

## CONUNDRUM OF CHILD MARRIAGE: ANALYSIS OF INFLUENCE OF AFRICAN FAMILY STRUCTURE IN A RURAL SET UP OF HOMABAY COUNTY, KENYA

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### Abstract

*Child marriage is a major challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is recognized in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target 5.3 which nations are urged to eliminate. There have been concerted efforts by the government of Kenya to deal with the vice. Such efforts include but not limited to; enactment of international instruments like CEDAW, CRC, ACRWC; enactment of laws in Kenya such as SOA of 2006, constitution of Kenya of 2010, marriage act of 2014 and Children's Act of 2022. Despite these efforts, the vice continues unabated, especially in Homa Bay County where the prevalence rate (40.0%) almost doubles the national prevalence rate (23%). This study sought to examine influence of family structure on child marriage. The study was guided by Social Constructionism Theory. The theory is premised on the fact that social and normative meanings are socially constructed or defined. This implies that the meanings attached to social reality are dependent on what the society builds as models of explaining and understanding such realities. The Study employed mixed method approach in which a cross-sectional household survey was applied. Study targeted 371 young married women aged 18-24 years in Homabay County as the main respondents. Chiefs, teachers and healthcare workers in the area were the key respondents. Cluster, Purposive sampling and Systematic random sampling were used as sampling techniques. Data was collected using questionnaires, key informant interview and focus group discussions. Data was subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The study reveals that family structure plays an important role in child marriage. When subjected to regression analysis, R-value of 0.895 was found showing a strong correlation. R-square value of 0.625 revealed that combined independent variables (family types, nature of respondents' family, sleeping arrangement and number of siblings) account for 80.2% of the variation in the dependent variable (child marriage). Study recommends that government of Kenya through the Ministry of Lands, Public Works, Housing and Urban Development should consider decent affordable housing in the rural areas. Study also recommends that government through Ministry of Health should dispense knowledge on contraceptive use and avail them to rural residence to reduce household population.*

**Keywords:** Child, Child Marriage, Family, Family Structure, African Family Structure, Rural Set-up

## Introduction

Child marriage is any marital union where one individual is under 18 years of age (UNICEF, 2021). According to Haarr and Duncan (2023), marriage is conceived as a ritual that permits legal partnerships of husbands and wives. Child marriage has far reaching implications on the life of child brides. The vice is considered a major challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Together with forced marriage and female genital mutilation, child marriage has been identified in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as one of the harmful cultural practices that world nations are urged to eliminate (UNDP, 2015). Despite significant efforts to eliminate child marriage, it remains global pervasive practice affecting countries, cultures and religions (Cappa et al., 2023; Cordova-Pozo et al., 2023). The vice has remained widespread (Hayes & Protas, 2022).

Child marriage is considered a violation of human rights, and continues to be of great concern because it is unabated in many communities in the world. The vice has consistently remained high over the past decades (Hayes & Protas, 2022). According to the UNICEF (2024) survey, approximately 19% of young women aged 20–24 were married as children in the globe. UNICEF (2023) estimates that 12 million girls get married every year. In the same breath, approximately 21% of all marriages globally involve children (UNICEF, 2019). Based on the current trends, it is estimated that by 2030, one hundred and fifty million girls will have been married before they reach age 18 years. UNICEF (2023) recommends acceleration of rate of change 20-fold in order to reach Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.3 of eliminate all harmful practices, including child marriage by 2030.

It is however instructive to note that the problem of child marriage is disproportionately concentrated in the world. According to Presler-Marshall et al., (2020), child marriage is rampant in low- and middle-income countries. Countries with highest rates of child marriage are classified as fragile (UNICEF, 2020). A study by Hotchkiss, Godha, Gage and Cappa (2016) revealed that the prevalence of child marriage is higher in low and middle-income

countries, compared to their more developed counterparts.

According to UNICEF (2019), one in every nine girls in developing countries gets married before attaining 18 years. UNICEF (2018) also reports that Africa, Latin America, South Asia, and the Middle East persistently record high prevalence of child marriage, as opposed to Europe and North America where the practice is very rare. Available data reveals that in South Asia 30% of all girls get married before the age of 18 years and 8% get married before attaining the age of 15 years. In the Republic of Moldova, for example, 15% of women aged 20 to 49 were married before the age of 18, whereas only 2% of men were married before the age of 18 (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

UNICEF (2019) recorded that South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa have the highest proportions of girl-child marriage. In Africa, the Sub-Saharan region continues to record high prevalence with 40% in West and Central Africa and 34% in East and Southern Africa as opposed to 18% North of the Sahara (UNICEF, 2018). On the same note, skewed trends are reported in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean Islands (UNICEF, 2019).

