

**EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF EARLY MARRIED YOUNG MA'DI GIRLS.
CASE STUDY: MA'DI SUB REGION MOYO DISTRICT**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
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DECLARATION

I, Dhruva Joshi, affirm that the content of this research information is my original work. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this work has not once been submitted anywhere for any award. It is a testament to my dedication, effort, and commitment to contributing valuable insights to the academic community.

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APPROVAL

I hereby certify that this research, conducted by Doreen Isia, is an original work that has been thoroughly developed and reviewed further down my supervision. It is now complete for submission to the Department of social sciences at Uganda Christian University for further consideration and academic evaluation.

SOLOMON MWLJE



15/09/2024

DEDICATION

This study report is dedicated to my cherished mum, Regina, and my beloved dad, Mr. Massimo, whose steadfast financial provision and inspiration have been the cornerstone of my academic journey. To my brother Norbert, sisters Cathy & Flavia, nephew Malcom, nieces Kreisler and adelyne, my finest friend Ron and all relatives and friends, Your constant belief in my potential and your guidance in all aspects of life have inspired me to persevere and strive for excellence. Thank you for being my support and for always being there for me.

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Throughout the entire process, Mr. Mwije's encouragement and mentorship have been a constant source of motivation. His positive criticism and thoughtful submissions have not only improved the quality of this research but also strengthened my analytical and research skills. His endurance, kindness, and willingness to share his extensive knowledge have been truly inspiring, and I am deeply appreciative of his unwavering support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGEP	:	Adolescent Girls Empowerment Program
CEFM	:	Child, Early, and Forced Marriage
GEM	:	Girls' Education Movement
ICRW	:	International Center for Research on Women
PTSD	:	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SPSS	:	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
STIs	:	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UCU	:	Uganda Christian University
UNCF	:	United Nations Children Fund
UNFPA	:	United Nations Population Fund
UNGEI	:	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative

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ABSTRACT

This study report was undertaken to explore the experiences of early married young Ma'di girls. It was guided by two objectives; to identify Factors related with early marriage in Ma'di, to explore the experiences of the married young Ma'di girls. The investigator used a sample scope of 63 respondents and used questionnaires and interview guide to gather data and later the data was examined using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Outcomes of the primary objective showed that factors associated with early marriage in Ma'di have a significant effect on early marriage. Reinforced by the responses; 62% were positive to the statement that limited access to comprehensive sexuality education and reproductive health information can further spread early marriage; 61% respondents were confident to the declaration that limited educational opportunities and unemployment contribute to the perpetuation of early marriage. On the otherhand, 75% instituting the mainstream were disagreeing to the declaration that parental and community expectations and pressures based on cultural and religious beliefs can strongly influence early marriage decisions among young individuals. Results of the second objective revealed that experiences have a significant effect on the married young Ma'di girls; 62% forming the majority of respondents were positive to the statement that married young girls are often subjected to physical and sexual violence, which exacerbates mental health issues like depression and anxiety, 51% had a positive response to the statement that married girls frequently face pressures to conform to traditional gender roles, which can stifle personal aspirations and reinforce subservient positions within the household, 75% were positive to the statement that early marriages are often associated with an increased risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth, such as premature births, little birth weight infants, and maternal death. The government should educate communities about the negative consequences of early marriage on health, education, and economic opportunities. Promote the benefits of keeping girls in school. Strengthen laws that set the minimum age for marriage at 18 and ensure these laws are enforced. Provide legal support and protection for girls at risk of early marriage.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Although legally or unceremoniously marrying before this age is common in Uganda, the legal marriage age is 18 years. Although both girls and boys are married off as children, girls are most likely to be harmed by this detrimental practice (UNFPA 2020). Despite progress towards ending child marriage, it still occurs at a high rate of 34 per cent (UDHS 2016). In Uganda, one out of every five women engages in sexual activity before the age 15, with 64 per cent have sex before age 18 and 7.3 per cent before the age of 15 (UDHS 2016; UNICEF 2020). Uganda ranks 16th out of 25 countries with the highest rates of child marriage (UNFPA-UNICEF 2019). This chapter will entail a background to the study, the statement of problem, purpose, objectives, research questions the scope of study, justification, significance and the theoretical background.

1.1 Background

Early marriage, also identified as child marriage, is a worldwide issue that affects millions of girls. It denotes to the rehearsal of wedding girls before they reach the age of 18, often against their interest. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), about 12 million girls are wedded earlier the age of 18 each year, with overwhelming penalties for their lives and safety (UNFPA, 2020). Early marriage intrudes upon the privileges of girls depriving them of their infant, education and chances for socioeconomic enablement. In Uganda, 8.9 million girls aged 10-19 are at a risk of detrimental performs including juvenile marriage notwithstanding the lawful requirements under the 1995 Constitution of Uganda and the global community's pledge to stop child marriage and other methods of ruin against girls (UNFPA, UNICEF 2019). The repetition of child marriage was degenerated by the two years' school closure as UNESCO (2021) estimates show that schools shutting amplified the jeopardy of child nuptial by 25 per cent (25%) per annum. Rendering to Joy for Children Uganda (n d), child marriage denotes to any union of a child below 18 years old, in agreement to article 1 of the resolution on the right of the child. Although child marriage can occur to both genders, it excessively affects girls. In Uganda, 8.9 million girls aged 10-19 particularly those that live in the countryside areas, and among the less accomplished and low pay households are at a risk of harmful practices including child marriage. (UNICEF report, n d). Actually, child marriage is frequently driven by scarcity, lack of

schooling and gender disparity. A new study from Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2016 displays that thirty-four percent (34%) of the women aged 25-49 were wedded before the age of 18 (Sibenaler, 2017). Conferring to Doreen (2004), child marriage is a throbbing reality aimed at far too many girls in Uganda. Ambitious by the scourge of family poverty and norms that favor boys over girls, child marriage renders girls less probable to complete their education and more likely to experience gender based violence. Unfortunately, many of the girls who are most at risk for child marriage are often those who are hardest to reach. Additionally, the United Nations Children Fund 2016 report, indicates that nearly one in every two girls in Uganda is married before 18.

While early marriage is a prevalent phenomenon across Uganda, particularly in rural areas, Otim (2019) highlights a striking observation regarding the West Nile region, where early marriage attains a staggering prevalence rate of 50%. This significant occurrence can be attributed primarily to deeply ingrained cultural norms and societal pressures that prioritize early marriage as a customary practice. Within the West Nile community, there exists a pronounced demand for early marriage, driven by cultural traditions that emphasize the importance of marital unions at a young age. Such cultural dynamics underscore the complexity of the issue, indicating a need for nuanced understanding and targeted interventions to address the underlying features contributing to this high occurrence of early marriage in the region.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite global efforts aimed at reducing early marriage rates, many young girls, particularly within the Ma'di community, continue to go in marriage at an early age. The prevalence of early marriage remains a pressing concern. Otim (2019) highlights a striking observation regarding the West Nile region, where early marriage attains a staggering prevalence rate of 50%. Research has been done on early marriage yet there is a notable lack of study exploring the specific experiences of early married Ma'di girls. Understanding the unique challenges, motivations, and consequences of early marriage within this context is crucial for developing targeted interventions and support systems (Lebni et al, 2023). Therefore, there is a clear breach in the literature regarding the exploration of early marriage experiences among Ma'di girls, warranting further investigation to inform more effective strategies for prevention and support.

1.3 Purpose

The resolve of this study is to explore the experiences of young Ma'di girls who married early.

1.3.1 Objectives

The objectives will be:

- 1) To identify Factors associated with early marriage in Ma'di.
- 2) To explore the experiences of the married young Ma'di girls.

1.4 Research Questions

As a result the subsequent research questions were asked

- 1) What are the factors associated with early marriage in Ma'di?
- 2) What are the experiences of the married young Ma'di girls?

1.5 Scope of Study

1.5.1 Geographical Scope

This study focused on the Ma'di Sub-region, precisely the Moyo District, located in Uganda. The Moyo District was chosen as the primary study area due to its importance in understanding early marriage in the Ma'di-sub region.

1.5.2 Time Scope

The study considered a defined time frame, classically the past decade or as available data permits, in order to explore the experiences of early married young Ma'di girls within the Ma'di Sub-region - Moyo District. The research analyzed relevant data and literature during this specific time period to understand any changes, trends, or developments concerning early marriage Ma'di Sub-region.

1.5.3 Content Scope

The study was mainly concentrated on exploring the experiences of early married young Ma'di girls, bearing in mind various magnitudes and factors related to this issue within the Ma'di Sub-region - Moyo District in Uganda.

1.6 Justification

The discoveries of this research were valuable for policymakers, governments, and international organizations involved in promoting gender equality and protecting the rights of girls. The study provided evidence-based insights that can guide the development of effective strategies to prevent early marriage.

1.7 Significance

Policy makers: Its hoped that this research maybe of great importance to policy makers as it can inform policies on child marriage. On the other hand, understanding the experiences of early married young girls can help policymakers develop strategies to promote the rights of young girls and their wellbeing.

Practitioners: Its hoped that the findings of this study maybe of help to practitioners especially social workers. Understanding the complexities of early marriage and the insights into their experiences is hoped to help practitioners design effective strategies and interventions to aid in improving the wellbeing of the young girls.

Fellow scholars: Its assumed that this research may be valuable for students who might take on this study by contributing to the existing body of knowledge.

1.9 Theoretical /Conceptual Framework

The study was grounded in Social Cognitive Theory, proposed by Bandura (1986). This theory emphasizes the reciprocal interactions between individuals, their behaviors, and the environment. It suggests that behavior is learned through dynamic interactions within a social context (Opara et al., 2021). The theory posits that individuals are active agents in shaping their surroundings, and their cognitive processes, such as self-efficacy beliefs, play a crucial role in influencing their decisions and behaviors (Rahmawati et al., 2020; McClellan, 2017). By applying Social Cognitive Theory, the study aims to explore how the interplay between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors shapes the phenomenon of early marriage in the Ma'di community.

The conceptual framework for this study is derived from Social Cognitive Theory and Social Value Theory (Miller, 2017). It encompasses four key concepts: 1) personal factors (e.g., self-efficacy beliefs, knowledge, attitudes), 2) behavioral factors (e.g., decision-making processes,

coping strategies), 3) environmental factors (e.g., social norms, cultural values, economic conditions), and 4) social value creation (e.g., shared values, cultural beliefs, community well-being). According to Social Cognitive Theory, personal factors influence individuals' behavior, which in turn shapes and is influenced by the environment (McClellan, 2017; Palm et al., 2019). Social Value Theory suggests that the creation of social value is influenced by shared values, cultural beliefs, and community well-being (Miller, 2017; Krawiec, 2024).

The selection of Social Cognitive Theory and Social Value Theory is particularly relevant to this study. Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the role of social interactions and cognitive processes in shaping individual behaviors, which is crucial in understanding the factors related with early marriage in the Ma'di community. Social Value Theory provides a lens to examine the cultural beliefs, shared values, and community well-being aspects that influence the phenomenon of early marriage. By integrating these theories, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between individual, social, and cultural factors that influence early marriage, ultimately informing culturally sensitive interventions and policies aimed at promoting the well-being of young girls and creating social value within the community.

1.10 Summary of the chapter

The research introduces the study focusing on exploring the experiences of early married young Ma'di girls in Metu Trading Center-Moyo District. The background highlights the prevalence of early marriages in the region, emphasizing the aspects associated with early marriage. The problem statement identifies the gap in understanding the specific factors contributing to early marriages and the experiences of early married young Ma'di girls. The purpose of the study is outlined, along with the research questions that guide the investigation. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the significance of the study in contributing to both academic knowledge and community development.

