and educational well-being, the study concludes that early childbearing significantly disrupts the educational trajectories of young girls. The majority of adolescent mothers drop out of school and face limited opportunities for re-entry, which undermines their future prospects and perpetuates cycles of poverty. Socially, young mothers experience marginalization and reduced participation in community life, which weakens their social networks and access to support systems (Chambers & Conway, 1992).

Economically, the study concludes that early childbearing contributes to increased dependency and livelihood insecurity. Most young mothers rely heavily on humanitarian aid due to limited access to income-generating

opportunities. The burden of childcare responsibilities further restricts their ability to engage in economic activities, reinforcing cycles of poverty and vulnerability (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004).

Finally, the study concludes that while support systems such as healthcare services, food aid, and community-based initiatives exist within Palorinya Refugee Camp, they are insufficient to fully address the needs of young mothers. Gaps in psychosocial support, education reintegration programs, and economic empowerment initiatives limit the effectiveness of current interventions. Additionally, barriers such as stigma, lack of awareness, and cultural norms hinder access to available services, reducing their overall impact (UNHCR, 2022; WFP, 2023).

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the study findings and conclusions, several recommendations are proposed to address the challenges associated with early childbearing in Palorinya Refugee Camp.

First, there is a need for comprehensive poverty reduction and livelihood empowerment programs targeting vulnerable households and adolescent girls. Humanitarian agencies and government institutions should expand access to vocational training, skills development, and income-generating opportunities to reduce economic vulnerability. Empowering girls economically can significantly reduce reliance on transactional relationships and enhance their ability to make informed reproductive choices (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004).

Second, education retention and re-entry programs should be strengthened to ensure that pregnant girls and young mothers can continue their education. Schools within and around the refugee settlement should adopt inclusive policies that support adolescent mothers, including flexible learning arrangements and provision of childcare support. Education plays a critical role in delaying early childbearing and improving long-term outcomes for girls (UNFPA, 2021).

Third, there is a need to strengthen sexual and reproductive health education and services within the settlement. Comprehensive sexuality education should be integrated into community programs to increase awareness of family planning methods and reproductive health rights. In addition, access to youth-friendly health services should be improved to ensure that adolescent girls can obtain contraceptives and maternal care without stigma or discrimination (WHO, 2023).

Fourth, interventions aimed at preventing sexual and gender-based violence should be prioritized. This includes strengthening community protection mechanisms, enhancing reporting systems, and providing support services for survivors. Addressing gender-based violence is critical in reducing early childbearing and promoting the safety and well-being of adolescent girls (UNHCR, 2022).

Fifth, psychosocial support services should be expanded to address the emotional and mental health needs of young mothers. Counselling services, peer support groups, and community-based mental health programs should be integrated into existing humanitarian interventions. Providing emotional support is essential for improving the overall well-being and resilience of adolescent mothers (UNICEF, 2023).

Sixth, there is a need to enhance community sensitization and engagement to address stigma and negative cultural attitudes toward adolescent pregnancy. Community leaders, parents, and stakeholders should be involved in awareness campaigns aimed at promoting positive attitudes and supporting the reintegration of young mothers into society. Reducing stigma is essential for improving access to services and enhancing social inclusion.

Finally, coordination among stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community groups, should be strengthened to ensure a more integrated and effective response to early childbearing. Collaborative approaches can improve resource utilization and ensure that interventions address the multifaceted nature of the problem.

6.4 Areas for Further Research

While this study has provided valuable insights into the effects of early childbearing on the well-being of young girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp, several areas require further investigation.

Future research should explore the long-term outcomes of early childbearing on both young mothers and their children, particularly in relation to education, health, and economic status. Longitudinal studies would provide a deeper understanding of how early childbearing affects life trajectories over time.

There is also a need for research focusing on the role of male partners and community dynamics in influencing early childbearing. Understanding the perspectives and behaviours of men and boys can inform more inclusive and effective intervention strategies.

Additionally, further studies should examine the effectiveness of existing intervention programs within refugee settings, including education, health, and livelihood initiatives. Evaluating these programs can provide evidence on best practices and areas for improvement.

Finally, research should investigate the impact of cultural beliefs and social norms on adolescent reproductive behaviour within refugee communities. Such studies would provide deeper insights into the socio-cultural dimensions of early childbearing and inform culturally sensitive interventions.

6.5 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has presented the conclusions, recommendations, and areas for further research based on the study findings. The study concludes that early childbearing is a significant challenge in Palorinya Refugee Camp, driven by socio-economic and structural factors and associated with negative outcomes across multiple dimensions of well-being. The recommendations emphasize the need for integrated and multi-sectoral interventions that

address the root causes of early childbearing and promote the empowerment of adolescent girls. The identified areas for further research provide direction for future studies aimed at deepening understanding and improving intervention strategies.

REFERENCES

- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27-40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Chambers, R., & Conway, G. R. (1992). *Sustainable rural livelihoods: Practical concepts for the 21st century* (IDS Discussion Paper No. 296). Institute of Development Studies.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Development Aid. (2023). *Child marriage and early childbearing: The most affected countries*. Development Aid. <https://www.developmentaid.org>
- Devereux, S., & Sabates-Wheeler, R. (2004). *Transformative social protection* (IDS Working Paper No. 232). Institute of Development Studies.
- Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques* (2nd ed.). New Age International Publishers.
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), 607-610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447003000308>
- Moyo, T. (2023). *Report on school dropout due to pregnancy in Zimbabwe*. Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.
- Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). (2023). *Palorinya refugee settlement: Settlement profile and operational report*. Government of Uganda.
- Palorinya Report. (2025). *Sexual and gender-based violence among adolescent girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp*. Obongi District Local Government.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Save the Children. (2022). *Protecting girls from early pregnancy in humanitarian settings*. Save the Children International.

Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS). (2022). *Uganda demographic and health survey 2022*. Uganda Bureau of Statistics.

Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST). (2014). *National guidelines for research involving humans as research participants*. Government of Uganda.

UNFPA. (2021). *Adolescent pregnancy: A review of the evidence*. United Nations Population Fund. <https://www.unfpa.org>

UNHCR. (2022). *Global trends: Forced displacement in 2022*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. <https://www.unhcr.org>

UNICEF. (2023). *Adolescent girls and early childbearing: Global snapshot*. United Nations Children's Fund. <https://www.unicef.org>

World Food Programme (WFP). (2023). *Uganda: Refugee response situation report*. World Food Programme. <https://www.wfp.org>

World Health Organization (WHO). (2023). *Adolescent pregnancy: Key facts*. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int>

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR YOUNG MOTHERS / PREGNANT GIRLS

Title: Questionnaire on the Effects of Early Childbearing on Well-being

Instructions:

Please answer the following questions honestly. Your responses will be kept confidential and used only for academic purposes.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Age:

☐ 13-15 ☐ 16-17 ☐ 18-19

Marital status:

☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Separated

Education level:

☐ No education ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary

Number of children:

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3+

Age at first pregnancy:

☐ Below 15 ☐ 15-17 ☐ 18-19

SECTION B: DETERMINANTS OF EARLY CHILDBEARING

(Adapted from WHO adolescent reproductive health tools)

Tick where applicable:

What led to your pregnancy?

☐ Poverty

☐ School dropout

☐ Sexual violence

☐ Early marriage

☐ Peer pressure

Did you have knowledge about family planning before pregnancy?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did you willingly engage in the relationship leading to pregnancy?

☐ Yes ☐ No

SECTION C: PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Did you experience any of the following during pregnancy?

- ☐ Anemia
- ☐ Complicated labor
- ☐ Malnutrition
- ☐ Lack of antenatal care

How would you rate your health after childbirth?

- ☐ Very good ☐ Good ☐ Poor ☐ Very poor.

SECTION D: PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

(Adapted from adolescent psychosocial assessment tools)

Indicate your agreement:

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel stressed most of the time					
I feel rejected by my family					
I feel isolated from my peers					
I regret becoming pregnant early					

SECTION E: SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL EFFECTS

Did you continue school after pregnancy?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, why?

☐ Stigma ☐ Lack of fees ☐ Childcare ☐ Health issues

How are you treated in the community?

☐ Well ☐ Fairly ☐ Poorly

SECTION F: ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

What is your main source of income?

☐ Aid ☐ Business ☐ Casual labor ☐ Family

Are you financially independent?

☐ Yes ☐ No

SECTION G: SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Do you receive any support?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, from whom?

☐ Family ☐ NGOs ☐ Government ☐ Friends

What support do you receive?

☐ Food ☐ Counseling ☐ Medical care ☐ Financial support

APPENDIX II: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE
(For teachers, health workers, NGO staff, leaders)

Instructions:

This interview aims to gather expert perspectives on early childbearing.

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

What is your role in the community?

How long have you worked in Palorinya Refugee Camp?

SECTION B: PREVALENCE AND CAUSES

How common is early childbearing in this camp?

What are the major causes of early childbearing?

How does poverty influence early pregnancy?

SECTION C: EFFECTS ON WELL-BEING

What health challenges do young mothers face?

How does early childbearing affect education?

What psychological challenges are common?

SECTION D: SUPPORT SYSTEMS

What services are available for young mothers?

Are these services adequate? Why or why not?

SECTION E: RECOMMENDATIONS

What should be done to reduce early childbearing?

What improvements are needed in the camp?

APPENDIX III: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

(For parents and community members)

SECTION A: COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

How does the community view early pregnancy?

What are the common causes of early childbearing?

SECTION B: IMPACTS

How does early childbearing affect girls' lives?

What are the social consequences?

SECTION C: SUPPORT AND SOLUTIONS

What support exists for young mothers?

What more can be done to support them?

APPENDIX IV: STIGMA SCALE (ADAPTED TOOL)

(Adapted from SRH stigma scale)

Rate the following:

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teen mothers are treated differently					
Teen pregnancy brings shame to families					
Girls who get pregnant early are disrespected					
Community members isolate young mothers					



UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

April 21, 2026

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR RESEARCH

This is to introduce to you EMMANUEL LEJU Registration number S23B15/015, a student of Uganda Christian University, pursuing Bachelor's degree in Social Work and Administration. He is expected to carry out research in the final year under the guidance of a university supervisor in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the above-mentioned award.

Topic: "Investigating the effects of early childbearing on the wellbeing of the young girls in Palorinya Refugee Camp Bongi District."

The purpose of this communication is to request your office to allow him collect data from your organization. Any assistance rendered to him will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,


Doreen Kukugiza
Coordinator, Research & Fieldwork Programmes
Tel: 0773395349
Email: dkukugiza@ucu.ac.ug