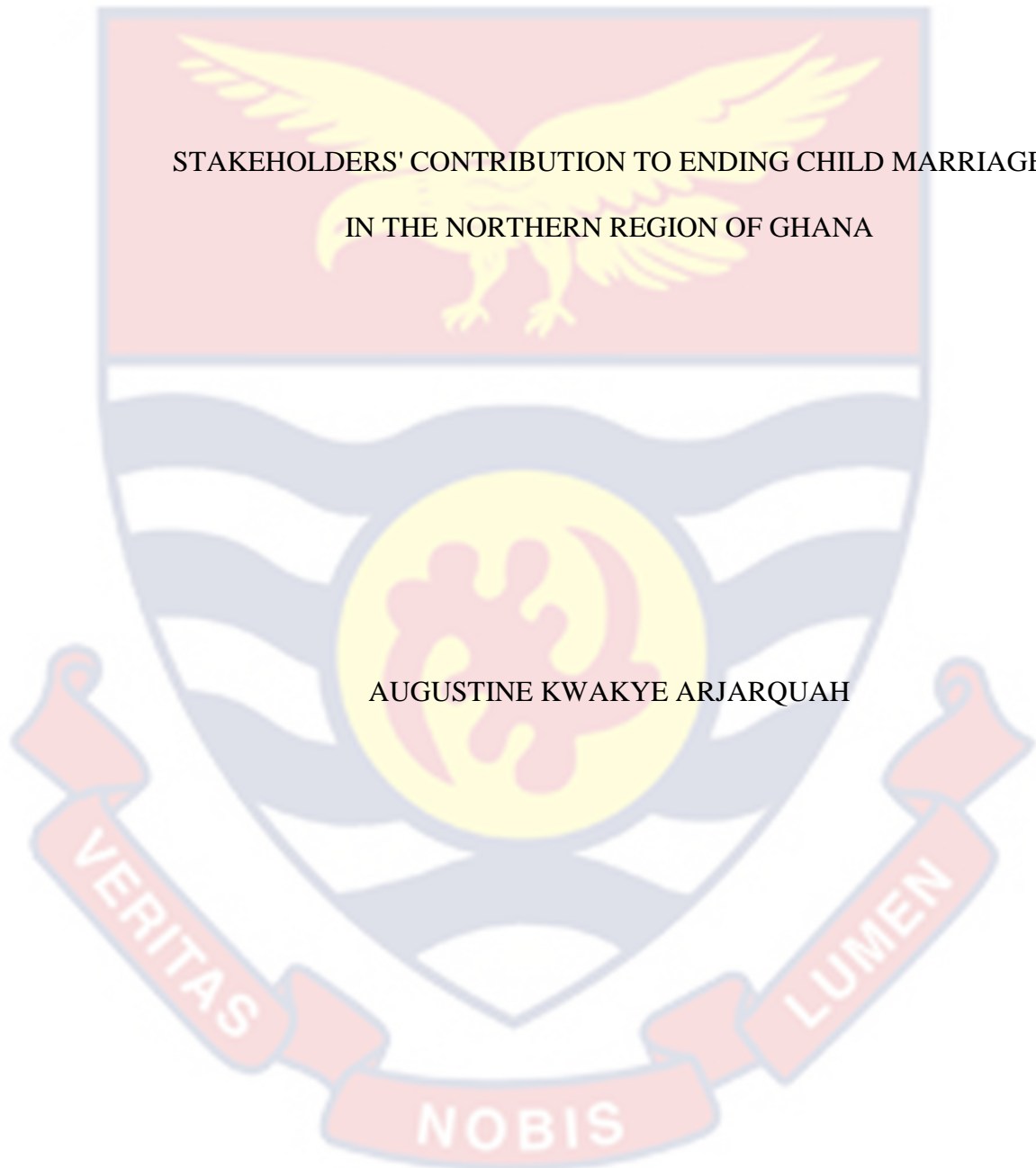


UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST



STAKEHOLDERS' CONTRIBUTION TO ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE
IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA

AUGUSTINE KWAKYE ARJARQUAH

2022



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STAKEHOLDERS CONTRIBUTION TO ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE
IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA

BY

AUGUSTINE KWAKYE ARJARQUAH

A thesis submitted to the Department of Geography and Regional Planning of
the Faculty of Social Sciences, College of Humanities and Legal Studies,
University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment for the award of Doctor of
Philosophy in Geography and Regional Planning

DECEMBER 2022

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original research and that no part has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: Augustine Kwakye Arjarquah

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised under the guidelines on supervision of the thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature: Date:.....

Name: Prof. K. B. Antwi

Co-supervisor's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: Dr. C. O. Adetona

ABSTRACT

Child marriage is still widely practised in many developing countries. It is estimated that the number of child brides in Sub-Saharan Africa will double by 2050 and become the region with the largest number of child brides worldwide. Despite the available legal frameworks, the prevalence of child marriage in Ghana remains high. This study, therefore, interrogated stakeholders' contribution to ending child marriage in the Northern region of Ghana. The stakeholder theory, victim blame theory and ecological model underpinned the study. A conceptual framework on stakeholders' role in ending child marriage was used to guide data collection and analysis. The study used the pragmatist philosophy using a mixed method approach to data collection, analysis, and reporting. A total of 1,465 responded to structured questionnaires, and 44 individual in-depth interviews were conducted. Thematic analysis, descriptive, and inferential statistics were employed in the data analysis. Child marriage is still relatively high (36,6%) in the Northern region of Ghana. Individual, family, structural and cultural factors influence child marriage. Stakeholders use legal frameworks, policies and programmes developed by the government, international bodies and Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) to end child marriage in the Northern region. Stakeholders are faced with several challenges that are experienced at the individual, family, cultural and structural levels. There should be conscious efforts by the various stakeholders, such as the Police, Judiciary, NGOs, etc.. to further strengthen and enforce laws, programs and policies to end child marriage.

KEYWORDS

Child

Child marriage

Stakeholder

Northern region

Ghana



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my wife and children.