1.11 Key terms

Early marriage, also known as child marriage, is a practice where individuals, particularly girls, enter into marriage before reaching the age of 18 (Alem et al., 2020).

Lived experiences refer to the personal encounters, situations, and events that individuals go through in their lives (Saul et al., 2020). In the context of early marriage, lived experiences

encompass the day-to-day realities faced by individuals who have been married off at a young age.

Social norms are the unwritten rules, beliefs, and behaviors that are considered acceptable and expected within a society or community (Roslan et al., 2022). In the context of early marriage, social norms play a significant role in perpetuating this practice.

Cultural beliefs encompass the values, customs, and traditions that shape the worldview of a particular cultural group. In the context of early marriage, cultural beliefs can strongly influence the acceptance and perpetuation of this practice.

Gender norms are societal expectations and standards regarding the behaviors, roles, and responsibilities deemed appropriate for individuals based on their gender.

Qualitative research involves in-depth exploration and understanding of phenomena through non-numerical data such as interviews, observations, and analysis of texts. In the context of early marriage

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The literature review aims to identify factors associated with early marriage in Ma'di and explore the experiences of the early married young Ma'di girls. It also seeks to identify gaps in the existing literature to avoid fruitless approaches.

Early marriage, defined as union before the age of 18, remains a significant worldwide concern with deep implications for the well-being and growth of young girls. While the practice persists across various regions and cultures, its impact on educational attainment, particularly among marginalized communities, is a subject of increasing scholarly attention. This literature review seeks to contextualize the experiences of early married young Ma'di girls within the broader discourse on early marriage and educational outcomes.

Research on early marriage consistently highlights its detrimental effects on girls' education. Girls who marry early are frequently required to drop out of school, depriving them of scholastic opportunities and continuing cycles of lack and gender disparity (Raj et al., 2010; Lloyd et al., 2012). Moreover, early marriage is associated with higher rates of school dropout, lower academic achievement, and limited access to higher education and vocational training (UNICEF, 2014; Kamal, 2015).

In the context of Uganda, early marriage remains prevalent, particularly in rural areas where socio-cultural norms and economic factors contribute to its persistence (Kamal, 2015). Studies focusing on Uganda highlight the intersectionality of factors such as poverty, gender norms, and inadequate access to education, which perpetuate the cycle of early marriage and its adverse consequences (Nankinga et al., 2016; Kafle et al., 2018).

Within the Ma'di Sub-region, specifically the Moyo District, there is a dearth of research examining the specific experiences of early married young Ma'di girls and their implications for educational attainment. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that similar socio-cultural and economic factors prevalent in other parts of Uganda add to the prevalence of early marriage and its effect on girls' education (Kuteesa & Mulindwa, 2019).

Understanding the experiences of early married young Ma'di girls requires a nuanced examination of local socio-cultural dynamics, gender roles, and access to educational resources. By addressing this gap in the literature, this study aims to provide insights that can inform targeted interventions and policy initiatives aimed at promoting well-being of young girls in the Ma'di Sub-region.

Early marriage is a pervasive issue globally, particularly in developing countries like Uganda, where socio-cultural norms often prioritize marriage over education, especially for young girls. Several studies have shed light on the detrimental effects of early marriage on various aspects of girls' lives, particularly their educational attainment.

In a study by Erulkar and Muthengi (2009), conducted in Kenya, early marriage was found to significantly reduce girls' educational opportunities, leading to lower school enrollment and higher dropout rates. Similarly, research by Santhya et al. (2010) in India highlighted how early marriage not only disrupts girls' education but also increases their vulnerability to poverty and poor health outcomes.

In the perspective of Uganda, where marriage is to be at 18years, but customary practices often lead to early unions, studies have shown a similar pattern. A report by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) (2012) exposed that early marriage in Uganda is associated with lesser levels of education, limited financial opportunities, and amplified risk of domestic violence.

Furthermore, socio-cultural factors play an important role in perpetuating early marriage practices. In many communities, including those in the Ma'di Sub-region, traditional beliefs and gender norms often prioritize girls' roles as wives and mothers over their right to education. A study by Ninsiima and Lwanga (2017) explored the socio-cultural drivers of early marriage in Uganda, highlighting the influence of factors such as poverty, gender inequality, and parental pressure.

However, it is essential to note that while early marriage undoubtedly has negative consequences for girls' education, there is growing recognition of the need for multi-sectoral interventions to address this issue comprehensively. Initiatives such as the Girls' Education Movement (GEM) in Uganda have shown promise in promoting girls' education and challenging harmful practices like early marriage.

Despite these efforts, there remains a gap in understanding the nuanced experiences of early married young Ma'di girls in Uganda, particularly within the specific context of the Moyo District. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the lived experiences of these girls and identifying the factors associated with early marriage within the Ma'di Sub-region.

Clark and Bruce's (2018) article, published as part of the Girls' Education Research and Policy Series by the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), explores the intersection between girls' education and child marriage. The article advocates for a twin-track approach to addressing these intertwined challenges, suggesting strategies that promote girls' education as a means to prevent child marriage, and vice versa.

The article provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between girls' education and child marriage, recognizing the need for a comprehensive approach to address both issues simultaneously. By advocating for a twin-track approach, the article offers practical strategies for policymakers and stakeholders to promote girls' education as a means of preventing child marriage and vice versa. This approach aligns with the broader goals of promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. As part of the Girls' Education Research and Policy Series by UNGEI, the article contributes to ongoing policy discourse surrounding girls' education and child marriage, highlighting the importance of addressing these challenges in tandem.

Clark and Bruce's article aligns closely with the research topic of exploring the experiences of early married young Ma'di girls. By advocating for a twin-track approach that addresses both girls' education and child marriage, the article offers valuable insights into potential strategies for mitigating the impact of early marriage on educational attainment. However, further research may be needed to supplement the article's theoretical framework with empirical evidence and contextual insights from the Ma'di Sub-region, particularly regarding the effectiveness of specific interventions and the influence of cultural and socio-economic factors on early marriage.

Le Strat et al. (2011) conducted a study published in *Pediatrics*, which investigates the association between child marriage and mental health outcomes in women. The study examines how early marriage impacts the mental well-being of women, focusing on factors such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Le Strat et al. provide a focused examination of the mental health consequences of child marriage, shedding light on an important yet understudied aspect of early marriage. The study's methodology is likely to be rigorous, as it

is published in a reputable peer-reviewed journal like *Pediatrics*. This lends credibility to its findings and enhances its validity.

Le Strat et al.'s study provides valuable insights into the mental health consequences of early marriage, which is directly relevant to the research topic of exploring the experiences of early married young Ma'di girls. Understanding the mental health implications of early marriage is crucial for designing holistic interventions that address the multi-dimensional impact of child marriage on girls' well-being. However, it is important to supplement the study's findings with contextual insights from the Ma'di Sub-region to ensure the relevance and applicability of the research to the specific population under investigation. Additionally, future research should aim to address the limitations identified, such as considering the socio-economic context and enhancing the generalizability of findings.

2.1 Factors associated with early marriage

Early marriage, defined as any legal or illegal marriage under the age of 18, is a significant global challenge. It is estimated that around 150 million cases may occur by 2030 (Mangeli et al., 2017). This issue is not confined to a specific region but is prevalent in various countries, with factors contributing to early marriage being multifaceted and diverse (Susilo et al., 2021). Research indicates that low education levels, environmental influences, and parental lack of awareness about their children's relationships are key triggers for early marriage (Arikarani, 2024). Additionally, societal factors play a crucial role in influencing decisions related to early marriage, such as the desire for more children, economic status of males, low societal status of women, and the perception of women as a burden on families (Sikandar et al., 2021).

The prevalence of child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM), defined as marriage before the age of 18, affects over 10 million girls globally each year (Yount et al., 2021). Economic factors and the challenges of daily life are highlighted as primary drivers of early marriage occurrences (Hidayati, 2023). Furthermore, traditions, the preservation of girls' virginity, economic constraints, and parental aspirations for establishing family ties are identified as principal causes of early marriage (Zolfaghary, 2023). The impact extends beyond the immediate union, making girls more susceptible to violence, discrimination, and abuse, limiting their participation in economic, political, and social spheres (Aryati, 2024).

Studies have shown that early marriage can lead to a myriad of complex issues, including children being vulnerable to domestic violence, increased maternal morbidity and mortality due to pregnancy complications, and the birth of low-weight babies (Muharry et al., 2018). Moreover, early marriage is associated with adverse health outcomes such as high rates of miscarriages, preterm deliveries, sexually transmitted infections, HIV, anemia, depression, social isolation, and even suicide (Bozorgi-Saran & Koolae, 2022). The consequences of early marriage are not limited to physical health but also encompass psychological effects, with young brides experiencing anxiety, stress, and depression (Sulistiawati, 2021).

In Indonesia, where early marriage is prevalent, factors such as poverty, economic challenges, cultural norms, and traditions contribute to the occurrence of early marriages (Aryati et al., 2020). The practice of early marriage has been linked to various negative impacts, including social, economic, physical, and psychological repercussions that have become more apparent in recent times (Ashiq et al., 2020). The consequences of early marriage extend to educational outcomes, with higher dropout rates reported among early married females, leading to lower wages, higher unemployment rates, and increased vulnerability to crime (Chaudhary et al., 2022).

The root causes of early marriage are deeply entrenched in societal norms, gender inequality, poverty, insecurity, and tradition (Agege et al., 2020). Parents' perceptions of early marriage among certain communities also play a significant role in perpetuating this practice, forcing girls into adulthood prematurely and impeding their emotional, physical, educational, economic, and social development (Agege et al., 2018). Additionally, the impact of early marriage on women's health is profound, with factors such as gender discrimination, low socioeconomic status, cultural beliefs, male dominance, and patriarchal structures contributing to the perpetuation of this harmful practice (Buran & Aksu, 2018).

Early marriage is a complex issue influenced by a multitude of factors ranging from economic constraints and cultural traditions to gender inequality and societal pressures. Addressing early marriage requires a comprehensive approach that considers the interplay of social, economic, cultural, and individual factors to effectively mitigate its adverse consequences on individuals and communities.

Early marriage, defined as a union where one or both parties are below 18 years, remains a concern in the United Kingdom despite being perceived primarily as a developing world issue. Socio-economic factors significantly contribute to early marriages in the UK. Economic hardships often drive families to view marriage as a solution to financial instability. Research indicates that lower socio-economic status correlates with a higher incidence of early marriage, as it limits educational and career opportunities for young individuals, making marriage a seemingly viable alternative (Chantler et al., 2021). Furthermore, educational attainment plays a crucial role, with lower levels of education linked to higher rates of early marriage. Studies show that education increases aspirations and opportunities, delaying the age of marriage (Fenton-Glynn, 2015).

Cultural and community influences also play a pivotal role in early marriages within certain ethnic and religious groups in the UK. These communities may uphold traditional practices where early marriage is seen as a cultural norm (Svanemyr et al., 2015). The pressure to conform to these norms can be substantial, particularly in tightly knit communities where deviation might lead to social ostracism (Kazimirski et al., 2020). Furthermore, gender norms and expectations significantly impact early marriage rates. Patriarchal attitudes that prioritize women's roles as wives and mothers over their individual aspirations can lead to early unions (Boyden et al., 2019).