Child marriage has a myriad of negative consequences to child spouses and their children (Sebany et al., 2019). Child marriage affects girls educational and employment opportunities (John et al., 2019). It results in early pregnancy, restricted autonomy, social isolation, school dropout, lower labour force participation and earnings, limited decision-making power in households and increased risk for domestic violence (Shukla et al., 2023). The vice poses death risk to child brides especially during pregnancy and when delivering their children (Dadras et al., 2023; Garcia-Hombrados, 2022; Moyazzem Hossain et al., 2022).

Child marriage or adolescent marriage deprive girls of their golden period of their life and are more threatened to experience future domestic violence and sexual violence (UNICEF, 2023; Lowe et al., 2022). Oguejioffor (2020) asserts that child marriage could cut a girl-child life short, increasing

the likelihood of poverty being passed down from one generation to the next. This means that child marriage can be seen as an obstacle to the growth and development of a girl. Practice of early marriage and child marriage is an archaic practice that has profound effect on the physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, educational and mental health of individuals (Bezie & Addisu, 2019; Jayawardana, 2022).

In view of the negative outcomes of child marriage, Kenya has enacted three major international instruments to protect the rights of children— 1) the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which states that marriage of a child is illegal; 2) the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of 1989; and 3) the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) of 1990 (United Nations, 2015). The CRC specifies several child rights violated by child marriage practices such as impairing recognition, enjoyment and exercise of human rights and fundamental rights of children. The ACRWC on the other hand, emphasizes the need for signatories to take action to end child marriage, sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 years and makes the registration of all marriage's compulsory. All signatories to the three instruments are expected to enact laws to domesticate the them.

To operationalize the three international instruments, Kenya has enacted several laws, in addition to formulating various policies to domesticate the three international instruments. These include; the Sexual Offences Act (SOA) of 2006, the Constitution of Kenya (2010), the Marriage Act of 2014, Protection Against Domestic Violence Act of 2015 and Revised Children's Act of 2022 all of which prohibit child marriages. Kenya became the 19<sup>th</sup> African country in 2017 to launch the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa.

Despite the enactment of the above international and local laws and ACTs, child marriage is still high in the study area. Its prevalent rate stands at 40.7% against the national average of 23% (NCPD, 2020). This is the backdrop in which this study is premised.

The purpose of the study is therefore to investigate the influence of family structure on child marriage in Homabay County, Kenya.

### Research Methodology

This study adopted mixed method approach that included a cross-sectional household survey, complemented by a desk review. The study used cross-sectional descriptive survey design. Cross-sectional survey design was selected because it is best suited for studies that are aimed at finding out the prevalence of a phenomenon, situation, problem, attitude or issue, by taking a cross-section of the population (Kumar, 2011). The cross-sectional descriptive survey design was equally selected for this study because it provides a snapshot of what is happening in that group at that particular time (Leavy, 2017).

Study area was Homa Bay County, Kenya. The County is situated in western part of Kenya. It borders Migori County to the South, Kisii and Nyamira Counties to the East, Kericho and Kisumu counties to the North East and Lake Victoria to the North West. It has a population density of 359 people per square Kilometer. Homa Bay County comprises of eight (8) sub-counties namely; Rachuonyo South, Rachuonyo North, Rachuonyo East, Rangwe, Homa Bay town, Ndhiwa, Suba South and Suba North. In addition, the county has 40 County Assembly Wards, 19 divisions, 116 locations and 226 sub-locations. Its inhabitants include; Luo and Suba.

The target population for this study was women who were married as children but were aged 18-24 years at the time of study. The total number of females in this category were 80, 213 as documented by the Kenya National Census of 2019 (Republic of Kenya, 2019).

Primary data was collected from a sample of target population by use of three different methods which include: Questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIs). Questionnaire was administered to 371 respondents where 339 were filled and returned. Data was equally collected from area chiefs, teachers

and community health supervisors within the study area using key informant interview guides so as to obtain their opinions and thoughts on the research question. A FGD guide was developed to collect qualitative data from the main respondents. The FGD guide was selected for this study because it allows for discussion of specific social issues aiming at drawing complex personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of participants through a moderated interaction (Hayward, Simpson & Wood, 2004).