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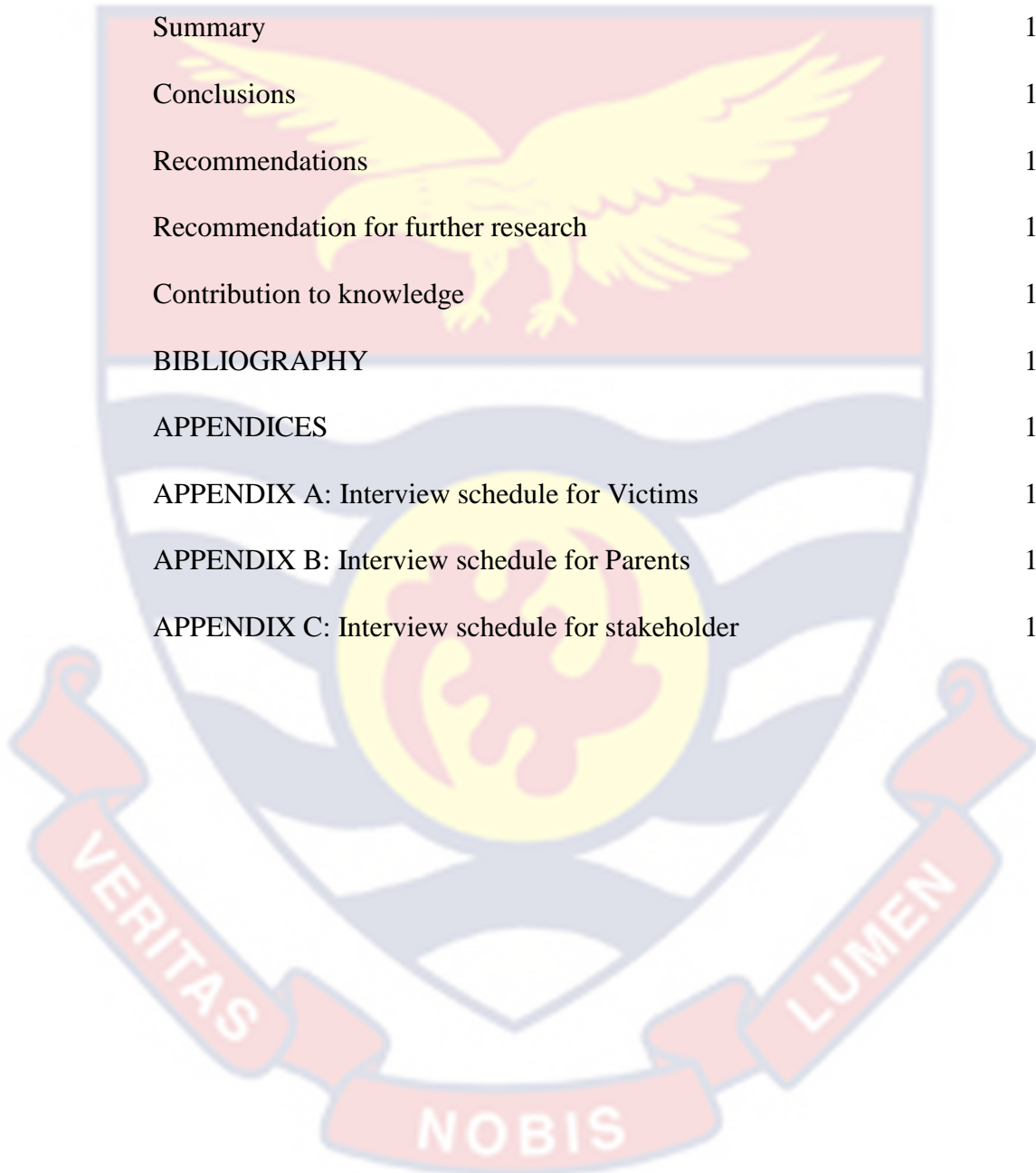
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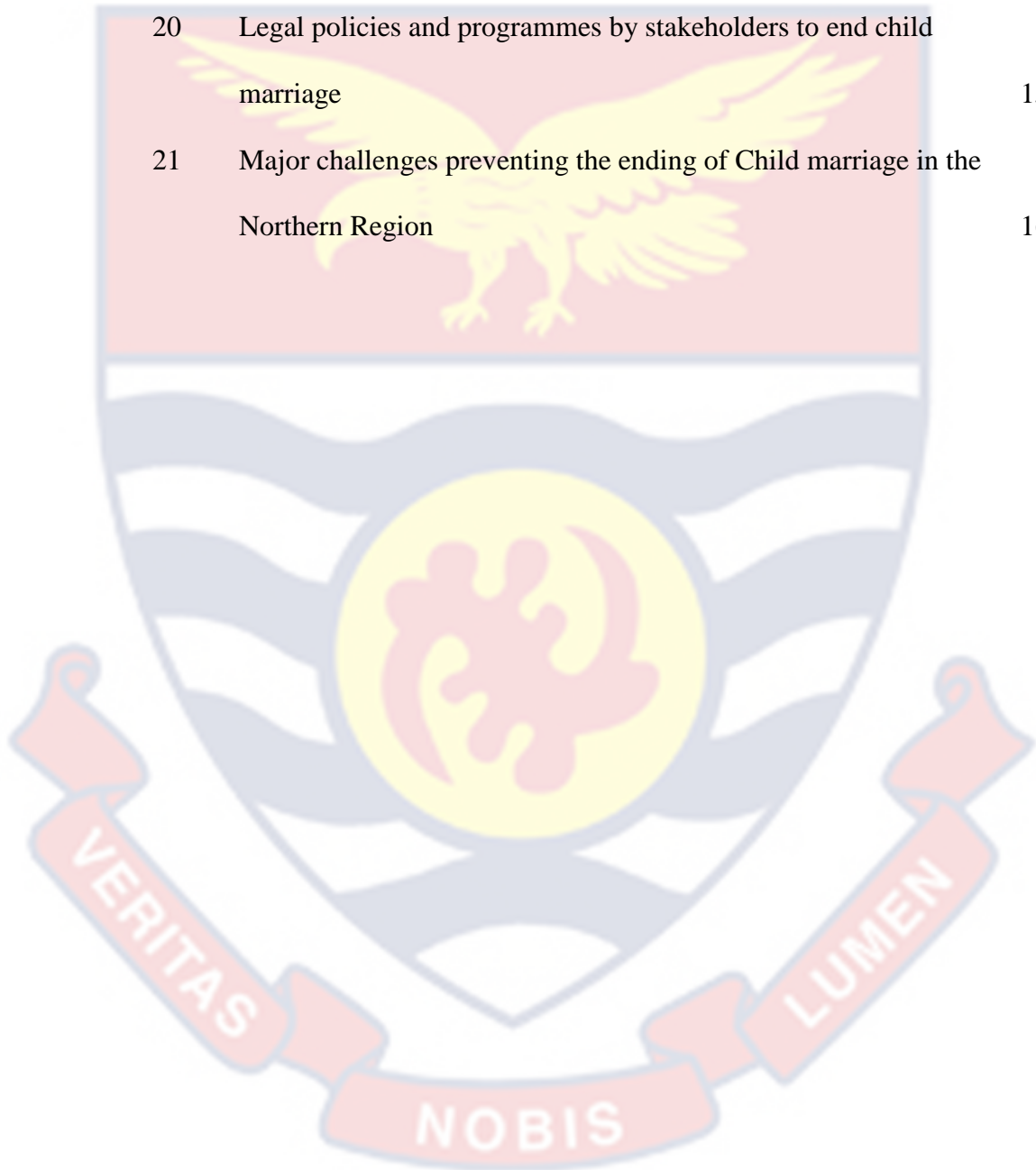
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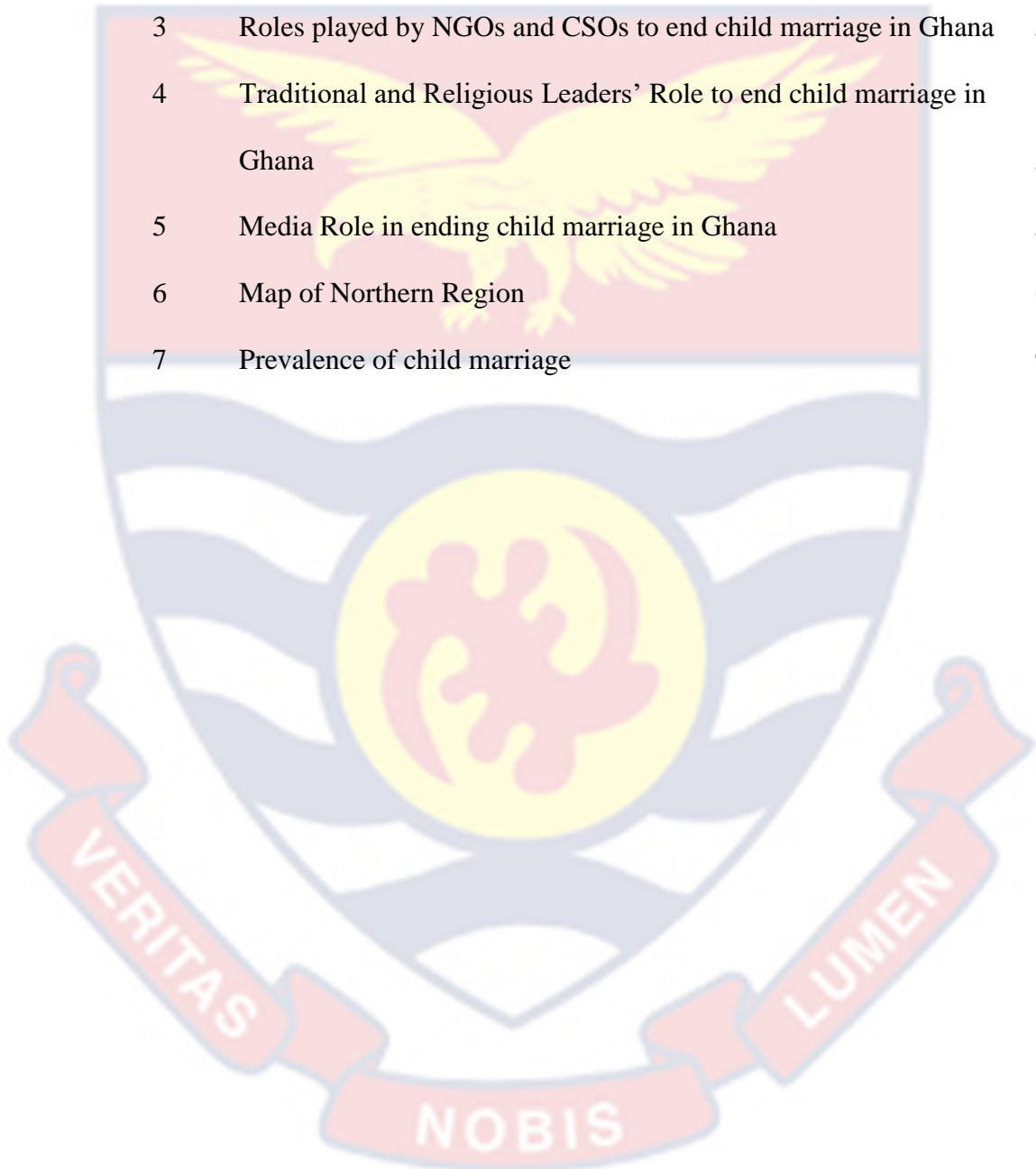
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Globally, several voices have been raised by government agencies, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to maintain that Child marriage is a violation of human rights that unfairly targets young girls (UNICEF, 2018). Projections on child marriage in Africa are alarming. They indicate that due to population growth, the devastating consequences of child marriage are likely to affect an even larger number of girls in Africa in the coming years. If nothing is done to accelerate progress toward ending child marriage, it is estimated that the number of child brides in Sub-Saharan Africa will double by 2050. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) will overtake Asia to become the region with the largest number of child brides worldwide (UNICEF, 2015). The data from UNICEF's 2014 global report indicates that child marriage among girls is most common in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The 10 countries with the highest rates are found in these two regions. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) reports from various countries reflect the top ten countries with the highest practice rates.