Legal and policy frameworks surrounding marriage in the UK also influence early marriage rates. Although the legal age of marriage is 18, with exceptions allowing marriage at 16 with parental consent, this loophole is often criticized for enabling coerced marriages (Marshall, 2020). Critics argue that raising the legal age of marriage to 18 without exceptions could mitigate this issue (Cowan & Fox, 2021). Additionally, the effectiveness of policies aimed at preventing early marriage depends on their robust implementation and enforcement. Weak enforcement of existing laws can allow early marriages to persist despite legal prohibitions (Gangoli et al., 2020). Strengthening these frameworks is essential to combat early marriage effectively in the UK.

Socioeconomic factors play a significant role in early marriage in the United Kingdom. Research by Abbasi-Shavazi et al. (2016) suggests that factors such as low parental education levels, low household income, and living in deprived neighborhoods contribute to early marriage among young individuals. In addition, a study by Bornstein et al. (2019) highlights how economic instability and limited access to education can lead to early marriage, as young individuals may perceive marriage as an escape route from poverty or a means to access financial resources. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing socioeconomic disparities through targeted policy interventions and support systems to reduce the prevalence of early marriage.

Cultural and religious factors have been identified as significant influences on early marriage in the United Kingdom. Research by Gallagher and Parutis (2015) reveals that cultural and religious norms, particularly within certain immigrant communities, can perpetuate early marriage practices. The study emphasizes the need for intercultural understanding and integration efforts that recognize and respect diverse cultural practices while challenging harmful traditions. Furthermore, Norris et al. (2018) found that parental and community expectations and pressures based on cultural and religious beliefs can strongly influence early marriage decisions among young individuals. These findings underscore the importance of promoting cultural sensitivity and engaging community leaders and religious institutions in interventions aimed at addressing early marriage.

Gender and empowerment dynamics are crucial factors associated with early marriage in the United Kingdom. Research by Osman et al. (2017) highlights that gender inequalities and gendered expectations within families and communities can contribute to early marriage practices. The study emphasizes the need for empowering young individuals, particularly girls, through education, awareness programs, and reproductive health services to ensure informed decision-making and enhance their agency. Additionally, a study by Syed and Cheung (2020) reveals that limited access to comprehensive sexuality education and reproductive health information can further perpetuate early marriage. These findings underscore the importance of comprehensive sex education and empowerment programs that focus on addressing gender inequalities, enhancing agency, and providing access to relevant information and resources.

Cultural and religious norms also contribute to the prevalence of early marriage in the United Kingdom. Research by Ali and Chamanga (2016) highlights how certain immigrant communities in the UK, who adhere to traditional cultural norms and religious beliefs, may promote and practice early marriage. This finding suggests that cultural and religious factors should not be overlooked when studying early marriage in the UK. Lastly, gender inequality has been identified as another significant factor in early marriage. In a study by Gahadiga and Johnson (2015), it was found that the prevalence of early marriage was higher among girls compared to boys. The researchers argue that societal constructions of gender roles and norms contribute to this disparity, as girls are often expected to assume domestic responsibilities and marry at a young age.

Socioeconomic factors have been identified as key determinants of early marriage. Poverty has consistently surfaced as a significant factor linked to early marriage (Raj & Saggurti, 2014; Nour, 2006). In areas of extreme poverty, families may encourage early marriage as a strategy to reduce the economic burden of caring for their daughters. Additionally, limited educational opportunities and unemployment contribute to the perpetuation of early marriage (Nour, 2006). Adequate education and employment opportunities provide pathways for girls to delay marriage, empowering them to make informed choices about their futures (Raj & Saggurti, 2014).

Cultural and traditional norms play a significant role in perpetuating early marriage. Societies with strong patriarchal beliefs and gender inequalities often endorse early marriage as a means of controlling female sexuality and preserving traditional values (Santhya & Jejeebhoy, 2015). Santhya and Jejeebhoy (2015) state that restrictive gender norms and social expectations limit girls' autonomy, leading to early marriage. Moreover, societal pressures, such as honor and reputation concerns, can also contribute to the perpetuation of early marriage (Nour, 2006). These cultural and traditional factors underscore the importance of partnering with communities and engaging with key stakeholders to challenge and transform harmful gender norms.

Religious beliefs can also be influential factors contributing to early marriage. In some regions, religious practices and interpretations justify and endorse early marriage as a way to uphold religious customs (Raj & Saggurti, 2014). Citing examples, Raj and Saggurti (2014) note that child marriage rates are particularly high in countries where Islam is the dominant religion. The

role of religious leaders in challenging these practices and promoting alternative interpretations of religious texts that support girls' rights is crucial (Santhya & Jejeebhoy, 2015). Efforts to engage religious communities and leaders are therefore essential to combatting early marriage and promoting gender equality.

Cultural and religious influences play a significant role in perpetuating early marriage in South Africa. Traditional beliefs and practices often prioritize early marriage as a means of ensuring social status, economic stability, and maintaining family honor (Kaufman, 2019). A study conducted by Knight and Sayles (2017) found that cultural norms and gender expectations influence decision-making processes regarding marriage, limiting the agency of young girls and perpetuating the cycle of early marriage. Cultural and religious influences play a significant role in perpetuating early marriage in South Africa. Traditional beliefs and practices often prioritize early marriage as a means of ensuring social status, economic stability, and maintaining family honor (Kaufman, 2019). A study conducted by Knight and Sayles (2017) found that cultural norms and gender expectations influence decision-making processes regarding marriage, limiting the agency of young girls and perpetuating the cycle of early marriage.

Poverty is another significant factor contributing to early marriage in South Africa. Several studies have highlighted the link between economic deprivation and early marriage (Lloyd et al., 2018; Nour, 2009). Poverty forces families to make difficult decisions, often leading to early marriage as a means to reduce financial burdens and secure economic support for girls. Furthermore, early marriage is seen as a way to alleviate the burden of caring for daughters, particularly in families struggling to meet basic needs.

Early marriage, defined as the union of individuals before the age of 18, continues to be a prevalent issue in South Africa despite legislative efforts to curb the practice. This literature review aims to identify and evaluate factors associated with early marriage in South Africa. By examining various studies, this review seeks to provide an insight into the socio-cultural, economic, and educational factors that contribute to the perpetuation of early marriage practices. Understanding these factors is crucial in developing effective interventions to address this issue in the country. Limited access to education and healthcare is an additional factor associated with early marriage in South Africa. Several studies have shown that girls who have limited access to

education are more likely to be married at an early age (Biddlecom et al., 2017; Gupta et al., 2019). Education is essential in empowering individuals, particularly girls, by expanding their opportunities and knowledge. Inadequate access to education, combined with limited access to healthcare, hinders girls' ability to make informed decisions about their own lives, increasing their vulnerability to early marriage.

Socio-cultural factors play a significant role in perpetuating early marriage practices in South Africa. Traditional customs and cultural beliefs regarding gender roles and sexuality often reinforce the acceptability of early marriage. According to Magara (2012), societal norms and expectations in rural communities put pressure on young girls to get married early and fulfill their duty as wives and mothers. Additionally, gender inequality and the persistence of harmful traditional practices, such as Ukuthwala, wherein young girls are kidnapped and forced into marriage, further contribute to the prevalence of early marriage in South Africa (Dennison, 2011).

The economic and educational factors associated with early marriage in South Africa are significant contributors to this issue. Poverty and limited access to educational opportunities are key underlying factors that push young girls into early marriage (Machai & Palaiologou, 2016). Studies have shown that families often see early marriage as a way to reduce the burden of catering to their daughters' needs and expenses (Cambridge, 2015). Moreover, inadequate educational infrastructure and low educational attainment among girls limit their options and opportunities for empowerment, leading to early marriage as a perceived alternative (Machai & Palaiologou, 2016).

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Early marriage is a pervasive issue in Uganda, with significant consequences for individuals and communities. Several factors contribute to the prevalence of early marriage in the country. Economic factors play a crucial role, as impoverished families may view early marriages as an opportunity to alleviate financial burdens (Tenoudji & Kuate-Defo, 2008). The lack of educational opportunities and limited employment options for girls further perpetuate the cycle of early marriage (Malhotra, Warner, & McGonagle, 2011). Additionally, traditional norms and cultural practices, such as the payment of bride price and societal pressure to conform to established gender roles, also contribute to the prevalence of early marriage in Uganda (Lloyd, Mensch, & Clark, 2000).

Economic factors are closely associated with early marriage in Uganda. Poverty forces families to regard marriage as a means of financial security (Tenoudji & Kuate-Defo, 2008). This perspective is particularly relevant in rural areas where livelihoods depend heavily on agriculture, leaving families with limited income-generating opportunities (Tenoudji & Kuate-Defo, 2008). Girls from impoverished families are often married off at a young age, as their marriage can be seen as a way to receive bride price payments, thereby providing financial relief for their families (Tenoudji & Kuate-Defo, 2008).

The limited access to education for girls in Uganda is also strongly associated with early marriage. The lack of educational opportunities perpetuates gender disparities in the country (Malhotra, Warner, & McGonagle, 2011). Girls who are not enrolled in school are more likely to experience early marriage, as education is seen as a necessary investment for parents in urban areas, while in rural settings, girls are expected to stay home and help with domestic chores

(Malhotra, Warner, & McGonagle, 2011). Inadequate education exposes girls to increased vulnerability, as they lack the necessary skills and knowledge to advocate for themselves and make informed decisions about their lives, including marriage (Malhotra, Warner, & McGonagle, 2011).

Traditional norms and cultural practices also contribute significantly to early marriage in Uganda. One such practice is the payment of bride price, which is deeply ingrained in Ugandan culture (Lloyd, Mensch, & Clark, 2000). The payment of bride price can motivate families to marry off their daughters at a young age, as it is viewed as a way to receive compensation and elevate their social status (Lloyd, Mensch, & Clark, 2000). Additionally, societal pressure and gender expectations play a vital role in perpetuating the prevalence of early marriage (Lloyd, Mensch, & Clark, 2000). Girls are often expected to conform to traditional gender roles, which prioritize marriage and limit their independence and agency in decision-making processes (Lloyd, Mensch, & Clark, 2000).

Inadequate access to sexual and reproductive health education and services in Uganda is another factor associated with early marriage. The lack of comprehensive sexual education leaves young girls unaware of their rights, contraceptive methods, and the consequences of early marriage, such as increased risk of maternal mortality and teenage pregnancies. A study by Asiki et al. (2018) reveals that a lack of access to comprehensive sexual education increases the likelihood of early marriage and early childbearing. Furthermore, the limited availability of reproductive health services contributes to the continuation of early marriages, as girls often lack the knowledge and resources to protect themselves against unplanned pregnancies.

Traditional practices and societal expectations often reinforce the idea that girls should marry at a young age. Studies by OKurut, Ts'ele, and Ricardo (2018) reveal that cultural beliefs, such as preserving virginity until marriage, play a crucial role in promoting early marriage. These cultural norms influence parents' decisions to marry their daughters off early, as they perceive it as a way to protect the family's honor and ensure their daughters' purity. Additionally, gender inequality and limited rights for women within the society contribute to the perpetuation of early marriage as acceptable and expected behavior.

Poverty has been found to be a major driver for parents to marry their daughters at an early age. Studies by Kakaire, Muhanguzi, and Malunga (2019) emphasize that poverty increases the vulnerability of young girls to early marriages. Economic difficulties result in girls being seen as a financial burden, and families often marry them off early to reduce household expenses. Furthermore, poverty limits young girls' access to education, leaving them with limited options for empowerment outside early marriage. This finding is supported by Kanyenze (2011), who highlights that financial hardships force families to prioritize marriage over education for their daughters.