The secondary sources of data included but not limited books, journals, publications, periodicals. Content analysis was used to examine these secondary sources of information. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques to generate a reliable data from the approaches used.

The study employed both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. It utilized cluster sampling, purposive sampling and systematic random sampling techniques. The county was clustered into sub-counties. Three sub-counties were purposively selected based on their unique economic characteristics such as farming and fishing. Systematic random sampling was employed to get respondents from the households. The sample size was determined using a formula proposed by Fisher et al., (1998).

Validity of the instruments were ensured by seeking expert opinion from two university research supervisors. Percent-agreement was calculated for the two supervisors to ensure face and content

validity. Each question was evaluated by the experts to determine its relevance to the objective. Reliability of the instrument was determined by doing a pilot test to a group which was not involved in actual study but have similar characteristics. The instruments for data collection were then tested by assessing their scale's internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability was computed based on the reliability of a test relative to other tests with same number of items, and measuring the same construct of interest.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze quantitative data from questionnaire. Descriptive statistics results were displayed in frequency distribution tables. On the other hand, inferential statistics employed regression analysis for testing the influence of independent variable (Family structure) and dependent variable (child marriage). Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis.

## Results and Discussions

This section presents, interprets and discusses the results of the data analysis conducted in line with the objective of the study. The objective of the study was to investigate the influence of African Family Structure on child marriage in a Rural Set Up of Homabay County, Kenya.

### Questionnaire Return Rate

This section presents the questionnaire return rate from the sampled respondents across the three sub-counties involved in the study. The return rates are summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

#### *Response Questionnaire Return Rate*

| Respondents     | Questionnaires administered | Questionnaires returned | Return rate (%) |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Ndhiwa          | 154                         | 136                     | 88.31           |
| Rachuonyo North | 126                         | 118                     | 93.65           |
| Suba North      | 91                          | 85                      | 93.41           |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>371</b>                  | <b>339</b>              | <b>91.79</b>    |

The study targeted 371 respondents aged between 18 and 24 years, out of which 339 completed and returned the questionnaires, resulting in an overall

response rate of 91.79%. The return rates varied slightly across sub-counties: Ndhiwa recorded 88.31%, Rachuonyo North 93.65%, and Suba North

93.41%. These rates are considered sufficient for analysis and exceed commonly accepted thresholds for questionnaire-based research. According to Matano and Mortimer (2015) and Kombo and Tromp (2013), a response rate of 70% is deemed adequate for research involving administered questionnaires. Kumar (2019) further notes that a 50% response rate is acceptable for descriptive studies, making the 91.79% achieved in this study particularly strong. The high return rate may be

attributed to the respondents' understanding of the study's purpose and their willingness to participate.

### ***Distribution of respondents' demographic characteristics***

Table 2 introduces demographic characteristics of the respondents. It focuses on their age at the time of study, current marital status, age of respondents at the time of marriage, occupation of the respondents, age of their spouses and status of their marriages.

**Table 2**

### ***Distribution of respondents' demographic characteristics***

|                                        |                    | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> | <b>Cumulative</b> |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Age of respondents                     | 18 years           | 23               | 6.78              | 6.78              |
|                                        | 19 years           | 34               | 10.03             | 16.81             |
|                                        | 20 years           | 39               | 11.50             | 28.31             |
|                                        | 21 years           | 48               | 14.16             | 42.47             |
|                                        | 22 years           | 54               | 15.93             | 58.40             |
|                                        | 23 years           | 71               | 20.94             | 79.34             |
|                                        | 24 years           | 70               | 20.65             | 100.00            |
|                                        | <b>Total</b>       | <b>339</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |                   |
| Marital status                         | Married            | 273              | 80.53             | 80.53             |
|                                        | Separated          | 54               | 15.93             | 96.46             |
|                                        | Widowed            | 12               | 3.54              | 100               |
|                                        | <b>Total</b>       | <b>339</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |                   |
| Age of respondents at time of marriage | 14 years           | 14               | 4.13              | 4.13              |
|                                        | 15 years           | 23               | 6.78              | 10.91             |
|                                        | 16 years           | 119              | 35.10             | 46.01             |
|                                        | 17 years           | 183              | 53.98             | 100               |
|                                        |                    | <b>339</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |                   |
| Occupation of the respondents          | Housewives         | 174              | 51.33             | 51.33             |
|                                        | Fishmongers        | 63               | 18.58             | 69.91             |
|                                        | Farmer             | 53               | 15.63             | 85.54             |
|                                        | Employed           | 49               | 14.45             | 100.00            |
|                                        |                    | <b>339</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |                   |
| Age of spouse at time of marriage      | 18 years and above | 259              | 76.40             | 76.40             |
|                                        | 17 years and below | 47               | 13.86             | 90.26             |
|                                        | I don't know       | 33               | 9.73              | 100.00            |
|                                        |                    | <b>339</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |                   |
| Status of marriages                    | Formal             | 77               | 22.71             | 22.71             |
|                                        | Informal           | 262              | 77.29             | 100.00            |
|                                        |                    | <b>330</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |                   |