Despite recent declines, child marriage is still widely practised in many developing countries (Singh & Samara, 1996; United Nations Children's Fund, 2014). Every third of young women in developing countries, mostly in Africa (excluding China), marry as a child (Santhya, 2011). While the average age of first marriage is rising worldwide, many girls in Sub-Saharan Africa still marry before they turn 18. (Hossain, Mahumud & Saw, 2016; Kamal, Hassan,

Alam & Ying, 2015; Mensch, Bagah, Clark & Binka, 1999). One out of seven girls in developing countries are estimated to marry before age 15, and 38 percent marry before age 18 (UNFPA-UNICEF, 2011). For example, in Ghana, 4.4 percent of women aged 15–49 married by the exact age of 15 in 2006 and 5.8 percent of women aged 15–49 married by the exact age of 15 in 2011. Furthermore, the percentage of women aged 20–24 who married before 18 was 22 percent in 2006 and 21 percent in 2011 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015). Premarital sex and childbearing bring shame to the family, so child marriage is used to uphold chastity (Malhotra, 2010).

Pre-marital sex and childbearing are frowned upon in traditional Ghanaian communities, so early marriage is encouraged. For example, betrothal (or, in some cases, the exchange of girls) frequently occurs, even before birth, to ensure that sex and childbearing occur within marriage (the University of Ghana Centre for Social Policy Studies & World Vision Ghana, 2017). Another traditional factor influencing child marriage is the need to strengthen social ties or form alliances (Ahonsi et al., 2019). Because premarital sex and childbearing are considered "immoral," Ghana's two main religious traditions (Christianity and Islam) promote early marriage. These actions were, and sometimes still are, strictly forbidden and occasionally sanctioned. Islam and Christianity strive to keep sex and childbearing within the confines of marriage (Ahonsi et al., 2019).

As a result, they tend to indirectly promote early marriage (Addai, 2000). By reducing the time between menarche and marriage, some Muslim groups try to ensure that children are born within marriage (Adjei, Sarfo, Asiedu & Sarfo, 2014). It is evident that whereas traditional and religious

practices attempt to protect girls from pre-marital sex and childbearing, girls who become pregnant are often married off to the men who impregnated them for them to care for their children (the University of Ghana Centre for Social Policy Studies & World Vision Ghana, 2017).

Marriage is very important for women's status in Ghanaian communities. Marriage is synonymous with recognition and respect. Evidence suggests that early marriage earns some child brides respect and honour because they have "settled down" (married) and are seen as responsible by both peers and adults in the community (Ahonsi et al., 2019). In addition, adult parents with married daughters are regarded as respected members of the community (the University of Ghana Centre for Social Policy Studies & World Vision Ghana, 2017).

Despite these legal frameworks, the prevalence of child marriage in Ghana remains high, one in five girls marries before her 18th birthday (20.7%), and one in 20 girls (4.9%) marries before her 15th birthday (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015). Thus, child marriage is the union, whether official or not, of two persons, at least one of whom is under 18 years of age (United Nations Children's Fund, 2014). UNICEF asserted that under their age, child spouses are incapable of giving full consent, meaning that child marriages should be considered a violation of human rights and the child's rights. In addition, child marriage is a gendered phenomenon that affects girls and boys differently. Overall, the number of boys in child marriages worldwide is significantly lower than that of girls, and married girls are more vulnerable to gender-based violence and discrimination within marriage (UNICEF, 2014).

They also often experience complications during pregnancy and childbirth, as their bodies are not ready for childbearing (UNICEF, 2014). The right of girls to be protected from child marriage is upheld in various international policy instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of discrimination against Women (CEDAW), both of which call for countries to legislate a minimum marriage age of 18. But despite this legal protection, each year, thousands of child marriages occur (UNFPA, 2016). According to UNICEF (2017), child marriage is a fundamental violation of human rights. Despite international agreements and national laws, the marriage of girls less than 18 years of age is common worldwide and affects millions. Globally 15 million girls are married before the age 18; that is 28 girls every day and 1 every 2 seconds (UNICEF, 2017). Child marriage is also common in Ghana, especially in the northern part of the country. According to UNICEF (2015) report, one out of four women in Ghana get married before 18, thus, 27 percent of the population. Also, child marriage escalated nationwide from 25.9 percent to 27.0 percent between 2006 and 2011.

Ghana ranks 61st in the International Child Marriage Ranking (National Population Council's Report, 2018). On average, one out of five girls in Ghana is married before their 18th birthday. In other words, the percentage of girls between 20-24 years who were married or in a union by 18 is 21 percent nationally (GHS, 2015). This amounts to approximately 260,000 affected girls in the country, however, for girls living in the original three Northern Regions of Ghana (i.e., Northern Region, Upper East and Upper West regions). This number increases to one (1) out of three (3) girls (34%)

due to severe poverty, high illiteracy rate, social norms and lack of appropriate parenting. Available evidence suggests regional rates of Child Marriage- Upper East Region (39.2%); Western Region (36.7%); Upper West Region (36.3%), and Ashanti Region (30.5%) (UNICEF, 2015).

Child Marriage is more common in rural (36.2%) areas than in urban (19.4%). Marriage before age 15, according to the Ghana Health Service Report (2014), asserts that it does occur, although it is rarer for girls in Ghana (National prevalence is 5%). In Ghana, girls from rural areas are twice more likely to become child brides than those in urban areas (UNICEF, 2017). This may be due to the high poverty rate, illiteracy and social norms. Child marriage is an extremely complex issue, influenced by – and influencing – the social and economic conditions in a given local, regional or national context, as well as cultural, social, and religious attitudes to gender roles, sexuality, and the appropriate age for childbearing (UNFPA, 2015).

Even though the practice of Child Marriage is slowly decreasing, one (1) in five (5) young women today were married before age 18, compared to one (1) in three (3) in the early 1990s (NPC, 2018). Meanwhile, there are numerous laws for protecting children, adolescents and young people in Ghana. Yet, several rights are denied by child marriage in contravention of the provision in Article 4 (Protection of Rights) under the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child. The right to education, the right to be protected from physical and mental violence, rape and sexual exploitation, the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, right to meaningful employment. This pose questions such as: are the various policies and legal framework such as the 1992 Constitution of Ghana; Children’s Act, 1998 Act

560; Domestic Violence Act, 2005; the 1994 National Population Policy; the 2000 Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy; the National Gender Policy, 2015; and National Reproductive Health Service Policy and Standards in Ghana being effective and efficiently implemented? Were all key stakeholders of child marriage harnessed in the implementation stages of the policies? Are these policies, programmes and projects being monitored and evaluated?

Moreover, given the enormity of the problem in the world, global momentum to address child marriage is increasing. In September 2013, for instance, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted a resolution banning child marriage, which Ghana supported (UN Resolution, 2013). In 2015, global leaders included a target to end child marriage under Goal Five (Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls) of the recently adopted United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the regional level, African leaders have also committed to ending child marriage. In 2014, the African Union (AU) launched a two-year Continental Campaign to end child marriage. The following year in 2015, the AU and the Government of Zambia convened a high-level Girl's Summit to enhance continental awareness of child marriage's effects and accelerate the end of child marriage in Africa. The outcome of this Girls Summit to end Child marriage was a renewed commitment to eliminating child marriage in Africa no later than 2030 (Nepal, 2018).

Therefore, looking at the current trend, child marriage is one of the population issues of great concern at the international, national, regional, and local levels. This is due to several implications it has on adolescents and young person's sexual reproductive health, including demographic, economic,

and socio-cultural implications (Ngyuen & Wodon, 2012; Nepal, 2018). As a lower-middle-income country, Ghana prohibits child marriage under its constitution and by law. More so significant efforts have been made in Ghana to address child marriage. According to Ghana's 1992 Constitution, a person under 18 is a child and, therefore, cannot marry or be given off in marriage.

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP), the Government has launched an Ending Child Marriage Campaign, the National Gender Policy, the Justice for Children Policy, and the Child and Family Welfare Policy, among others, to eliminate child marriage in Ghana. The Ending Child Marriage Campaign is preparing a 10-year National Strategic Framework to give all stakeholders an integrated vision and clear direction. This framework sets out: National goal; objectives, strategies, guiding principles, processes and mechanisms for coordination of joint efforts; monitoring and evaluation framework; and an operational plan for 2017 and 2018 (Nepal, 2018).