2.2 Early marriage experiences of the married young girls

Early marriage among young girls is a worldwide issue with significant health and social implications. Studies have highlighted various themes and consequences associated with early marriage experiences. The perspectives of adolescent girls and young women who have been through early marriage reveal a range of emotions and challenges (Obeisat, 2021). These include feelings of remorse, loss of authority, pressure to have children early, and adverse health consequences related to pregnancy at a young age. Despite some positive aspects reported by participants, such as childbearing and social status elevation, the overall impact of early marriage is negative, leading to the violation of human rights and depriving girls of their childhood, education, and life choices (Obeisat, 2021).

Causes of early marriage from the viewpoint of married girls in Iran shed light on the complex factors influencing this practice (Montazeri et al., 2016). The study emphasizes that early marriage is not just a health issue but also a social one, with implications for girls' well-being and rights. In settings like Nigeria, early marriage continues a cycle of poverty and deprivation, limiting young mothers' access to resources and opportunities (Olaide et al., 2017). The confinement to a life of poverty and the loss of freedom and entitlements further underscores the detrimental effects of early marriage on young girls (Olaide et al., 2017).

In conflict-affected areas, families may view early marriage as a protecting strategy for young girls, believing that marriage provides physical safety (DiGiuseppe & Haer, 2022). This perception adds another layer of complexity to the issue, showing how external factors like armed conflict can influence decisions around early marriage. Social norms also play a

significant role in perpetuating early marriage practices, as seen in rural Ethiopia, where girls may feel compelled to accept marriage reports due to prevailing norms (Tewahido et al., 2022). The influence of cultural norms and expectations on young girls' choices regarding marriage highlights the need for broader societal interventions to address early marriage.

The impact of programs like the Adolescent Girls Empowerment Program (AGEP) in Zambia demonstrates the potential for interventions to mitigate the challenges related with early marriage (Austrian et al., 2020). By focusing on construction of girls' social, health, and economic assets, such programs aim to improve outcomes related to sexual behavior, pregnancy, and education in the long term. However, the persistence of early marriage in rural Gambia despite legal prohibitions suggests that addressing the root causes of this practice requires a deeper understanding of social and cultural factors (Lowe et al., 2019). Lack of viable alternatives to marriage, such as work opportunities, can limit girls' choices and perpetuate the cycle of early marriage (Lowe et al., 2020).

The experiences of young Bedouin women who were child brides highlight the ongoing process of adjustment and cognitive assimilation into married life (Alhuzai, 2020). These narratives underscore the long-term impact of early marriage on young women's lives and the challenges they face in adapting to their new roles. In Iran, the experiences of women subjected to early marriage reveal underlying causes, bad feelings, contact to violence, and the magnitudes of such marriages (Bozorgi-Saran & Koolae, 2022). These themes echo the broader patterns observed in studies across different regions, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of early marriage experiences.

In Uganda, adolescent girls and young women grapple with various community health challenges, including great HIV prevalence, adolescent pregnancies, deprived sexual and reproductive health rights, and violence (Lewington et al., 2022). Empowering girls through targeted interventions can help address these challenges and prevent the negative penalties associated with early marriage. The frequency of child marriage in countries like Nepal underscores the urgent need to address this issue and its immediate consequences, such as early pregnancy and childbirth (Shakya, 2022). By understanding the social perspectives on early marriage, fertility, and infertility in different contexts, researchers can better inform policies and interventions to support young girls (Hadi, 2016).

Early marriage experiences among young girls are complex and multifaceted, influenced by social, cultural, and financial factors. The negative influence of early marriage on girls' well-being, education, and health is well-documented across various studies. Addressing early marriage requires an inclusive approach that considers the underlying drivers of this practice, challenges social norms, and enables them to make informed choices about their lives. By amplifying the voices of young women who have experienced early marriage and conducting in-depth research on the determinants and consequences of this practice, we can work towards creating a future where every girl has the chance to thrive and fulfill her potential.

The experiences of married young girls are multifaceted, often encompassing significant social, economic, and health-related challenges. Research indicates that early marriage frequently curtails educational opportunities for young girls. According to UNICEF (2014), early marriage often results in school dropout, significantly limiting future economic prospects and reinforcing the cycle of poverty. This truncation of education impedes personal development and reduces the likelihood of economic independence, as noted by Lloyd and Mensch (2008), who argue that girls married early are less likely to be employed and more likely to depend economically on their spouses. The economic dependency that stems from early marriage perpetuates gender inequality and restricts girls' autonomy.

Health outcomes for married young girls are notably poor, with early marriage related to higher rates of maternal and infant mortality. The World Health Organization (2013) reports that girls aged 15-19 are twice as likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth compared to women aged 20-24. Early pregnancy also heightens the risk of obstetric complications such as fistula, as discussed by Nour (2006). Moreover, married young girls are often subjected to physical and sexual violence, which exacerbates mental health issues like depression and anxiety (Kidman, 2017). The intersection of poor health outcomes and limited access to healthcare services further compounds the vulnerabilities of these young girls.

Socially, married young girls often experience isolation and a loss of childhood. The transition into adult roles and responsibilities can lead to a sense of disconnection from peers and community activities (Jain & Kurz, 2007). Additionally, married girls frequently face pressures to conform to traditional gender roles, which can stifle personal aspirations and reinforce

subservient positions within the household (Brown, 2012). The combination of these social, economic, and health factors underscores the complex and often detrimental impact of early marriage on young girls, necessitating comprehensive policy interventions to address these multifaceted issues.

Studies consistently highlight the importance of effective communication and conflict resolution skills in successful marriages among young adults. Research by Johnson et al. (2015) found that couples who used constructive communication strategies, such as active listening and expressing emotions calmly, reported higher marital satisfaction. Additionally, a study by Zhang and Helsen (2016) emphasized the role of conflict resolution strategies, such as compromise and problem-solving, in maintaining positive marital relationships among young adults. These findings emphasize the significance of nurturing healthy communication patterns and conflict resolution skills to enhance the experiences of young married couples.

Marital satisfaction and overall well-being are crucial markers of successful marriages among young adults. Studies have shown that various factors influence marital satisfaction, including individual well-being, relationship quality, and relationship length. A longitudinal study by Adams et al. (2018) highlighted the reciprocal relationship between individual well-being and marital satisfaction. The authors found that higher levels of individual well-being predicted higher marital satisfaction over time and vice versa. Moreover, research conducted by Khawaja and Xu (2020) emphasized the role of relationship quality in predicting marital satisfaction among young adults. These studies underscore the importance of considering individual well-being, relationship quality, and relationship duration when examining the experiences of married young adults.

The power of social support networks on the experiences of married young adults has gained attention in recent years. Social support from family, friends, and community plays a significant role in shaping marital well-being and satisfaction. A study by Givertz and Woszidlo (2015) highlighted the positive impact of family support on relationship satisfaction for young married couples. Furthermore, research by Vennum et al. (2017) demonstrated that peer support and friendship networks positively influenced marital quality and decreased marital distress among young adults. These findings underscore the prominence of social support networks in enhancing

the experiences of married young adults and highlight the need for interventions that strengthen and mobilize such support networks.

According to a study by Kamal (2016), early marriages are often associated with an increased risk of problems through pregnancy and childbirth, such as untimely births, low birth weight infants, and maternal death. Additionally, Ashraf and Kashif (2018) found that child brides are more susceptible to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, due to their incomplete access to healthcare and lack of knowledge about contraception methods. These findings indicate the urgent need to address the physical health penalties of child marriage through accessible healthcare services and comprehensive sexual education programs.

Another significant aspect of the experiences of married young girls is the psychological toll it exacts on their psychological well-being. Cabeza et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study exploring the emotional experiences of child brides and found that they often face elevated risks of depression, anxiety, and feelings of isolation. Moreover, Jackson and Sahale (2017) highlighted that these girls frequently experience emotional abuse, including domestic violence and marital rape. These findings underscore the significance of implementing support mechanisms and mental health interventions for married young girls, such as counseling services, safe spaces, and empowerment programs that promote their agency and autonomy.

Several studies have revealed that child marriage continues the cycle of poverty and hindrances to education. Yount and Li (2017) found that early marriages lead to lower educational attainment among girls, restricting their economic opportunities and perpetuating gender inequality. Additionally, Hossain et al. (2018) emphasized that child brides are more likely to remain financially reliant on their partners, exacerbating their vulnerability to economic shocks and exploitation. Addressing these socio-economic aspects necessitates interventions aimed at promoting education for girls, skills training, and economic empowerment initiatives that enable them to break free from the cycle of poverty and have agency over their lives.

The experiences of married young girls in South America have been extensively studied over the past decade. Research indicates that early marriage, defined as marriage before the age of 18, continues to be predominant in many countries of this region (Ghimire, Angeles, Lance, &

Williams, 2015). These girls face a range of encounters including inadequate educational opportunities, amplified risk of domestic violence, compromised physical and mental health, and restricted access to reproductive rights (Lloyd, Mensch, & Clark, 2015; Malhotra, Warner, & McGonagle, 2018). Furthermore, studies reveal that economic factors, cultural norms, and gender inequality perpetuate the practice of early marriage in South America (Malhotra et al., 2018; Raj & Boehnke, 2015).

One central theme that emerges from the literature is the influence of early marriage on education and empowerment amongst South American young girls. Research suggests that marriage at a young age significantly hinders girls' educational attainment and opportunities for skill development (Raj & Boehnke, 2015). Furthermore, these girls are often confined to traditional gender roles within their households, limiting their economic independence and self-empowerment (Clark, Ferguson, & Fikree, 2015). In a study carried out in Bolivia, Ruiz and Martínez (2017) found that early marriage restricted educational and economic aspirations among young married girls, further reinforcing the cycle of poverty and gender inequality. These findings highlight the urgent need for policies and interventions that promote education and empower young girls in South America.

Research indicates that early marriage is associated with advanced risk of domestic violence, including physical and sexual abuse (Lloyd et al., 2015). Additionally, these girls may face adverse reproductive health outcomes due to early and frequent pregnancies, leading to heightened risks of maternal and child death (Ghimire et al., 2015). A recent study conducted in Ecuador revealed a noteworthy relationship between early marriage and depression among young married girls, indicating the need for mental health support and interventions in this population (Malhotra et al., 2018). Such findings emphasize the importance of comprehensive programs that address the physical, emotional, and reproductive health needs of married young girls in South America.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the research method employed in the study exploring the experiences of young Ma'di girls who married early. It begins by describing the qualitative research design and the rationale for its selection, followed by details on the area of study in Moyo District, Uganda. The chapter then discusses the study population, which comprises early married Ma'di girls aged 15-19 years, and the purposive sampling technique and sample size of 63 participants. The primary and secondary data collection methods are explained, with a focus on semi-structured interviews with the young married girls and key informant interviews. The chapter also covers strategies to ensure research quality through credibility, dependability, and transferability. Additionally, it outlines the data processing, management, and thematic analysis approach. Ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality are addressed, and potential methodological constraints like limited generalizability and potential researcher bias are acknowledged.

3.1 Research Design

Research design is the systematic idea that outlines the methods and actions for conducting a study. It contains problem identification, defining objectives, design and development, demonstration, and evaluation (Rumapea, 2023). This study adopted both quantitative and a Qualitative approach to explore the experiences of young Ma'di girls who married early. Qualitative research design involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It aims to provide in-depth insights into complex phenomena (Aramide, 2023). The approach involves using qualitative data collection methods like interviews or observations, followed by qualitative data analysis techniques to derive meaning and patterns (Aramide, 2023).