The age distribution in Table 2 reveals that 20.94% of participants were aged 23 years, 20.65% aged 24 years, 15.93% 22 years, 14.16% aged 21 years, 11.50% age 20 years, 10.03% aged 19 years and 6.78% aged 18 years reflecting a relatively young population whose early marriages occurred within the last few years preceding the study. This enhances the reliability of self-reported information on adolescent attitudes and behaviors related to sexuality—key elements in the study's first objective. As suggested by UNICEF (2020), understanding the age cohorts affected by child marriage is essential for designing context-specific interventions.

On marital status, data revealed that most respondents (80.53%) were still married, while 15.93% were separated and 3.54% widowed. These figures point to significant marital instability within a short timeframe—a pattern that may be linked to the maturity as well as emotional, economic, and psychosocial preparedness of those married as children, aligning with findings by Bellizzi et al., (2021) on the fragility of child marriages.

Notably, a significant proportion of respondents (53.98%) had married at age 17 years, including 35.10% at 16 years, 6.78% at 15 years and 4.13% at 14 years. This confirms that the sample entirely consisted of individuals who experienced child marriage, thus grounding the subsequent analysis in lived experiences.

The occupational profile, where over half of the respondents (51.33%) were housewives and only

14.45% reported formal employment, indicates limited economic empowerment among participants. Such dependence is relevant for analyzing the influence of family structure and parental economic decisions on early marriage, consistent with Mughal and Awan (2020) which highlights poverty and gender norms as structural drivers of child marriage. The data also supports inquiry into how family roles and occupational expectations shape socialization patterns leading to early marriage.

The age of spouses at the time of marriage and the type of marital union further illuminates the social dynamics surrounding child marriage. The finding that 13.86% of respondents were married to spouses under 18, and that 77.29% of marriages were informal, points to a context where customary norms and informal socialization agents are influential. Moreover, among the small number of formalized marriages, most were traditional (75.32%), again reinforcing the centrality of culturally embedded socialization practices.

### ***Distribution of family structure and child marriage***

This table presents aspects of family structure that influences child marriage. They include; types of respondents' family, nature of respondents' family, nature of spouse family, respondents' sleeping arrangement and number of siblings in the family.

**Table 3***Distribution of family structure and child marriage*

|                                                   |                                   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Types of respondents' family                      | Monogamous                        | 142              | 41.89             |
|                                                   | Polygamous                        | 197              | 58.11             |
|                                                   | <b>Total</b>                      | <b>339</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |
| Nature of respondent's family                     | Both parents                      | 98               | 28.91             |
|                                                   | Single mother (widow)             | 71               | 20.94             |
|                                                   | Single mother (separation)        | 53               | 15.63             |
|                                                   | Single father (widower)           | 14               | 4.13              |
|                                                   | Single father (separated)         | 33               | 9.73              |
|                                                   | Grandparents                      | 23               | 6.78              |
|                                                   | Other relatives                   | 47               | 13.86             |
|                                                   | <b>Total</b>                      | <b>339</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |
| Nature of spouse family                           | Both parents                      | 101              | 29.79             |
|                                                   | Single mother (widow)             | 51               | 15.04             |
|                                                   | Single mother (separation)        | 56               | 16.52             |
|                                                   | Single father (widower)           | 21               | 6.19              |
|                                                   | Single father (separated)         | 27               | 7.96              |
|                                                   | Grandparents                      | 31               | 9.14              |
|                                                   | Other relatives                   | 52               | 15.34             |
|                                                   | <b>Total</b>                      | <b>339</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |
| Respondents' sleeping arrangement before marriage | A bedroom in parent's house       | 10               | 2.95              |
|                                                   | Share bedroom with sisters        | 24               | 7.08              |
|                                                   | Share bedroom with brothers       | 5                | 1.47              |
|                                                   | Grandparents' house with sisters  | 33               | 9.73              |
|                                                   | Grandparents' house with brothers | 9                | 2.65              |
|                                                   | Parent's kitchen                  | 197              | 58.11             |
|                                                   | Brothers' hut                     | 29               | 8.55              |
|                                                   | Uncles house                      | 12               | 3.54              |
|                                                   | In neighbours house               | 20               | 5.90              |
|                                                   | <b>Total</b>                      | <b>339</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |
| Number of children                                | 1                                 | 4                | 1.18              |
|                                                   | 2                                 | 25               | 7.37              |
|                                                   | 3                                 | 56               | 16.52             |
|                                                   | 4                                 | 99               | 29.20             |
|                                                   | 5+                                | 155              | 45.72             |
|                                                   | <b>Total</b>                      | <b>339</b>       | <b>100.00</b>     |