Other interventions and programmes include the SISTA initiative (The SISTAs Club Initiative is an all-girls program that provides a platform for young girls [10-19years] to be empowered with health and socio-economic assets to build their agency and ensure a higher chance of fulfilling their potential (UNFPA, 2018) in Volta Region by UNFPA in partnership with Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG); Hats Community Empowerment Programme (HACEP Ghana), Youth for Change Ghana to end child marriage and promote girls rights; Let the Girl Smile: say no to child marriage campaign by Northern Sector Action on Awareness Creation (NORSAAC); and lastly, the National Population Council set targets on age at

first marriage, “to reduce the proportion of women who marry before age 18 years by 80 percent by the year 2020.”

In addition, girls who marry early are at a higher risk of intimate partner violence, poorer mental health, and limited decision-making power due to power imbalances within their marriage (Nour, 2009). Child marriage is also associated with adverse economic outcomes, including lower educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and poverty rates (Delprato, Akyeampong, Sabates & Hernandez-Fernandez, 2015). Furthermore, it denies it affected girls’ and boys’ rights to education, health and security and the right to choose when and who to marry. Furthermore, child marriage robs the affected children of their dignity and prevents them from realizing their full potential and contribution to society. Though child marriage involves both sexes, girls are disproportionately affected (Human Rights Watch, 2015). One of the key lessons emerging globally from the development of similar plans is that the Strategic Framework is more likely to be implemented if it is developed with significant involvement of the relevant stakeholders. Thus, the key stakeholders supposed to make concerted efforts to address child marriage in Ghana include diverse government agencies, parliamentarians, civil society, development partners, traditional and religious leaders, parents and most importantly, children who are at risk or have already been married.

Significance of the Study

Combating child marriage is a universal mandate enshrined as the third goal of the United Nations Development Goals. The findings of the study will unveil the level of knowledge of key institutions mandated by law to end child marriage in Ghana. Also, the study findings will furnish decision-makers with

key information on the activities of stakeholder institutions on child marriage to enable them to make informed decisions. In addition, findings are useful to institutions such as the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC), CHRAJ and Ghana Police and other international bodies again for child marriage to intensify the call to end child marriage now.

Furthermore, this study will add up to the limited pool of resources on child marriage. This will provide insight into child marriage and its related issues and assist researchers or academicians in researching other facets of child marriage in Ghana and beyond. Thus, it will serve as an academic reference for interested associations, researchers and other organisations or individuals interested in the subject matter.

Delimitation

The study assesses stakeholders' efforts to end Ghana's child marriage. However, the study was limited to the original Northern Regions of Ghana before creating the current sixteen (16) regions. Also, the study considered stakeholders such as religious and traditional leaders, victims and perpetrators, and Governmental Agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations. Moreover, issues concerning their respective efforts to end child marriage were considered. Furthermore, the study was a triangulation of analytical methods and data collection approaches from the qualitative and quantitative philosophies to determine the pervasiveness of child marriage and identify the significant factors and consequences associated with child marriage. Efforts of stakeholders through legal, policies and programme frameworks were assessed, and challenges faced by stakeholders were also identified and discussed.

Problem Statement

Early marriage has hurt education in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Ghana, as it has reduced literacy and secondary school completion (Nguyen & Wodon, 2014). Child marriage, defined as a marriage between a couple who are under the legal minimum age of eighteen is a serious issue that has ramifications for human rights, and health as well as the economy. High incidence rates in Ghana's Northern Region present serious obstacles to the region's growth and development, empowerment of females, and the freedoms of children (Anarfi, 1997). Although there currently existing international efforts to end child marriage, successful measures require a thorough understanding of the local context. Deeply ingrained sociocultural norms and financial challenges frequently contribute to the continuation of marriages at an early age in the northern part of the country (Ghana) (Teye, 1996). The participation and the contributions of different stakeholders, such as governmental entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local community leaders, and foreign agencies in tackling this issue, are crucial to investigate, though.

Research points to a deficit in the methodical assessment of the efforts made by stakeholders in this area. For instance, even though the Children's Act of 1998 and other national laws are in place, it is still unclear how well they are integrated and enforced locally (Otoo-Oyortey, 2001). A thorough grasp of the combined impact, difficulties, and possibilities of the diverse stakeholders' respective attempts to end marriage among children in Northern Ghana is absent, even though these initiatives are acknowledged. To close this gap, our research will maximize the involvement of stakeholders and provide practical,

long-lasting solutions to end the practice of child marriage in the northern portion of Ghana.

International and non-governmental organizations are involved, but more research is necessary to determine their exact impact, degree of congruence with local settings, and partnerships with local organizations (Girls Not Brides, 2020).

(Santhya, 2011; Karei & Erulkar, 2010). Indeed, de Groot et al. (2018) believe that a clearer understanding of the dynamics surrounding child marriage is necessary to inspire more action in reducing child marriage rates, which have stalled in recent years, and to inform programming that assists child brides.

Furthermore, existing data sets widely used to study the negative effects of child marriage, such as the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), are designed to be comparable across countries, including Ghana and thus may not include all the indicators of interest that can be used to address the child marriage menace (Ahonsi et al., 2019; Karei & Erulkar, 2010). This has led to the pervasiveness of child marriage in development countries such as Ghana and other African nations. Having signed on to international resolutions, national legislation, and campaigns by numerous national and international organizations, Ghana's child marriage remains an issue of concern, with little empirical evidence to support programme initiatives to address the practice.

The underlying argument of the study is the question of the contributions of key stakeholders in Ghana in tackling child marriage. First and foremost, the study will ascertain the pervasiveness of child marriage in

the northern region of Ghana and retrospectively examine the immediate parental or guardian environment that predisposes young girls to child marriage. Accordingly, the study seeks to fill the research gap by quantitatively and qualitatively examining and discussing stakeholders' contributions to ending child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana.

The researcher asked the following research questions to aid in examining the achievement and challenges of the major stakeholders. The first research question intends to identify the stakeholders and their major contributions to ending child marriage in the Northern region. Afterwards, the researcher asked what causes child marriage in the Northern region. This question was asked to introduce contextual relationships between child marriage and the factors influencing its continuity in the region. On the third researcher question, the researcher intended to find out how stakeholders are contributing to ending child marriage in the Northern region. Lastly, the researcher asked questions concerning the challenges stakeholders are faced in ending child marriage in the Northern region.

Purpose of the Study

General Objective

The study's main aim was to interrogate stakeholders' contribution to ending child marriage in the Northern Regions of Ghana.

Specific Objectives

To address the main objective, the study set out the following specific objectives:

1. Identify and profile major stakeholders' contributions to ending child marriage.

2. Analyse the causes of child marriage in the Norther region.
3. Examine the legal policies and programmes introduced by stakeholders to end child marriage in the Northern region of Ghana.
4. Explore the major challenges stakeholders face in tackling child marriage in the Northern region of Ghana.

Definition of terms

A **child** is a male or female below the age of 18 years.

Child marriage is a formal or informal union in which at least one of the parties is a child.

Operational definition of child marriage: In the context of this study, child marriage is operationalized as the formal or informal union in which one part is a female below the age of 18 years.

Limitation of the Study

Positionality

The researcher has a background in social sciences and a keen interest in topics concerning human rights, gender equality, and child protection. The researcher's experience helps in comprehending the greater context of child marriage, the legal and regulatory frameworks, and the significance of grassroots activities. Being the founder and leader of the African Traditional Leaders Against Trafficking in Person (COTRATIP), a child trafficking advocacy organization adds a degree of empathy and dedication to the well-being of children, which may determine the study emphasis. In tackling the issue of child marriage in Ghana, the researcher recognizes the significance of cultural sensitivity and cultural relativity. The Northern Region has distinct cultural practices, and the researcher recognizes that these practices must be

understood and appreciated within their cultural settings. Cultural sensitivity guides the research methodology to ensure that local voices and perspectives are heard and respected. The principal investigator, being a Senior Police detective in the Ghana Police Service, Kumasi, and doubling as a traditional ruler at Adjena, in the Akwamu traditional area, advocate for children's rights and firmly believes in the importance of child protection. This perspective may influence the research by focusing on the best interests of the child and the need for comprehensive child protection measures, therefore, underscoring the urgency of ending child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana. As the principal investigator who has personal commitment to children's rights and gender equality, an immense effort would be made to ensure neutrality and objectivity throughout the research process. The aim is to present a balanced and evidence-based analysis of stakeholders' contributions towards ending child marriage in the northern region of Ghana. It is significant to recognize that the principal investigator's positionality may influence the research process and findings. To mitigate potential biases, rigorous methodologies, consultation from diverse perspectives, critical analysis of data and transparency would be employed throughout the research process to ensure integrity of the study.