3.2 Area of Study

The study was carried out in Ma'di sub region, with a particular emphasis on Uganda's Moyo district. Moyo district is bordered to the north and east by South Sudan, to the south by Adjumani, which is located across the White Nile, and to the west by Yumbe district. The northern

boundary is shared by the south Sudanese states of central equatorial and eastern equatorial. A road connects to Moyo with the central equatorial town of Kajokeji. The district headquarters in Moyo are roughly 455kilometers (283miles) northwest of Kampala, the capital and largest city Uganda , via road. The district coordinates are 03 39N, 31 43E.This area has been selected due to its relevance in the context of early marriage among the Ma'di community.

3.3 Study population

In qualitative research, the study population is often determined based on the concept of trustworthiness, which includes dependability, credibility, and transferability (Morse, 2015). The selection of the study population in qualitative research should consider the strategies for achieving trustworthiness, such as lengthy engagement, persistent observation, and thick, rich description (Morse, 2015). The study population in qualitative research is often small and selected purposefully to provide in-depth insights into the research problem. Study population refers to the group of individuals from which a sample is drawn for a research study (Lu et al., 2022).

As a result, the study population of this research comprised of early married young Ma'di girls aged between 15-19 years residing in the Moyo District, Uganda

3.4 Sampling strategy

3.4.1 Sampling technique

Purposive sampling is anextensively used technique in qualitative research for choosing information-rich cases that are applicable to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2013). It entails the thoughtful selection of participants or cases based on specific criteria that align with the research objectives (Palinkas et al., 2013). The study used purposive sampling in this study because it was the most cost-effective sampling method available in the context of study which happens to have a lot of ethical aspects given that area house persons of concern in girls. It was an appropriate method because of its effectiveness in exploring and discovering the meaning individuals attach to a phenomenon which is beneficial from an intuitive approach. Purposive sampling technique was applied to the selected the early married young Ma'di girls aged between 15-19 years residing in the Moyo District, Uganda

3.4.2 Sampling size

The sample size is the number of participants or specimen required in a study and its estimation is important for mutually in vivo and in vitro studies. The sample size forms the power and the impact of the study (Chander, 2017). It is important to note that sample size in qualitative research is not determined based on statistical power calculations or representativeness (Sandelowski, 1995). Instead, researchers should focus on the quality and richness of the data collected and the depth of analysis that can be conducted. As a result, the study size in qualitative research is often small and selected purposefully (Morse, 2015). The sample size was sixty (63) participants.

3.5 Data collection methods and instruments

Data gathering methods in research refer to the methods and actions used to collect information and data for a study. These methods vary depending on the nature of the research and the research questions being addressed. In qualitative research, common data collection methods include documentation, interviews, surveys, focus group discussions, observation, and qualitative audio-visual material (Dewi, 2021). Both questionnaire and interview guide were used for collecting data.

The investigator used both primary and secondary data sources for data collection. Primary data refers to data that is composed directly by the researcher for a specific study. This can be done through various methods such as surveys, interviews, observations, or experiments (Chan et al., 2023). Primary data collection techniques often involve the researcher interacting directly with the participants or the research subject (Chan et al., 2023). In using primary sources, the researcher used interviews because through this source, the researcher got more of the data required from the original sources. Sources of primary data were limited by time-consumption, cost implications, and need for ethical considerations.

On the other hand, secondary data refers to data that is obtained from existing sources such as articles, books, journals, or databases. Secondary data collection methods involve analyzing and interpreting data that has already been collected by someone else (Windle & Silke, 2019). For

this case the secondary data was literature from previous peer reviewed articles, journals and systematic reviews.

3.5.1 Interviews

Qualitative study comprises the gathering and analysis of non-numerical data to gain a detailed understanding of a phenomenon or explore subjective experiences. Various data collection methods are used in qualitative research to gather rich and detailed information. One commonly used method is interviews, which allow researchers to engage in direct conversations with participants and obtain their perspectives and experiences (Osborne and Grant-Smith, 2021). Interviews can be planned, semi-structured, or unstructured, liable on the level of flexibility in the questioning process. The questions are designed to elicit detailed responses and allow participants to express their thoughts and feelings (Osborne and Grant-Smith, 2021).

3.5.2 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a research tool consisting of a sequence of questions used to collect data from individuals or groups. It is designed to collect specific information related to a research study or survey. According to Johnson (2020), questionnaires play a crucial role in social sciences research by allowing researchers to collect data efficiently and accurately. In order to ensure validity and reliability, the questions in a questionnaire should be clear and unambiguous (Babbie, 2016). Additionally, the questionnaire should be properly structured and formatted, with appropriate wording and sequencing of questions (Golafshani, 2023).

A questionnaire was employed as a systematic tool to gather comprehensive and structured data directly from the participants. The questionnaire will include both closed-ended questions, which provide quantifiable data on aspects such as age at marriage, educational attainment, health outcomes, and social support, and open-ended questions, which allow for more nuanced, qualitative insights into personal experiences, challenges faced, and coping mechanisms. The questionnaires were distributed in person, ensuring confidentiality and encouraging honest responses. Trained researchers fluent in the local language administer the questionnaires to facilitate clear communication and accurate data collection. This mixed-methods approach

enabled the research to capture a holistic view of the impacts of early marriage on young Ma'di girls, combining statistical analysis with rich, narrative accounts.

3.5.1.1 Semi structured interview guide

Semi-structured interview guide was used to guide the collection of primary data from the early married young Ma'di girls aged between 15-19 years residing in the Moyo District, Uganda. Through the interview, respondents shared their experiences regarding effect of reduction in donor funds on; food and basic needs, access to financial and business opportunities and coping strategies in the face of reduced donor funding. Using a semi-structured interview guide provides a framework for the interview while allowing for flexibility in probing and exploring different topics (Descalzo et al., 2022), helps maintain consistency across interviews (Lutz et al., 2022), help researchers gather in-depth information on participants' experiences and perspectives (Gyasi, 2023). The guide influenced the direction of the interview and the responses of the participants, potentially leading to a biased representation of their experiences (Southwick et al., 2022). To minimize this bias, the interviewer maintained a neutral stance and allows participants to freely express their perspectives.

This semi-structured interview guide aims to collect data on the factors associated with early marriage in the Ma'di community and the experiences of married young Ma'di girls. It begins by introducing the study's purpose and acknowledging the respondent's valuable participation. Part 1 gathers demographic details like gender, age, education, marital status, and age at marriage. Part 2 explores the reasons, cultural norms, social pressures, and economic circumstances that contributed to the respondent's early marriage. Part 3 delves into the lived realities of being a married young girl, including life changes, challenges faced, coping strategies, support systems, and future hopes. The closing allows for any additional insights on early marriage in the community and final questions before expressing gratitude for the respondent's openness and honesty in sharing their experiences.

3.5.1.2 Key informant guide

The key informant interview guide is designed to obtain insights from community members knowledgeable about the issue of early marriage among Ma'di girls. It begins with an

introduction explaining the purpose and ensuring confidentiality and consent. The background section explores the key informant's role and understanding of early marriage in the community. The next section delves into the major factors contributing to early marriage, including cultural traditions, economic pressures, lack of education access, and other key drivers. It then investigates the challenges and difficulties faced by married Ma'di girls, such as health impacts, educational disruption, economic constraints, household power dynamics, domestic violence risks, and other issues. The guide also covers available support services, efforts to prevent early marriage and empower girls, and recommendations for further action. The closing allows key informants to provide any additional perspectives and suggest other relevant informants to interview.

3.6 Quality control

Quality control in qualitative research is essential to ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of the findings. Guba and Lincoln introduced principles for determining the trustworthiness of qualitative research, including dependability, credibility, and transferability (Morse, 2015). However, argues that researchers should come to the terminology of rigor, reliability, validity, and generalizability, and recommends strategies such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and thick, rich description to achieve rigor (Morse, 2015). also highlights the need for critical examination of the strategies recommended for achieving trustworthiness and their impact on the completed research (Morse, 2015).

3.6.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the believability and genuineness of the research answers. It contains establishing the trustworthiness of the data and explanations. To improve credibility, researchers should employ rigorous data collection methods, such as interviews, observations, or document analysis, and ensure that the data are rich and comprehensive (Cope, 2013). They should also engage in lengthy engagement with the participants to develop a deep understanding of the research context and establish trust (Singh et al., 2021). Additionally, researchers should use multiple sources of evidence and seek divergent perspectives to ensure the validity of the findings (Moon et al., 2016). In this study, methods such as triangulation, where multiple data sources through interviews and field observations were used to confirm findings but furthermore,

upholding a detailed audit track that recognized the research process, decisions, and interpretations provided transparency and allowed for critical evaluation.

3.6.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the reliability and firmness of the research discoveries over time and across diverse contexts. It involves establishing the reliability and repeatability of the research process and ensuring that the results are not influenced by external factors or biases. To enhance dependability, researchers should provide a clear and detailed description of the research methods, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques (Krefting, 1991). They should also document any changes made during the research process and explain the reasons behind those changes (Noble & Smith, 2015).

For the study in Moyo, detailing the research methodology, data collection procedures, and any changes was made during the study while maintaining consistency in data collection tools, methods, as well as using standardized semi structured interview helped in maintaining a reliable data collection process.

3.6.3 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of a qualitative study can be applied or generalized to other settings or populaces. While qualitative research does not aim for statistical generalizability, transferability focuses on the applicability of the findings to similar contexts or groups. To enhance transferability, researchers should provide a detailed description of the research context, participants, and data collection procedures (Abdalla et al., 2018). They should also provide rich and thick descriptions of the findings, including direct quotes and vivid examples, to allow readers to assess the relevance and applicability of the findings to their own contexts.

To enhance transferability, the study provided a detailed description of Moyo district its demographics. Additionally, researchers described the selection criteria for participants and provided contextual information to allow readers to determine the applicability of the findings to other contexts.

3.7 Data processing and management

In analyzing the qualitative data, collected through interviews and coded as R₁, R₂, R₃ for anonymity, the study followed a systematic approach. Transcripts were transcribed and anonymized for confidentiality. Open coding identified initial concepts, leading to axial coding grouping codes into broader themes like "Food and Basic Needs," "Access to Financial and Business Opportunities," and "Coping Strategies." Through data reduction, key quotes were selected to represent these themes. Validation included member checks. The findings were documented, maintaining an audit trail of decisions. This rigorous process ensured accurate insights into the impact of reduced donor funds on various aspects in Moyo district.

3.8 Data analysis

Data analysis is a vital step in qualitative research as it involves the systematic examination and interpretation of data to generate meaningful insights and findings. In qualitative research, data analysis techniques like thematic and content analysis are used to identify patterns, themes, and relationships within the data, and to make sense of the rich and complex information gathered through interviews (Lewis, 2015).

Thematic analysis was used for this study and involved classifying and analyzing outlines or themes within the data, which helped to uncover underlying meanings and concepts. This technique involved several steps, including, generating initial codes, searching for themes, familiarization with the data, reviewing and refining themes, and finally, defining and naming themes. Thematic analysis allows researchers to organize and make sense of the data, and to identify key findings and insights (Lewis, 2015).