Table 3 indicates that 58.11% of respondents hailed from polygamous families while 41.89% were from monogamous families. This may be attributed to large number of families members characterized by polygamous families. As a result of this, girls are

married off early to reduce pressure of managing large families. The finding is corroborated by assertions of one discussant that:

*I come from a polygamous family and my father did little to care for all of us. My*

*mother struggled to put food on our table and pay our school fees. What my father earned from his peasant farming was not enough to cater for family expenses. I decided on my own to drop out of school at age 15 years and get married.* (FGD discussant from Ndhiwa sub-county).

This finding is in line with that of Razu (2018) who postulates that girls raised in polygamous are more likely to be married as children. The finding also concurred with those of Rose and Siti (2020) who asserted that children raised in polygamous families experience physical and emotional abuse that drive girls to marry early to escape from such abuse. Lebni et al., (2020) contended that families sometimes marry their daughters off early to protect them from harmful situations in homes especially polygamous homes.

Regarding the nature of respondent's family, findings revealed that slightly more than fifty percent of the respondents (50.44%) hails from families headed by single parents. Respondents reported widow (15.04%), single mother due to separation or divorce (15.63%), widower (4.13%) and single father due to separation/divorce (7.96%). On the other hand, 28.91% of the respondents had both parents alive while 20.65% had grandparents as their guardian. This finding is supported by KII where one of the interviewees indicated that children raised by single parents are likely to be eloped in marriage early in life to ease the burden faced by such parents in raising them. It is equally corroborated by a discussant, who is a house wife, assertion that:

*I was raised by a single mother. I was the first born among four siblings. My mother struggled to take care of us by providing our basic needs. At age 15 years, I decided to get married so as to ease the burden my mother had in taking care of us.* (FGD discussant from Ndhiwa sub-county).

This finding concurred with those of Lebni et al. (2020) who asserted that girls from dysfunctional families resulting from separation and divorce are

more likely to be married as children. The study is also supported by those of Pourtaheri et al. (2023) who posit that family headed by one parent is associated factor to early marriage.

With regard to respondents' spouses' family, the finding was not much different from those of respondent's families. It revealed that 45.71% comes from families headed by single parents while 29.79% from families with both parents alive. However, only 9.14% of the respondents stated that their husbands hail from families headed by grandparents and 15.34% lived with other relatives. Coming from a family headed by one parent is a factor associated with early marriage (Pourtaheri et al., 2023).

Regarding sleeping arrangements of respondents prior to marriage, data in the table 2 illustrates that more than half, 58.11%, of the respondents were sleeping in their parents' kitchen. This was followed at a distance by parent's houses, 11.50%, grandparent's houses, 10.32%, brother's houses, 8.55%, neighbours' houses, 5.90% and lastly in their uncles' houses, 3.54%. Majority of girls sleeping in their parents' kitchen by be attributed to sleeping arrangement in rural area where girls are not allowed to share a room with their parents at a particular age. This finding concurred with those of Juma et al (2014) who found that girls in some communities sleeping in separate structures like kitchens, grandparents' houses, neighbors' homes or brother's houses and this exposure them to risky sexual behaviour which may lead to child marriage. This finding is also supported by those of Girls Not Brides (2018) which stated that girls from low-income families frequently see marriage as a path to better living circumstances, particularly if their present surroundings are unsafe or unhygienic. A study by Human Rights Watch (2016) in Malawi and Tanzania equally found that girls who were disproportionately affected by the lack of access to safe sleeping and sanitary facilities in rural regions got into marriage early.