Limitations

Conducting research in Ghana's northern area involves a number of substantial problems. The region's ethnic groups and cultures are diverse, making it difficult to capture the whole spectrum of diversity and impacting the generalizability of findings. Linguistic diversity affects research further due to language hurdles and the necessity for proficient translation, causing

problems with effective communication and data collection. Furthermore, rural and difficult-to-reach places with poor infrastructure and limited network connectivity present access issues. The scope of research is constrained by limited resources, including funds, manpower, and logistical assistance, and time restrictions are compounded by the COVID-19 epidemic. The generalizability of findings to the broader population is typically limited by research focusing on specialized demographics within the region, such as child brides, educators, or healthcare workers. The Northern region's ever-changing socioeconomic, political, and cultural backdrop might render research findings obsolete as dynamics change over time. Furthermore, the region's data availability and quality are poor, and ethical considerations and cultural sensitivities must be managed, restricting the breadth of inquiry. The difficulties in locating and recruiting a representative sample are exacerbated by regional differences in population density and demographics.

Organization of the Study

The thesis consists of ten chapters; the first chapter introduces the study and the background information and sets the rate at which the study was developed. Chapter one of the study explained some important highlights, including the problem statement, research objectives, and research questions. Also, technical terms used in this chapter were explained, and the scope of the study and definitions of key terms were also covered in the first chapter. The following chapter also provides a section on how the entire thesis is drawn up. Chapter two presented an in-depth review of the literature concerned; theoretical background explaining different concepts, and clarification of the various concepts such as marriage and child marriage. The policy reviews and

empirical assessment of literature on the measures to end child marriage. This chapter also discussed the roles of the various stakeholders involved in child marriage and the study's conceptual model.

Chapter three covers the legal and policy framework aimed at reducing child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana, with several postulations and the reporting of the statistical results discussed in Chapter four. The research methods chosen, and the data collection methods are discussed in Chapter four. The chapter explains why the analysis involves adopting action research and evaluation as assessment tools. In addition, Chapter four discusses issues of ethical consideration as well as challenges to data collection and resolution. Chapter five (5) covered the covers the underlying causes of underlying causes of child marriage in the northern region. Chapter present the results of the qualitative causes of child marriage in the study. The sixth chapter was dedicated to the results and discussion on the prevalence of child against the various socio-demographic. This chapter served as a preliminary analysis to the binary logistic regression to be fitted in the subsequent chapter.

Regarding the seventh chapter, the researcher presented the results and discussions of the child and parental factors influencing child marriage in the northern region. The eighth chapter covered the results and discussion on legal policies and programmes by stakeholders to end child marriage in the Northern Region. The ninth chapter focused on the challenges faced by stakeholders in their efforts to end child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana. The tenth and final chapter summarised the entire work from the introduction to the last discussion. The researcher concluded and proposed some recommendations based on the study's findings.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This chapter reviews the study's related literature. It focuses on both a theoretical and empirical foundation for the study and aids in evaluating the nature and direction of the study. As a result, the literature review also evaluates studies identified in other prior literature relevant to the issue under investigation. The literature review is divided into three sections. Section one reviews theories underpinning the study and its relevance, while the second section examines the empirical literature with the last section of the chapter focusing on the conceptual framework and other conceptual issues.

Factors Influencing Child Marriage

The causes of child marriage have been extensively discussed in a variety of international literatures. Social customs, Dowry, demographic factors, educational attainment and its impact, economic factors, legal repercussions, and systemic need are the most widely acknowledged underlying factors. A major factor in the persistence of child marriage is poverty. In terms of feeding, clothing, education, and the fact that girls would get married and live in the home, parents saw girls as an economic burden. A family could only recoup their investment in a daughter by marrying her off in exchange for money and gain. Parents may be tempted to marry off a female child at a young age in some cultures because a girl's ability to manage money declines with age (Nawal, 2006). In situations like premarital sex and childbirth, child marriage is used to avoid embarrassing the family (Ahonsi et

al.,2019). Early marriage removes the stress of preserving the image of the traditional family, according to Ahonsi and colleagues (2019), who claim that child marriage in Ghana is shameful due to premarital sex and pregnancy in traditional society (Ahonsi et al.,2019). According to Bezie and Addisu's research on early marriages in West Ethiopia, in Injibara town, early girl marriages were caused by the close bonds between two families (74%), material benefits (20.4%), the inability to pay for all children's education (3.8%), and the need to maintain virginity before marriage (1.8%). (Bezie & Addisu, 2019). 167 (44.8 percent) of the 373 people that were interviewed who made up the entire sample got married before turning 18. The average age from graduation to first marriage was 17 years, with the minimum and maximum ages being 9 and 23, respectively (Bezie & Addisu,, 2019). 295 respondents, or 79.1%, did not provide their consent during their first marriage (Bezie & Addisu, 2019). Due to the financial weight of poverty and lack of access to options that could help people escape poverty, early marriage is a common practice. Although some families hold a different opinion, they believe that child marriage restricts and deters juvenile promiscuity (Bezie & Addisu, 2019).

Enduvalu and colleagues (2016) report that research on the causes and consequences of girl-child marriage in Nigeria's Plateau State shows that parents and poverty can also encourage girls to marry young. His writings claim that females with uneducated parents or parents with little education frequently marry young (Envuladu et al., 2016). He said that educated parents will probably put off having their young children get married. Child marriage was more common among farmers and those in lower socioeconomic classes.

Similar to this, early marriage rates are lowest in the richest quintile and highest in the poorest quintile in other African nations (Envuladu et al., 2016). He came to the conclusion that key determinants of early marriage in Plateau State included parents' low levels of education, poverty, religion, and place of residence (Envuladu et al., 2016). The primary causes of early marriage among women were pressure from families and a lack of financial resources. Early marriage of the female child is encouraged in Ethiopia as a strategy to increase family income, curb promiscuity, fortify relationships within the home, and prevent women from losing their value as wives as they mature (Bezie & Addisu, 2019). The practice of child marriage is firmly founded in customs that uphold a family's honor. Consequently, a girl's value is determined by her virginity and ability to be a good wife and mother (Gage, 2013).

Socio-Economic Determinants of Child Marriage: Evidence from the Iranian Provinces, research by Mozhgan Asna-Ashary, Mohammad Reza Farzanegan, Mehdi Feizi, and Hassan F. Gholipour, presents a fresh perspective on the situation in Iran. According to the study, child marriage keeps a girl from growing old enough to no longer be a woman a man or his family would want to marry (Asna-Ashary et al., 2020). Married children cannot decide whether to get married or with whom (Jensen & Thornton, 2003). According to Eftekharzadeh (2015), the primary causes of early marriage are family honor and societal expectations. Iranian law, which is founded on Sharia, supports a society where early child marriage is socially acceptable.

Using a Bangladeshi study, Hossain et al. (2016), Islam et al. (2016), and Kamal et al. (2015) described the main causes of child marriage in India and Bangladesh. They discovered that in Bangladesh, sociodemographic characteristics like religion, level of education, wealth, and unemployment rate are crucial drivers of child marriage. By conducting interviews, Stark (2018) discovered that the prevalence of Islam, poverty, gendered economic disparity, high schooling costs, and high unemployment are significant factors influencing child marriage in Tanzania (Stark, 2018). Corno and Voena (2016) demonstrated that they relied on bride price payments to generate revenue in order to survive hard times using a survey dataset from rural Tanzania. In Iranian areas, rainfall shocks boost women's odds of early marriage and conception (Asna-Ashary et al., 2020).

Sabina Faiz Rashid, Shuchi Karim, and Subas Chandra Biswas (2020), *Should we care? A qualitative investigation of the variables influencing young men's decisions to get married young in Bangladeshi urban slums*. During one-on-one interviews and informal discussions for the study, some respondents acknowledged that sex was the primary motivator behind their early marriage. He explained that early marriage was the only way to avoid having sex before getting married because it was socially unacceptable and could result in negative consequences for those caught doing it. The respondent stated in the qualitative interview, "I might not always be able to satisfy my sexual needs outside of marriage. I need money even if I want to use a prostitute for sex. However, she (my non-marital partner) might then complain about me or bring a lawsuit against me! So many people believe that getting married to a girl is preferable. Once that happens, I can talk to her whenever I want without

anyone objecting. (Age 24, wed at age 16) "(Subas et al. 2020). The results of the study demonstrated how social-cultural expectations, norms, and values as well as the development of gendered behavior expectations shaped the choice to get married young. Most of these choices—which culminated in an early marriage—were driven by personal preferences, social pressures, and parental wishes.

Consequences of Child Marriage

In many areas and communities, early child marriage is a practice that is influenced by a number of factors. However, empirical evidence indicates that favorable factors encourage societies and parents to continue such atrocities, which is problematic because of the numerous detrimental effects on the economy, the health of girls, their offspring, families, and communities, (Ahonsi et al., 2019). Evidence suggests that young girls who are promised or requested in marriage try suicide more frequently, which indicates that child marriage puts girls in danger psychologically even before sex and childbearing figures (Ahonsi et al., 2019). Girls' human rights are violated by child marriage because it leaves them open to physical, sexual, and psychological abuse because of the dynamics of imbalanced power in the marriage. Traditional communities argue that child marriage ensures that sexual activity and childbirth occur within the marriage. Nevertheless, it abruptly ends the female's youth and adolescence. Even before they are emotionally, psychologically, and physically equipped for maturity, it forces them to assume the obligations and responsibilities of that stage. Sexual activity and childbirth are linked to a number of health issues, but early marriage puts girls at risk for serious mental and physical health issues. For instance, early sexual

debut is linked to child marriage, which raises the health risks for girls because an adolescent's vaginal mucosa is still developing and puts them at risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted illnesses (Ahonsi et al., 2019).