3.8.1 Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data refers to non-numerical info that provides descriptive insights into characteristics, qualities, or phenomena, often gathered through methods like interviews, focus groups, or observations. It aims to understand underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations, offering depth and detail about a subject. This type of data is crucial for exploring complex issues and developing theories grounded in human experiences and social contexts (Creswell &

Poth, 2017). The analysis of qualitative data involves identifying patterns, themes, and narratives to interpret the meaning and implications of the findings (Saldaña, 2016).

Structured questionnaires were used to collect this data from a larger sample of early married young girls. The quantitative data is then analyzed using statistical techniques to identify trends, correlations, and potential causal relationships. Descriptive statistics provide summaries of the data, while inferential statistics help in drawing conclusions and making generalizations about the broader population (Bryman, 2016). Software such as SPSS was employed to perform these statistical analyses, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings (Creswell, 2014).

3.8.2 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data, on the other hand, is numerical and can be measured and analyzed statistically. It is collected through structured tools such as surveys, experiments, or secondary data sources, focusing on quantifying the extent of phenomena and establishing patterns or generalizations. This type of data is essential for testing hypotheses, making predictions, and evaluating relationships between variables (Bryman, 2016). Quantitative data analysis involves statistical techniques to summarize data, test theories, and derive conclusions based on empirical evidence (Creswell, 2014).

Quantitative data analysis involved measuring specific variables related to early marriage, such as the age at marriage, educational attainment, health outcomes, and socio-economic status. Surveys or structured questionnaires could be used to collect this data from a larger sample of early married young girls. The quantitative data is then analyzed using statistical techniques to identify trends, correlations, and potential causal relationships. Descriptive statistics provide summaries of the data, while inferential statistics help in drawing conclusions and making generalizations about the broader population (Bryman, 2016). Software such as SPSS was employed to perform these statistical analyses, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings (Creswell, 2014).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent: Obtaining voluntary participation and informed consent from all participants, ensuring they understand the purpose, risks, and benefits of the study.

Confidentiality: Ensuring the anonymity and privacy of participants by protecting their identities and sensitive information and respecting participants' autonomy, cultural beliefs, and perspectives throughout the research process.

3.10 Methodological Constraints

Limited Generalizability: Findings may be specific to the Ma'di Sub-region and may not be easily generalizable to other contexts or populations.

Potential Bias: Despite efforts to minimize bias, the researcher's background and perspective may influence data collection and analysis.

Time and Resource Constraints: Conducting qualitative research requires significant time, resources, and expertise, which may pose limitations on the scope and scale of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter shows the answers on the experiences of early married young Ma'digirls. The scholar passed out this learning with the aim of providing responses to the questions using the methodology described in chapter three.

4.1 Response rate

The section size of the population was 63. Questionnaires were designed distributed to 63 respondents and were exclusively answered. This suggests that the response rate was excellent.

4.2 Bio Data

These results describe the responses of the participants throughout the research activity for both male and female.

4.2.1 Gender of respondents

Table1: Gender of Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	20	32.0	32.0	32.0
ValidFemales	43	68.0	68.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: primary data (2024)

The table 1 above shows that, 32% were masculine while 68% were female. This shows that the views of females were more embodied in the study findings than those of the males and it also indicates that the study involved more females with 68% than males at 32% in Ma'di.

4.2.2 Marital status of respondents

Table2: Marital Status of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Currently married	12	19.0	19.0	19.0
Living with a man/woman	30	48.0	48.0	67.0
Widowed	8	13.0	13.0	80.0
Divorced	13	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data (2024)

Referring to table 3 above, it indicates that out of entire sample study; 19% were currently married, 48% were living with a man/woman, 13% Widowed, and 20% were Divorced. this implies that Ma'di girls who were majority were living as man/woman with 48%

4.2.3 Age of respondents

Table3: Age of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 15-16 years	12	19.0	19.0	19.0
16-17 years	22	35.0	35.0	54.0
17-18 years	10	16.0	16.0	70.0
Above 19 years	19	30.0	30.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data (2024)

According to table 4 overhead indicates that out of total section of the study; 19% lie between the age of 15-16 years ,35% reach the age of 16-17,16% are amongst the age of 17-18 years, and above the age of 19 years founded 30%. This designates that the mainstream of respondents was mature and knowledgeable enough to give the required data.

4.2.4 Highest level of education of respondents

Table4: Showing Highest Level of education of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Primary	11	17.0	17.0	17.0
O'level	8	13.0	13.0	30.0
A'level	25	40.0	40.0	70.0
Tertiary	14	22.0	22.0	92.0
University	5	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data (2024)

The Table 4above displays that out of total sample of the study; 17%, 13%, 40% ,22% and 8% correspond to Primary, O'level, A'level, Tertiary and University respectively. This indicates that all respondents who participated in giving out information in Ma'dihard attained certain level of education with most of the respondents corresponding to 40% who are mainly of A'level leavers.

4.3. Research question one: Finding out the factors associated with early marriage in Ma'di

4.3.1 Economic instability and limited access to education can lead to early marriage, as young individuals may perceive marriage as an escape route from poverty

Table 5: Showing Economic instability leading to Access Education that leads to Early Marriages

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	19	30.0	30.0	30.0
Agree	15	24.0	24.0	54.0
not sure	11	17.0	17.0	71.0
Disagree	6	10.0	10.0	81.0
strongly disagree	12	19.0	19.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: primary data (2024)

Table 5 above indicates that 54% (30%, 24%) were positive to the statement that poverty economic instability and limited access to education can lead to early marriage, as young individuals may perceive marriage as an escape route from poverty, while 29% (10%, 19%) forming the minority of the respondents were negative to the same statement, 17% were not sure hence implying that economic instability and limited access to education can lead to early marriage, as young individuals may perceive marriage as an escape route from poverty.

4.3.2 Parental and community expectations

Table6: Showing whether parental and community expectations and pressures based on cultural and religious beliefs can strongly influence early marriage decisions among young individuals

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	3	5.0	5.0	5.0
Agree	9	14.0	14.0	19.0
not sure	4	6.0	6.0	25.0
Valid Disagree	18	29.0	29.0	54.0
strongly disagree	29	46.0	46.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: primary data (2024)

With reference to table 6, above it can be seen that minority of respondents 19% (5%,14%) were positive to the statement that parental and community expectations and pressures based on cultural and religious beliefs can strongly influence early marriage decisions among young individuals, while 75% (29%, 46%) of the respondents were negative to the same statement while 6% of the respondents were not sure. This concurs with the research carried out by Krahn GL (2013) intimated that parental and community expectations and pressures based on cultural and religious beliefs can strongly influence early marriage decisions among young individuals there by implying that parental and community expectations and pressures based on cultural and religious beliefs can strongly influence early marriage decisions among young individuals.

4.3.3 Gender inequalities and gendered expectations

Table7: Gender inequalities and Gendered Expectations

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly agree	7	11.0	11.0	11.0
Agree	14	22.0	22.0	33.0
not sure	8	13.0	13.0	46.0
Disagree	20	32.0	32.0	78.0
strongly disagree	14	22.0	22.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data (2024)

Table 7 indicates that minority of respondents 33% (11%, 22%) were positive to the statement that gender inequalities and gendered expectations within families and communities can contribute to early marriage practices, 54% (32%, 22%) had negative responses to the same statement, 13% were not sure. This is an indication that gender inequalities and gendered expectations within families and communities can not contribute to early marriage practices.

4.3.4 Limited access to comprehensive sexuality education and reproductive health information can further perpetuate early marriage

Table8: Showing Limited Access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Reproductive Health

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	21	33.0	33.0	33.0
	Agree	18	29.0	29.0	62.0
	not sure	10	16.0	16.0	78.0

	Disagree	2	3.0	3.0	81.0
	strongly disagree	12	19.0	19.0	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: primary data (2024)

With position to table 8 above, it is clear that 62% (33%, 29%) were positive to the statement that limited admittance to complete sexuality education and reproductive health material can further perpetuate early marriage, 22% (3%, 19%) were negative to the same statement while 16% of the respondents were not sure. This was in accordance to Tsui AO, Brown (2011) pointed out that limited access to comprehensive sexuality education and reproductive health information can further perpetuate early marriage implying that limited access to comprehensive sexuality education and reproductive health information can further perpetuate early marriage

4.3.5 Limited educational opportunities and unemployment contribute to the perpetuation of early marriage

Table9: Showing Limited Education Opportunity Contribution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly agree	30	48.0	48.0	48.0
	Agree	8	13.0	13.0	61.0
	Not sure	9	14.0	14.0	75.0
	Disagree	14	22.0	22.0	97.0
	strongly disagree	2	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: primary data (2024)

Table 9 above indicates that 61% (48%, 13%) of the respondents were positive to the statement that limited educational opportunities and unemployment contribute to the perpetuation of early

marriage, 25% (22%, 3%) were negative to the same statement forming the majority of the respondents while 14% of the respondents were not sure, this is an indication that limited educational opportunities and unemployment contribute to the perpetuation of early marriage.

4.3.6 Societal pressures, such as honor and reputation concerns, can also contribute to the perpetuation of early marriage

Table10: Showing whether societal pressures, such as honor and reputation concerns, can also contribute to the perpetuation of early marriage

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	22	35.0	35.0	35.0
	Agree	13	21.0	21.0	56.0
	not sure	2	3.0	3.0	59.0
	Disagree	20	31.0	31.0	90.0
	strongly disagree	6	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data (2024)

With regard to table 10 above, it is clear that 56% (35%, 21%) of the respondents were in agreement with the statement that societal pressures, such as honor and reputation concerns, can also contribute to the perpetuation of early marriage, 41% (31%, 10%) were disagreeing to the same statement while 3% of the respondents were not. These findings were in line with Pratap N (2011) stresses that societal pressures, such as honor and reputation concerns, can also contribute to the perpetuation of early marriage.

4.3.7 Cultural norms and gender expectations influence decision-making processes regarding marriage, limiting the agency of young girls and perpetuating the cycle of early marriage.

Table 11: Showing whether cultural norms and gender expectations influence decision-making processes regarding marriage, limiting the agency of young girls and perpetuating the cycle of early marriage.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	21	33.0	33.0	33.0
	Agree	30	47.0	47.0	80.0
	not sure	8	13.0	13.0	93.0
	Disagree	1	2.0	2.0	95.0
	strongly disagree	3	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: primary data (2024)

Table 11 overhead indicates that 80% (33%, 47%) of the respondents were sure to the statement that cultural norms and gender expectations influence decision-making processes regarding marriage, limiting the agency of young girls and perpetuating the cycle of early marriage, 7% (2%, 5%) were negative to the same statement while 13% of the respondents were not sure. This concurs with the research carried out by Abern, (2016) intimated that cultural norms and gender expectations influence decision-making processes regarding marriage, limiting the agency of young girls and perpetuating the cycle of early marriage implying that cultural norms and gender expectations influence decision-making processes regarding marriage.

4.3.8 Poverty forces families to make difficult decisions, often leading to early marriage as a means to reduce financial burdens and secure economic support for girls

Table12: Showing if Poverty forces families to make difficult decision

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	4	6.0	6.0	6.0
	Agree	9	14.0	14.0	20.0
	not sure	15	24.0	24.0	44.0
	Disagree	27	43.0	43.0	87.0
	strongly disagree	8	13.0	13.0	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data (2024)

With regard to table 12 above, it is evident that while 56% (43%, 13%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that poverty forces families to make difficult decisions, frequently resulting in early marriage as a means of reducing financial burdens and securing economic support for girls, 24% of the respondents were unsure. These findings suggest that poverty forces families to make difficult decisions, often resulting in early marriage as a means of reducing financial burdens and securing economic support for girls.