Lastly, table 3 reveals that 45.72% of the respondents had five or more siblings. On the other hand, 29.20 of the respondents had four siblings,

16.52% had three siblings, 7.37% had two siblings while only 1.18% had one sibling. This may be attributed to the fact that parents with many children tend to organize marriages for their daughters early enough to free family overdependent and also to avoid issues of younger siblings getting married before their elder ones. In FGDs, one of the discussants who is a fishmonger revealed that:

*I got married before age 18 years because of pressure I got from my parents. They wanted me to be married so that I create space for my younger siblings. We were nine children in my family and my father was a mere peasant fisherman while my mother was a housewife. I had no option but to be married so that I ease the*

*pressure in my family of birth* (FGD discussant from Suba North sub-county).

This finding is in line with those of Pesando & Abufhele (2019) who found that girls whose next-youngest sibling is a girl face a higher risk of marriage because parents feel the pressure to arrange their daughters' marriage in sequence. Pourtaheri et al., (2023) A systematic review highlighted that family size is a contributing factor to child marriage, as larger families may struggle to provide for all children, making early marriage a perceived solution to alleviate economic strain. Rumble et al, (2018) posits that having a family size of more than 5 is a contributing factor to child marriage.

**Table 4**

*Respondents' knowledge regarding family structure and child marriage*

| Statement                                                            | SD             | D              | NU            | A              | SA             | Mean | Sd    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|------|-------|
| Girls raised by single mothers are likely to be married as children. | 102<br>(30.1%) | 118<br>(34.8%) | 68<br>(20.1%) | 40<br>(11.8%)  | 11<br>(3.2%)   | 2.23 | 1.102 |
| Girls raised by single fathers are likely to be married as children. | 27 (8.0%)      | 65<br>(19.2%)  | 61<br>(18.8%) | 135<br>(39.8%) | 51<br>(15.0%)  | 3.35 | 1.180 |
| Girls from poor backgrounds are likely to be married as children.    | 14 (4.1%)      | 24 (7.1%)      | 47<br>(13.9%) | 154<br>(45.4%) | 100<br>(29.5%) | 3.89 | 1.039 |
| Girls raised by grandparents are likely to be married as children.   | 16 (4.7%)      | 37<br>(10.9%)  | 71<br>(20.9%) | 150<br>(44.2%) | 65<br>(19.2%)  | 3.62 | 1.060 |
| Girls from polygamous families are likely to be married as children. | 19 (5.6%)      | 42<br>(12.4%)  | 54<br>(15.9%) | 138<br>(40.7%) | 86<br>(25.4%)  | 3.68 | 1.146 |

With regard to whether girls raised by single mothers are likely to be married as children, majority of the respondents 220 (64.9%) were in disagreement with the statement. Only 51 (15%) were in agreement. This was presented by a mean of 2.23 and a standard deviation of 1.102. This is a clear indication that being raised by a single mother

may not be a main reason for child marriage. This may be due to the fact that single mothers tend to be overprotective to their girls so that they don't fall prey to their predicaments hence delayed marriage.

A contrary result was obtained when respondents were asked whether girls raised by single fathers are likely to be married as children. 135 (39.8%) of the

respondents agreed while 51(15.0%) strongly agreed. This represents more than a half (54.8%) of the respondents who were in support of the statement. A mean response rate of 3.35 and standard deviation of 1.180 was obtained indicating that most of them agreed with the statement.

Similarly, a question was posed on whether girls from poor backgrounds are likely to be married as children. A mean response rate of 3.89 and standard deviation of 1.039 was obtained indicating that majority of the respondents agree with the statement. This was reflected by 154(45.4%) and 100(29.5%) of respondents who agreed and strongly agreed respectively. Only 24(7.1%) and 14(4.1%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. 47(13.9%) were neutral.

Regarding a statement that 'Girls raised by grandparents are likely to be married as children' 215 (63.6) of the respondents were in favour. Only

53 (15.6) gave a contrary opinion. On the other hand, 71(20.9%) were neutral. A mean of 3.62 and standard deviation of 1.060 was obtained indicating that majority are in the agreement with the statement.