Early marriage restricts young people from making critical decisions about their direction in life, such as pursuing school, securing a stable income, and exercising their human and sexual rights (Nirantar Trust, 2015). "Kid marriage is a significant societal issue and a breach of children's rights since it robs the child of his or her childhood and violates their fundamental rights to health, nutrition, education, and freedom from violence, abuse, and exploitation" (Abdul Azeez & Amit Poonia, 2015). Numerous literary works stress the predicament of young females who enter early marriages (Children's Dignity Forum, 2008; Bhat, Sen, & Pradhan, 2005; Gupta, 2005; Yadav, 2006; Segal, 1999). They are victims of early childbearing, unintended pregnancies, maternal and infant mortality, premature sexual relationships, unsafe abortions, and the subordination of women (Mathur, Greene, & Malhotra, 2003; Bruce, 2007; Amin, Chong, & Haberland, 2007). Because pregnancy delays them and they have a large family to care for, young girls cannot enter the job force (Lowe et al., 2020). Young girls who have less education are deprived of the ability to become independent and of opportunity to earn a respectable living. They primarily work in the unorganized sector as a result, which offers limited prospects to get above the poverty level (Lowe et al., 2020). Unsurprisingly, the financial costs of early marriage prevent the economies of West and Central African nations from fully developing (Lowe et al., 2020).

The maternal condition was the second highest cause of death among adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa, according to a UNICEF 2009 report (UNICEF, 2009). A number of maternal health issues, such as anaemia, disproportion, preterm delivery, birth asphyxia, low birth weight, STDs, mental illness, obesity, pregnancy-induced hypertension, instrumentation and forceps delivery, malaria, and obstetric fistula are linked to early childbearing. Infants born to adolescents are likewise affected by the complications of early pregnancy's consequences on their health (Lowe et al., 2020). Infant mortality among girls under the age of 20 is 73% greater than that among moms over the age of 20, and these babies also have a higher chance of stillbirth, low birth weight, and early birth, according to Nour, Health Consequence of Child Marriage in Africa (Nour, 2006). Compared to their older counterparts, young women who marry early are more likely to die or become unwell during pregnancy. In sub-Saharan Africa (2010–2014), a study that aggregated information from 37,558 mother-child pairs from 16 national and sub-national surveys looked at the connection between girl-child marriage and the early development of their offspring (Efevbera et al., 2017). According to the findings, infants born to moms who were married before turning 18 had a 25% higher chance of experiencing developmental delays and a 29% higher chance of having stunted growth than those whose mothers got married later (Efevbera et al., 2017). Child marriage had to be included in Goal 5 of the sustainable development objectives due to how destructive it is (SDGs). Child marriage has long-term effects on the female child's health as well as the social, economic, and political climate of society. All interested parties, including traditional authorities, parents, religious leaders, community

members, and tribal leaders, must work together and provide their approval to end child marriage. Programs to educate and empower women are required to end the cycle of poverty (Nawal, 2006).

Theoretical perspectives

The author considered three main theoretical underpinnings to inform the study. The three selected theories were the stakeholder theory, victim blame theory and ecological model. These three theories were considered appropriate for this study because they offer several explanations regarding the existing relationships between stakeholders' actions and the magnitude of societal problems, specific crimes, and persons responsible for the crime (victim or culprit), and different environmental contributions to existing social issues.

Victim Blaming Theory

Consistently, several theories have been used by researchers to explain various forms of child abuse, including child marriage (Santhya, 2011), female rape victims (Munsch & Willer, 2012) and child trafficking (Sertich & Heemskerck, 2011). One such theory is the victim blaming theory. Victim blaming represents the belief that victims are to be blame for their misfortunes. Most attributions of blame focus on a victim's conduct or actions that raise the likelihood of victimization (Birkland & Lawrence, 2002). Blaming the victim is a demeaning act in which the victim(s) of a crime or an incident are held liable – in full or in part – for the crimes committed against them (Liss, Erchull, & Ramsey, 2011). Victim blaming theory may stem from disparities in men's and women's attitudes toward each other (Crippen, 2015). Researchers have proposed that there are two types of sexism: aggressive

sexism, which refers to negative sexism (e.g., women are inferior to men), and friendly sexism, which refers to positive sexism (e.g., women are equal to men) (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Gender discrimination is more complicated; it is mostly benevolent and includes prescriptive beliefs about women, but it may also have negative consequences (Glick & Fiske, 1996). For example, one of the items on Glick and Fiske's (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory is that women are more moral than men. This supports the theory that young girls are more likely to be offered their hand in marriage. While this seems to be a progressive thought at first glance, it can potentially weaken young women in daily contexts such as the workplace (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Research shows high levels of benevolent sexism are linked to lower perpetrator blame and reduced jail terms for rapists (Viki, Abrams & Masser, 2004). According to Viki and colleagues (2004), this form of sexism is not corrected by society because it is seen as "prosocial." Males who marry young girls with high benevolent sexism scores are also not blamed as much as those who compel young girls to marry them (Durán et al., 2010).

This blame may result from negative social responses from legal, medical, and mental health practitioners, the media, immediate family members, other associates, and society. Some crime victims are treated with more sympathy by society than others (Hayes et al., 2013). The responses to crime victims are frequently based on others' misunderstandings. This misinterpretation could lead them to believe that the victim deserved what happened to them or that they are low-self-esteeming individuals seeking abuse. Consequently, it sometimes becomes difficult for victims to cope when

they are held responsible for their actions. For example, a common claim may be: “that she was raped while walking home alone in the dark. I will never do anything like that, so I will not be a rape victim” (Schneider et al., 2009; Munsch & Willer, 2012).

The victim blaming theory emphasizes that not only would the victim's gender affect victim blame, but so does the observer's gender. A significant body of evidence indicates that men are more likely than women to be victimized (Blumberg & Lester, 1991; Munsch & Willer, 2012). Other researchers, on the other hand, have discovered no gender gaps in victim-blaming behaviour (Check & Malamuth, 1982; Johnson, 1995; L'Armand & Pepitone, 1982). Instead of gender specifically affecting victim blaming, men may be more likely to score higher on rape acceptance, hostile sexism, or sexual scripts scales of rape acceptance, hostile sexism, or sexual scripts (Blumberg & Lester, 1991; Crippen, Krebs, & Miner, 2014; Hayes *et al.*, 2013; Johnson, 1995). As a result, the gender of the sample could affect the current study's findings. Social psychology studies have hotly debated the relationship between gender and victim blaming. According to some studies (Blumberg & Lester, 1991; Grubb & Harrower, 2009; Hayes et al., 2013), men are more likely than women to be victimized.

On the other hand, Crippen's (2015) study discovered that gender had a little direct effect and that men did not necessarily victim blame more than women. Rather than a mere gender disparity, Crippen (2015) discovered that men are likelier than women to score highly on the two most important scales, aggressive discrimination and rape myth acceptance. Other researchers have also discovered this connection (Check & Malamuth, 1982; Johnson, 1995;

L'Armand & Pepitone, 1982). Furthermore, these people are more likely to blame the victim, and they are less likely to think the incident is criminal. Even so, if a high level of Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance (IRMA) or aggressive misogyny individuals do not believe the incident was rape, there is no reason to blame the victim entirely.

As a result, more victim is blaming. Furthermore, both aggressive and benign sexism are related to the objectification of women, including female self-objectification (Liss et al., 2011; Swami, Coles *et al.*, 2010). Even though benevolent sexism is rarely seen as negative, an increasing body of research suggests that it plays a significant role in victim-blaming behaviours. All in all, evidence from the victim blaming theory implies that victims (mostly women or/and young girls) who suffer different forms of abuse cannot largely be blamed due to the structure of a long-standing society that favours men more than women. In this regard, it can be argued that the onus lies on the major stakeholders in Ghana to do everything possible to minimize child marriage in the country rather than giving the victims and their immediate families a major role to play –and this could be termed as “blaming the victim” (Hayes et al., 2013; Munsch & Willer, 2012).