4.4.0 Research question two: Finding out the experiences of the married young Ma'di girls

4.4.1 Early marriage perpetuates a cycle of poverty and deprivation, limiting young mothers' access to resources and opportunities

Table13: Showing if Early Marriages Perpetuates a cycle of poverty and deprivation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	16	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Agree	20	32.0	32.0	57.0
	not sure	6	10.0	10.0	67.0
	Disagree	8	13.0	13.0	80.0
	strongly disagree	13	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data (2024)

Table 13 above, indicates that 57% (25%, 32%) were agreeing to the statement that early marriage continues a cycle of poverty and lack, limiting fresh mothers' access to resources and opportunities, 10% of the respondents were not sure while 33% (13%, 20%) disagreed to the same statement making the minority of the respondents. This is an indication that early marriage perpetuates a cycle of poverty and deprivation, limiting young mothers' access to resources and opportunities.

4.4.2 Girls married early are less likely to be employed and more likely to depend economically on their spouses

Table14: Showing whether girls married are less likely to be employed

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly agree	22	35.0	35.0	35.0
Agree	10	16.0	16.0	51.0
not sure	6	10.0	10.0	61.0
Disagree	14	22.0	22.0	83.0
strongly disagree	11	17.0	17.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: primary data (2024)

Table14overhead indicates that the most of the respondents 51% (35%, 16%) were positive to the statement that girls married early are less probable to be employed and more likely to depend economically on their spouses, 39% (22%, 17%) were negative to the same statement while 10% of the respondents were not sure. These results were in line with Agbaje MA (2016) pointed out girls married early are less likely to be employed and more likely to depend economically on their spouses. This is an indication that girls married early are less likely to be employed and more likely to depend economically on their spouses.

4.4.3 Girls aged 15-19 are twice as likely to die during pregnancy on childbirth compared to women aged 20-24

Table15: Showing Girls aged 15-19 are twice likely to die of pregnancy than 20-24 years

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly agree	5	8.0	8.0	8.0
Agree	13	21.0	21.0	29.0
not sure	7	11.0	11.0	40.0
Disagree	18	29.0	29.0	69.0
strongly disagree	20	31.0	31.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: primary data (2024)

With position to table 15 above, it is clear that 29% (8%, 21) were positive to the statement that girls aged 15-19 are two times likely to die during gestation and during childbirth compared to women aged 20-24, 60% (29%, 31%) were undesirable to the same statement while 11% of the respondents were not sure. This corresponds with the research done by Noble JA. (2014) postulated that girls aged 15-19 are twice as likely to die during pregnancy due to childbirth compared to women aged 20-24.

4.4.4 Married young girls are often subjected to physical and sexual violence, which exacerbates mental health issues like depression and anxiety

Table16: Showing weather married young Girls are often subjected to Physical and Sexual Violence

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	24	38.0	38.0	38.0
Agree	15	24.0	24.0	62.0
not sure	11	17.0	17.0	79.0
Disagree	4	6.0	6.0	85.0
strongly disagree	9	15.0	15	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data (2024)

Table 16 above demonstrates that the majority of the respondents 62% (38%, 24%) were confident about the statement that married young girls are often subjected to physical and sexual violence, which exacerbates mental health issues like depression and anxiety, 21% (6%, 15%) were undesirable to same while 17% of the respondents were not sure. This approves with the research carried out by Birdsall N (2016) asserted that married young girls are often subjected to physical and sexual violence, which exacerbates mental health issues like depression and anxiety, hence implying that married young girls are often subjected to physical and sexual violence, which exacerbates mental health issues like depression and anxiety.

4.4.5 Married girls frequently face pressures to conform to traditional gender roles, which can stifle personal aspirations and reinforce subservient positions within the household

Table17: Showing whether Married Girls face pressures to conform to traditional Gender Rules

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	14	22.0	22.0	22.0
Agree	18	29.0	29.0	51.0
not sure	10	16.0	16.0	67.0
Disagree	9	14.0	14.0	81.0
strongly disagree	12	19.0	19.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data (2024)

Table 17 above indicates that 51% of the respondents were positive to the statement that married girls frequently face pressures to conform to traditional gender roles, which can stifle personal aspirations and reinforce subservient positions within the household, 33% (14%, 19%) of the respondents were negative to the similar statement meanwhile 16% of the respondents were not sure. This is a signal that married girls frequently face pressures to conform to traditional gender roles, which can stifle personal aspirations and reinforce subservient positions within the household.

4.4.6 Early marriages are often associated with an increased risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth, such as premature births, low birth weight infants, and maternal mortality

Table 18: Showing if Early Marriages are often Associated with an Increased Risk of Complications

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	34	54.0	54.0	54.0
Agree	13	21.0	21.0	75.0
not sure	1	2.0	2.0	77.0
Disagree	11	17.0	17.0	94.0
strongly disagree	4	6.0	6.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data (2024)

Conferring to table 18 above, it can be seen that 75% (54%, 21%) were positive to the statement that early marriages are often associated with an increased risk of difficulties during pregnancy and childbirth, such as premature births, low birth weight infants, and maternal mortality, 23% (17%, 6%) respondents were undesirable to the same statement while 2% of the respondents were not sure. Finnigan (2012) intimated those early marriages are often associated with an increased risk of difficulties during pregnancy and childbirth, such as untimely births, low birth weight infants, and maternal mortality. This is a manifestation that early marriages are often associated with an increased risk of problems during pregnancy and delivery, such as premature births, low birth weight infants, and maternal mortality.

4.4.7 Child brides are more susceptible to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, due to their limited access to healthcare and lack of knowledge about contraception methods

Table19: Showing whether child brides are more susceptible to STI's including HIV/HIV healthcare and lack of Knowledge

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly agree	27	43.0	43.0	43.0
Agree	16	25.0	25.0	68.0
not sure	8	13.0	13.0	81.0
Disagree	10	16.0	16.0	97.0
strongly disagree	2	3.0	3.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Source: primary data (2024)

With allusion to table 19, it can be observed that most of the responds 68% (43% ,25%) were positive to the report that child brides are more susceptible to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, due to their inadequate access to healthcare and lack of knowledge about contraception methods, 19% (16%, 3%) were negative to the same statement while 13% of the respondents were not sure hence implying that child brides are more susceptible to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, due to their limited access to healthcare and lack of knowledge about contraception methods.

4.5 Qualitative data

Marriage at a young age is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by a variety of factors. In conducting research on this topic, respondents were asked to share the reasons or circumstances that led to their early marriage. One respondent mentioned that their marriage was arranged by

their families due to financial difficulties, while another cited pressure from their community to conform to traditional gender roles. Additionally, cultural norms and expectations were highlighted as significant factors in the decision to marry at a young age. Family and community perceptions also played a role, with some respondents facing judgment and criticism for their early marriage. Overall, it is evident that cultural, social, and economic factors all play a role in shaping the experiences of individuals who marry at a young age (Smith, 2020). The experience of being a married young girl can be both challenging and transformative. One respondent described her experience as a married young girl as "*overwhelming at times, but also rewarding in many ways.*" Since getting married at a young age, respondents reported significant changes in their lives, including taking on new responsibilities and roles within their families. The challenges faced by married young girls ranged from financial difficulties to social stigma and lack of support from their communities. However, respondents highlighted their resilience and ability to cope with these challenges, often relying on support systems such as family, friends, and community organizations. Despite the obstacles they faced, respondents expressed hopes and aspirations for the future, including pursuing further education, starting a career, and building a stable and happy family. Overall, the narratives of these married young girls shed light on the complexities of early marriage and the importance of access to support systems in navigating the challenges that come with it.

During the interview, the respondents provided valuable insights into the issue of early marriage among Ma'di girls in the community. One respondent highlighted their role in raising awareness about the adverse consequences of early marriage and facilitating support programs for married girls. They had been working in this capacity for five years and expressed concern about the prevalence of early marriage in the community. According to their understanding, the major factors contributing to early marriage included poverty, limited access to education, and cultural traditions that prioritize early marriage. They emphasized that economic factors often compelled families to marry off their daughters early, as it secured financial stability for the family. Lack of access to education was seen as a significant factor enabling early marriage, as girls who are not enrolled in school are more vulnerable to being married off at an early age. The respondents also mentioned that cultural traditions, beliefs, and practices play a key role in encouraging early marriage, as it is seen as a way of preserving the family's honor and safeguarding the girls' future. They highlighted the challenges faced by married Ma'di girls, including limited decision-

making power, increased risk of domestic violence, and reduced educational opportunities. The impact on their physical and mental health was evident, with higher rates of early pregnancies and mental distress reported among young brides. Continuing education after marriage was rare due to societal norms and family expectations. Early marriage severely impacted their economic situations and future prospects, as they often lacked access to income-generating opportunities or skills training. Support services and programs available for married Ma'di girls in the community were limited, with few organizations providing counseling, vocational training, or reproductive health services. Efforts to prevent early marriage and empower girls were taking place, but further action was needed, including community awareness campaigns, collaboration with religious leaders, and creating economic opportunities for married girls. The respondents recommended speaking with local leaders, teachers, and healthcare providers for additional insights.

Inclusion, the issue of early marriage and the experiences of young brides in the community require urgent attention, with a focus on addressing cultural norms, tackling poverty, and ensuring access to education and support services.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction.

This chapter entails the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations in accordance with the research questions and objectives.

5.1 Summary of findings.

5.1.1 Research Question one: Findings on the factors associated with early marriage in Ma'di

The study looked at the variables related to early marriage in Ma'di. The majority of the respondents, according to the results, agreed with the statements that were posed to them. For instance, the majority of respondents constituting **54% of the total agreed with the assertion that there is economic instability and restricted access to education can lead to early marriage**, as young individuals may remark marriage as an escape route from poverty; 62% were positive to the statement that limited access to comprehensive sexuality education and reproductive health information can further perpetuate early marriage. This was in accordance to Tsui AO, Brown (2011) pointed out that limited access to comprehensive sexuality education and reproductive health information can further perpetuate early marriage; **61% of the respondents were positive to the statement that** limited educational opportunities and unemployment contribute to the perpetuation of early marriage.

supplementary, 75% founding the majority were negative to the statement that parental and community expectations and pressures based on cultural and religious beliefs can strongly influence early marriage decisions among young individuals. This concurs with the research carried out by Krahn GL (2013) intimated that parental and community expectations and pressures based on cultural and religious beliefs can strongly influence early marriage decisions among young individuals there, 54% were negative to the statement that gender inequalities and gendered expectations within families and communities can contribute to early marriage practices.

Majority of the respondents 56% of the respondents were positive to the statement that societal pressures, such as honor and reputation concerns, can also contribute to the preservation of early marriage. These findings were in line with Pratap N (2011) stresses that societal pressures, such as honor and reputation concerns, can also contribute to the perpetuation of early marriage., 80% of the respondents were positive to the statement that cultural norms and gender expectations influence decision-making processes regarding marriage, limiting the agency of young girls and perpetuating the cycle of early marriage while 56% of the respondents creating the majority remained negative to the statement that poverty forces families to make difficult decisions, often leading to early marriage as a means to reduce financial burdens and secure economic support for girls.

It can be concluded that factors associated with early marriage in Ma'di have a significant effect on early marriage.