Most of the respondents equally agreed that girls from polygamous families are likely to be married as children as revealed by a mean of 3.68 and standard deviation of 1.146. this was reflected by 138(40.7%) of respondents who agreed and 86(25.4%) who strongly agreed. 42(12.4%) and 19(5.6%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

### Regression analysis of influence of family structure on child marriage

The study established a linear model to describe the influence of family structure (independent variable) on the level of child marriage (dependent variable). Four constructs of family structure were considered in a model at once.

**Table 5**

*Regression Analysis Model summary output: Influence of family structure on child marriage*

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .895 <sup>a</sup> | .802     | .799              | .35358                     |

Predictors: (Constant), Number of siblings, Nature of respondents' family, Sleeping arrangement and Type of family.

The R-value .895 shows strong correlation. R-square is 0.802 which means that combined independent variables account for 80.2% of the variation in the

dependent variable. This means that there are other factors that account for 19.8%.

**Table 6**

*ANOVA- Influence of family structure to the level of child marriage*

| Model |            | Sum of Squares | Df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1     | Regression | 168.846        | 5   | 42.211      | 337.644 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|       | Residual   | 41.756         | 333 | .125        |         |                   |
|       | Total      | 210.602        | 338 |             |         |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: Age at marriage

b. Predictors: (Constant), Number of siblings, Nature of respondents' family, Sleeping arrangement and Type of family.

The ANOVA was used to test the null hypothesis that multiple R in the population equals 0. In this case the model reached statistical significance [ $F(5, 333) = 337.644$ ,  $R^2 = .802$ ,  $\text{sig.} < .05$ ], implying that the model was highly significant and adequate enough

to explain the variance in child marriage. In other words, the results show that the studied aspects of family structure statistically significantly predict child marriage, meaning the regression model is a good fit of the data. From Table 6, P value (.000) is

less than significant P-value of 0.05 hence the null hypothesis that “There is no significant association

between family structure and child marriage in the study area” is rejected.

**Table 7**

*Coefficient Output: Influence of family structure on child marriage*

| Model                         | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | T      | Sig. |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
|                               | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| (Constant)                    | .862                        | .090       |                           | 9.552  | .000 |
| Sleeping arrangement          | .223                        | .014       | .493                      | 15.648 | .000 |
| Type of family                | .289                        | .056       | .181                      | 5.162  | .000 |
| Nature of respondents' family | .109                        | .012       | .296                      | 8.765  | .000 |
| Number of siblings            | .113                        | .022       | .145                      | 5.069  | .000 |

In Table 7 it is observed from the model that when family structure variables (sleeping arrangement, type of family, nature of family and number of siblings) are held constant, the intercept value ( $B=0.862$ ) represent the baseline level of child marriage. The standardized beta coefficients indicate the relative strength of each predictor, with sleeping arrangement ( $\beta = 0.493$ ,  $p < .05$ ) having the highest impact on child marriage. This means that one standard deviation improvement in sleeping arrangement leads to a 0.493 standard deviation increase in child marriage. This was followed by nature of respondents' family ( $\beta = 0.296$ ,  $p < .05$ ), type of family ( $\beta = 0.181$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and number of siblings ( $\beta = 0.145$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, from the model it was noted that all the aspects of family structure to the child marriage made statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) unique contribution to the model.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concluded that family structure is an influencer of child marriage. The combined constructs of family structure (number of siblings, nature of girls' family, sleeping arrangements of girls and family type) when subjected to regression analysis, yielded R-value of 0.895 which shows a strong correlation. A strong relationship therefore exists between family structure and child marriage. The four family structure constructs were found to have significant influence to child marriage. For

instance, sleeping arrangement ( $\beta = 0.493$ ,  $p < .05$ ), nature of respondents' family ( $\beta = 0.296$ ,  $p < .05$ ), type of family ( $\beta = 0.181$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and number of siblings ( $\beta = 0.145$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Study recommends for government to consider a well-structured housing policy that will spell out the basic housing structure for families. This will ensure equity for both adolescent boys and girls as far as sleeping arrangements are concerned.

### Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The authors, while preparing this work, utilized ChatGPT for spell checking and grammar refinement. After using this AI tool, the authors carefully reviewed and edited the content as necessary and assumes full responsibility for the publication's content.

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**Ouko:** Writing – Original draft, Methodology, Data collection, Analysis and Discussions. **Otengah:** Writing – Review & Editing, Methodology & Conceptualization. **Osur:** Writing – Review & Editing, Conceptualization.

### Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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