Child marriage in Northern Ghana cannot be blamed exclusively on the decisions or perceived ‘faults’ of the children or their guardians. Poverty, educational hurdles, conventional norms, and gender inequities all play a role (Sossou, 2002). In this region, early child marriage is not an exceptional incidence, but rather a reflection of profoundly rooted societal institutions. Victim blaming ignores larger systemic issues such as a lack of education, limited economic possibilities for women, and patriarchal cultural norms

(Apusigah, 2009). Victim-blaming can reduce empathy for child brides, decreasing society's incentive to address fundamental issues or help victims (Lerner, 1980). Blaming victims might exacerbate child brides' psychological distress by reinforcing their self-blame and discouraging them from seeking care due to fear of societal stigma (Ampofo, 2001). While the victim-blaming hypothesis provides one viewpoint on early child marriages in Northern Ghana, it is insufficient in and of itself. A thorough understanding entails considering structural, cultural, economic, and educational variables. Only with this broad perspective can meaningful solutions be devised.

Stakeholder Theory

Frooman (1984) coined the term "stakeholder theory" (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997; Frooman, 1999; Hendrich, 2008). He described and classified stakeholders as any community or person that can influence or be influenced by the achievement of the organization's goals. The objectives have been expanded to include factors such as an organization's behaviour, decisions, strategies, practices, or goals (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2000). However, the Freeman concept was broad since it allowed for infinite stakes (Mitchell et al., 1997). In this regard, depending on the field of research, most literature differed in terms of identification, type, degree, classification, and management during the process of narrowing it down (Kasperson, 2006). The theory describes and forecasts how an organization affects its stakeholders and vice versa (Frooman, 1999).

Stakeholders are described as any group of people who can influence or be influenced by an organization's goals, such as employees, customers, consumers, suppliers, creditors, communities, government agencies, political

parties, competitors, trade associations, labour unions, and non-governmental organizations [NGOs] (Freeman, 1984). This means that government agencies, NGOs, CSOs, the media, and local community leaders can all be classified as stakeholders whose impact on the vulnerable overall well-being cannot be underestimated (Poret, 2019). This forms the basis for the stakeholder theory, which explains how and why different individuals or organizations collectively team up to address some common socio-economic and socio-cultural issues in society (Yan, Lin & Clarke, 2018).

The stakeholder theory has sparked a lot of discussion in academic circles. This is significant given that theory prescribes various solutions for a wide range of individuals or organizations that aim to control society through policies and programme, either indirectly or directly (Freeman, 2006). According to the theory, consumers, residents, local societies, producers, retailers, and owners are typically included in stakeholder groups. Other groups covered include the media, the public, corporate partners, future generations, past generations, scholars, rivals, NGOs, financiers rather than shareholders, government, regulators, and policymakers, among others (Baur & Palazzo, 2011; Friedman, 2006). Identifying all players and the need to synchronize all interests of any policy's main goal is a major constraint to a coalition of institutions and individuals coming together to form stakeholder organizations. This creates a conflict of interest since some parties may attempt to gain control (Friedman, 2006).

On the other hand, the stakeholder theory asserts that a definitive contract exists between business and society and that business entity lose all their reputations if this social contract is broken. According to Porter and

Kramer (2006), the concept of an operating license derives from the fact that any business requires tacit or formal permission from governments, societies, and a variety of other stakeholders to function in society. As a result, organizations must maintain their stakeholders' permission to operate and answer their concerns (Poret, 2019).

This argument suggests that collaboration between NGOs, CSOs, and any government or private entity needs the entire community's consent, even if such collaboration's benefits are reciprocal. It is no secret that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) are at the forefront of implementing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives using the knowledge and resources at their disposal for a range of environmental and social purposes (Baur & Palazzo, 2011). Arenas, Lozano, and Albareda (2009) stressed that other stakeholders regard NGOs and CSOs as key players in implementing and extending CSR and that companies seeking to address socio-economic problems regard NGOs and CSOs as their primary stakeholders, based on the tenets of stakeholder theory. This may be one of the main reasons why some argue that collaborating with NGOs and CSOs at the institutional level is the best way to ensure that collaborative programs have a greater effect on the target societies (Arenas et al., 2009; Yan et al., 2018). Nonetheless, several highly specialized and market-oriented non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) seem to be maintaining their reputation with potential corporate partners, companies, clients, and other private and public institutions (Poret, 2019). Therefore Schepers (2010) recommends that global governance systems have both theological and practical integrity, the latter being critical. However, he

claims that gaining and maintaining such authority is a constant struggle for such organizations (Schepers, 2010).

Noticeably, the tenets of the stakeholder theory discussed in this study offer theoretical guidance on how major stakeholders who work together for a common goal can use their resources and expertise (i.e., logistics, financial and human capital) to help protect the right of young girls against child marriage. Thus, the stakeholder theory demonstrates a direct relationship between specific programmes initiated through the collaboration of stakeholders and the possible outcome of such initiatives. In this regard, it is assumed that policies and programmes introduced by the key stakeholders identified in this study would positively impact child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana.

Ecological Model

The ecological model examines the relationships between issues that impact a single individual at various community levels. This model recognizes that no single factor can explain why people behave violently against others (Tsekpo et al., 2016). The structure of the model divides the factors that influence forced child marriage into four categories: individual, interpersonal, culture, and societal (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). Drivers at all four stages, individually and collectively, promote the practice of forced child marriage. Individual drivers refer to a person's thoughts and feelings about child marriage that are shaped by their history, social characteristics, experience, and exposure, all of which predispose them to child marriage.

The Ecological Model is commonly used in the social context to assess the causes of social ills such as sex trafficking, child marriage, and child

labour that are prevalent in specific geographic areas (Krug *et al.*, 2002). This model recognizes that no single factor can explain why people behave violently against others (s). The structure divides the factors that influence forced child marriage into four categories: individual, interpersonal, culture, and societal (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). Drivers at all four stages, individually and collectively, promote the practice of forced child marriage. Individual drivers refer to a person's thoughts and feelings about child marriage that are shaped by their backgrounds, social status, experience, and exposure, all of which predispose them to child marriage.

Relationships that increase the likelihood of a person becoming a victim of child marriage are known as interpersonal drivers. It covers events in the individual's social networks, values and behaviours, experiences with the community, and relationships with married and unmarried peers. Substance abuse is an example of a phenomenon that can influence this level. Stockholm syndrome is a psychological condition in which abuse victims sympathise with their captors and even see them as protectors against law enforcement officers (Fuselier, 1999). This occurrence is relevant to this study, particularly where sexual and filial relationships grow between victims of human trafficking and their hosts or other household members. The climate and community settings that promote or impede forced child marriage are investigated at the community level.

These variables may be embedded in how the culture and society perceive marriage, its role and function, and the obligations that come with it. It may include, among other things, the society's socio-cultural customs and practices at menarche, norms on the ideal age to marry, spouse selection, and

marriage contracting processes. The final stage, social structures, comprises the large socioeconomic conditions, institutions, policies, and programs that encourage or discourage child forced marriage. Relationships that increase the likelihood of a person becoming a victim of child marriage are known as interpersonal drivers. It covers events in the individual's social networks, values and behaviours, experiences with the community, and relationships with married and unmarried peers (Tsekpo et al., 2016).

A thorough examination of the causes, impacts, and solutions to child marriages indicates that preventing child marriage requires combining macro and micro-level factors in ways that impact a girl's life, such as providing her with opportunities to make informed decisions and function in a secure, violence-free environment. Poverty reduction initiatives, for example, must be followed by parallel changes in girls' shifting desires and values, and schools and open spaces must be made secure for girls to realize their potential. Around the same time, government programs, policies, and regulations must be strengthened and effectively enforced, emphasising not just those at risk, but also those who are married and have been refused an education because of their marriage. The interrelationship of multiple factors can be clearly understood within an ecological context, where factors operating at various levels impact and are impacted by a girl's life. Conclusively, it is obvious that the explanation provided in the ecological model re-enforces the belief that certain social phenomena are peculiar to the specific environment, which calls for stakeholders' involvement to address such existing issues.