5.1.2 Research Question two: Findings on the experiences of the married young Ma'di girls.

The study investigated into the experiences of the married young Ma'di girls., it can be observed that 57% were positive to the statement that early marriage continues a cycle of poverty and deprivation, limiting young mothers' access to resources and opportunities, 51% were positive to the statement that girls married early are less likely to be employed and more likely to depend economically on their spouses. These findings were in line with Agbaje MA (2016) pointed out girls married early are less likely to be employed and more likely to depend economically on their spouses.

The findings revealed that 62% forming the majority of respondents were positive to the statement that married young girls are often subjected to physical and sexual violence, which exacerbates mental health issues like depression and anxiety, 51% had a positive response to the statement that married girls frequently face pressures to conform to traditional gender roles, which can stifle personal aspirations and reinforce subservient positions within the household, 75% were positive to the statement that early marriages are often associated with an increased jeopardy of complications during expectancy and childbirth, such as untimely births, short birth weight infants, and maternal mortality, 68% had a constructive response to the statement that

child brides are prone to getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, due to their low access to healthcare and lack of knowledge about contraception methods. Additionally, the majority 60% disagreed to the declaration that girls with the age 15-19 are two times likely to lose their lives during pregnancy on childbirth compared to those aged 20-24. This harmonizes with the research conducted by Noble JA. (2014) postulated that girls between 15-19 years are twice as likely to die during pregnancy on childbirth compared to those aged 20-24, it can be concluded that experiences have a significant effect on the married young Ma'di girls.

5.2 Conclusion

Basing on the research objective one which was to identify features associated with early marriage in Ma'di, it can be concluded that factors associated with early marriage in Ma'di have a significant effect on early marriage and can be enhanced by educating communities about the adverse consequences of early marriage on health, education, and economic opportunities. Promote the benefits of keeping girls in school. Strengthen decrees that set the least age for marriage at 18 and ensure these laws are enforced. Provide legal support and protection for at risk girls. Provide monetary incentives for families so that they keep their daughters in school, such as studentships or provisional cash transfers. Support income-generating activities for families to reduce the economic pressures that often lead to early marriage. Involve local leaders, parents, and religious leaders in discussions to change social norms and attitudes towards early marriage. Empower girls through life skills training and support groups. Ensure that young people, especially girls, have access to comprehensive health and reproductive services, including information about family planning and sexual health.

With reference to the research objective two which was to explore the experiences of the married young Ma'di girls. It can be concluded that experiences have a significant effect on the married young Ma'di girls and can be enhanced by providing opportunities for continued education through flexible schooling options, vocational training, and adult education programs tailored to young married girls. Ensuring access to comprehensive healthcare, including maternal health services, family planning, and reproductive health education, to support their physical and mental well-being. Offering economic opportunities through skills training, microfinance

programs, and support for small businesses, enabling young married girls to achieve financial independence and contribute to their households. Establishing support groups and counseling services to provide emotional support, guidance, and a safe space for young married girls to share their experiences and receive help when needed. Strengthening legal protections against abuse and exploitation, and promote awareness of their rights. Engaging community leaders and organizations to advocate for the rights and well-being of young married girls, ensuring they have access to necessary resources and support.

5.3 Recommendations

The government should educate communities about the adverse consequences of early marriage on health, education, and economic opportunities. Promote the benefits of keeping girls in school. Strengthening laws that allow girls to get married at 18, and ensure these laws are enforced. Provide legal support and protection for girls at risk of early marriage. Support income-generating activities for families to reduce the economic pressures that often lead to early marriage. Involve local leaders, parents, and religious leaders in discussions to change social norms and attitudes towards early marriage. Empower girls through life skills training and support groups. Ensure that young people, especially girls, have access to comprehensive health and reproductive services, including information about family planning and sexual health.

There is need for government to provide opportunities for continued education through flexible schooling options, vocational training, and adult education programs tailored to young married girls. Ensure access to comprehensive healthcare, including maternal health services, family planning, and reproductive health education, to support their physical and mental well-being. Offer economic opportunities through skills training, microfinance programs, and support for small businesses, enabling young married girls to achieve financial independence and contribute to their households. Establish support groups and counseling services to provide emotional support, guidance, and a safe space for young married girls to share their experiences and receive help when needed. Strengthen legal protections against abuse and exploitation, and promote awareness of their rights. Engage community leaders and organizations to advocate for the rights and well-being of young married girls, ensuring they have access to necessary resources and support.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Informed consent

Introduction

My name is **DRANZOA JOVIA**, and I am now a third year social work student at UCU. It's a requirement that third year students conduct research at the conclusion of their study. I'm undertaking a study on the experiences of early married young Ma'di girls in Moyo district. Participating in this interview will benefit my research by providing useful insights. please read the following information carefully before participating.

Description of the study.

This study focuses on exploring the experiences of early married young Ma'di girls. The interview will focus on interviewing you about your experience with early marriage. We will discuss determinants that led to you marrying early and the challenges/effects of early marriage on you. The interview will last for about (duration) and its going to be conducted in a secret place.

Voluntary participation.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to decline participation in the study at any time or to leave at any moment without incurring any fees.

Confidentiality

Your identity and entire submission of the information will remain private and your responses will be confidential in the research report. A pseudonym will be provided to replace your name and to protect your identity in any publications or reports.

Potential risks

The dangers of taking part in this interview are negligible. Talking about delicate subjects connected to your experiences, meanwhile, could make you feel emotionally uncomfortable. You can have a choice to terminate the interview or take a break if you feel uncomfortable at any point during it.

Benefits

Your participation in this interview will aid in our comprehension on the experiences faced by early married young Ma'di girls and may help improve support services for individuals in that category.

Contact information

In case of any queries or concerns about the research study, you may contact Dranzoa Jovia (UCU) on 0783005463 or email me on dranzoajovia@gmail.com

Consent

By formal acceptance, you are signifying to have recited and understood the information provided above and thus agree to participate voluntarily in this study and understand that you may pull out at any time without consequence.

Participants signature..... Date

Researchers signature.....Date.....

Appendix 2: Semi-structured interview guide

Introduction

I appreciate you for accepting to take part in this interview. My name is Dranzoa Jovia , and I am conducting a study to comprehend the factors associated with early marriage in the Ma'di community and to explore the experiences of married young Ma'di girls. Your participation and honest responses are highly valuable and will contribute to our understanding of this important issue.

PART I: RESPONDENT PROFILE

Demographic information

RP.1 Note the respondent's gender

- [1] Male
- [2] Female

RP.2 How old are you in years

__|__| years

RP.3 Have you ever attended school?

- [1] Yes
 - [1] No
- If yes proceed to Qn. If no proceed to Qn.

RP.4 What is the maximum level of school you attended?

- [1] Primary
- [2] "O" Level
- [3] "A" Level
- [4] Tertiary
- [5] University

RP.5 What is your marital status now?

- [1] Currently Married
- [2] Living with A Man/Woman
- [3] Widowed
- [4] Divorced
- [5] Separated
- [6] Never Married Or Lived With A Man/Woman

RP.6. What age did you marry?

Part 2: Factors Associated with Early Marriage

This section aims at identifying factors associated with early marriage in Ma'di. Please indicate your opinion on the following statements using the Linkert scale. Key: **1= agree, 2= strongly agree; 3= not sure; 4= disagree; 5= strongly disagree.**

No		1	2	3	4	5
1	Economic instability and limited access to education can lead to early marriage, as young individuals may perceive marriage as an escape route from poverty					
2	parental and community expectations and pressures based on cultural and religious beliefs can strongly influence early marriage decisions among young individuals					
3	gender inequalities and gendered expectations within families and communities can contribute to early marriage practices					
4	Inadequate access to comprehensive sexuality education and reproductive health information can further prolong early marriage					
5	Limited educational opportunities and unemployment contribute to the continuation of early marriage					
6	Societal pressures, such as honor and reputation concerns, can also add to the increase of early marriage					
7	Cultural norms and gender expectations influence decision-making processes regarding marriage, limiting the agency of young girls and perpetuating the sequence of early marriage.					
8	Poverty forces families to make difficult decisions, often resulting to early marriage as a means to reduce financial burdens and secure economic support for girls					

Part 3: To explore the experiences of the married young Ma'di girls.

This section aims at exploring the experiences of the married young Ma'di girls. Please indicate your opinion on the following statements using the Linkert scale. Key: **1= agree, 2= strongly agree; 3= not sure; 4= disagree; 5= strongly disagree.**

No		1	2	3	4	5
1	Early marriage perpetuates a cycle of poverty and deprivation, limiting young mothers' access to resources and opportunities					
2	Early marriage often results in school dropout, significantly limiting future economic prospects and reinforcing the cycle of poverty					
3	Girls married early are not as much likely to be employed and more likely to be contingent economically on their spouses					
4	Girls who are between 15-19years are two times as probable to death during pregnancy on childbirth compared to women aged 20-24					
5	Married young girls are often subjected to physical and sexual violence, which exacerbates mental health issues like depression and anxiety					
6	married girls frequently face pressures to conform to traditional gender roles, which can stifle personal aspirations and reinforce subservient positions within the household					
7	Early marriages are often associated with an increased risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth, such as premature births, low birth weight infants, and maternal mortality					
8	child brides are more susceptible to sexually					

	transmitted infections (STIs), as well as HIV/AIDS, due to their inadequate access to healthcare and lack of knowledge about contraception methods					
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Part 2: Factors Associated with Early Marriage

- 3. Can you share with me the reasons or circumstances that led to your marriage at a young age?
- 4. Were there any cultural, social, or economic factors that played a role in your early marriage?
- 5. How did your family and community perceive your marriage at a young age?

Part 3: Experiences of Married Young Ma'di Girls

- 6. Can you describe your experiences as a married young girl?
- 7. How has your life changed since getting married at a young age?
- 8. What are the challenges or difficulties you have faced as a married young girl?
- 9. How have you coped with these challenges, and what support systems did you have access to?
- 10. What are your hopes and aspirations for the future?

Closing

- 11. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences or perspectives on early marriage in the Ma'di community?
- 12. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for your time and for sharing your experiences with me. Your contribution to this study is invaluable, and I appreciate your openness and honesty.

Appendix 3: Key informant interview guide

Introduction

- Introduce yourself and the reason for the interview
- Explain that whatever will be shared is going to be kept confidential
- Ask for consent to proceed with the interview

Background

1. Please share with me your role/work in the community.
2. For how long have you been in this role?
3. What is your thought on the issue of early marriage among Ma'di girls in this community?

Factors Contributing to Early Marriage

4. In your own words, what are the major factors that contribute to early marriage of Ma'di girls in this community?
5. Are there any cultural traditions, beliefs or practices that encourage early marriage?
6. What are the economic factors that may lead families to have their daughters marry early?
7. How does lack of access to education impact early marriage rates?
8. Are there any other key factors you would like to mention?

Experiences of Married Girls

9. What challenges or difficulties do married Ma'di girls typically face after getting married at a young age?
10. How does early marriage impact their health, both physical and mental?

11. Are they able to continue their education after marriage? If not, why?
12. What are the impacts on their economic situations and future prospects?
13. How does early marriage affect their status and decision-making power within the household?
14. Are they at greater risk of domestic violence or marital conflicts?
15. What other major issues or problems do they commonly experience?

Support Services

16. What types of support services or programs are available for married Ma'di girls in this community?
17. Are you aware of any efforts to prevent early marriage or empower girls? 18. What more could be done to address this issue and improve the wellbeing of married girls?

Closing

19. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding early marriage and experiences of young brides in this community?
20. Do you have any recommendations for other key informants I should speak with?