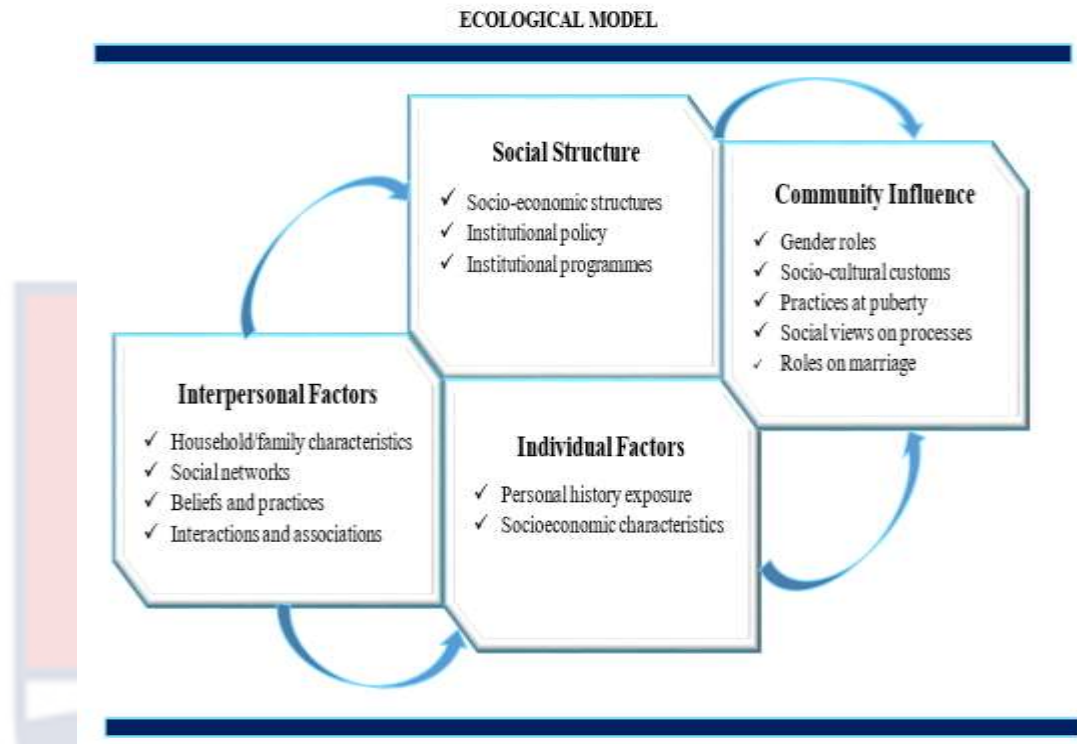


Figure 1: Ecological Model
Source: Dahlberg and Krug (2002)

Figure 1 shows the developed Ecological Model that illustrates some of the most common causes of forced child marriages. Thus, forced child Marriages have different causes depending on the social, economic, political, and cultural context. Though the basic drivers are divided into four levels, the interconnected shapes (see Figure 2.3) show how they are linked and reinforce each other to influence forced child marriages.

The ecological model provides a structured method to understanding the numerous elements contributing to the occurrence of child marriages in Northern Ghana, including a spectrum ranging from close family effects (microsystem) to overarching cultural standards (macrosystem) (Nukunya, 2003). This model can help us understand how norms of society and traditional practices in Northern Ghana, such as the high value put on virginity or economic incentives related to bride price, encourage early marriages

(Sossou, 2002). We can use the exo-system and macrosystem levels to investigate the economic challenges and political institutions that indirectly encourage child marriages, such as poverty, restricted educational prospects for girls, and a lack of stringent restrictions (Teye, 2012). The chronosystem sheds light on the changing practices and attitudes towards child marriage in Northern Ghana, particularly considering modernity and global influences (Ampofo, 2001). This model demonstrates how influences at one level can have an impact on others. For example, broader societal norms (macrosystem) can influence family views towards early weddings (Manful & Manful, 2016). The comprehensive framework of the ecological model provides a robust tool for analyzing the multiple and interconnected causes that sustain early child marriages in Northern Ghana. It advocates comprehensive treatments that address both immediate and broader drivers of this practice by taking into account impacts at various environmental levels.

Conclusion

Cardinally, this chapter was incorporated into the study to review the existing literature that aligns with the study's objectives. The theoretical underpinnings offered different elucidations limited to the problem under investigation. The key theoretical underpinnings reviewed in the study include stakeholder theory, victim blame theory and ecological model. These theories, coupled with other empirical and conceptual issues, provide the basis to conclude that stakeholders' involvement in applying appropriate measures would tend to minimize child marriage in a specific geographical area, such as the Northern Region of Ghana.

CHAPTER THREE

LEGAL, POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK TO END CHILD MARRIAGE: EVIDENCE FROM THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA

Introduction

An attempt to end a deeply-rooted phenomenon like child marriage is not and cannot be a one-sided agenda –it calls for coordination and collaboration from all stakeholders. These can be done through established legal, policy and institutional framework effective enough to tackle the issue of child marriage in Ghana. In light of this, this chapter is incorporated into the study to highlight the available legal, policy and institutional framework to ending child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana. Among the key issues discussed in the chapter include the role of international laws on child marriage in Ghana, the legal and institutional framework from a Ghanaian perspective, specific Ghanaian laws that prohibit child marriage, and major stakeholders' roles/efforts to end child marriage in Ghana, particularly in the northern part of Ghana.

The Concept of Legal and Institutional Framework

According to the World Health Organization. (2019), the concept of the *institutional framework* can be seen as established policies and strategies that are deemed significant and direct the activities of key institutions within a specific sector in addressing a particular need in the socio-economic environment. On the other hand, according to the International Ecological Engineering Society (IEES) (2006), the institutional framework is an existing structured organizational system composed of regulations and implicit norms

and values in providing specific services. Roles and responsibilities of the developed organization, separation of organizational and regulatory responsibilities, responsibilities, the role of management at appropriate levels, capacity building, and provision of services are among the key principles regarding institutional mandate and vision (Department of Water Affairs and Forestry of the Republic of South Africa-DWAF, 2008). Prior studies evaluating the institutional and legislative structures in some African countries showed that conventional frameworks exist but require a great deal of effort to ensure that the intended targets are met to promote institutional performance (Elumilade et al., 2006; Emeka, 2009). For example, according to Monney et al. (2014), current African institutional structures are poor due to inadequate institutional capacity on the part of departments and agencies responsible for implementing legislation and rules for individual enterprises' activities. Therefore, the basis for establishing any institutional framework is utilising rules, principles, and legal means to address current and future problems. In that regard, there cannot be a proper institutional framework without a specified legal framework (Huang-Lachmann & Lovett 2016; WHO, 2019). Figure 4.1 presents the existing legal, policy and institutional framework expected to tackle child marriage in Ghana and the study area.

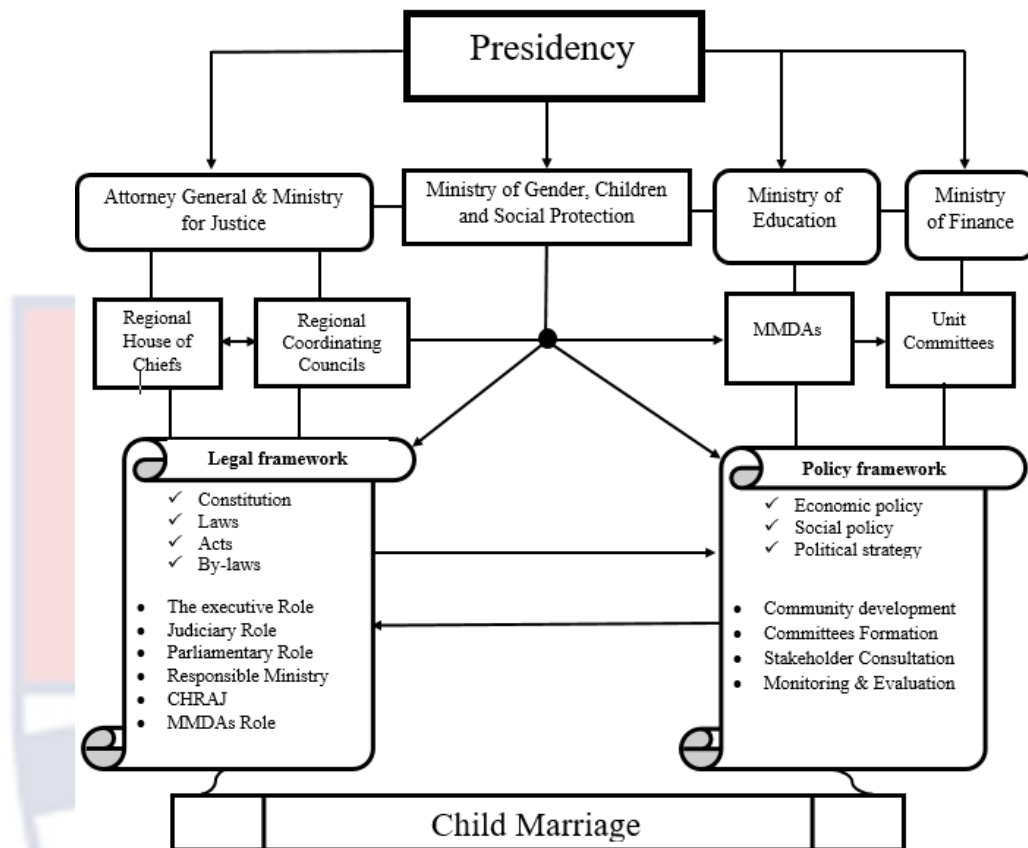


Figure 2: Existing Legal, Policy and Institutional Framework

Source:

Child marriage in Ghana, particularly in the Northern Region where this study was carried out. The framework follows Ghana's Fourth Republic governance structure, legal system, and coordination among the targeted institutions required to help end child marriage in Ghana. Thus, matters of national concern are addressed through a systemic and procedural arrangement.

This is consistent with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum-CLGF's (2019) elucidation that Ghana is a representative democracy with national and local government domains. Local government, like decentralization, is enshrined in the constitution, and the Local Government Act of 2016 is the key piece of legislation that governs it (Act 936). As a result, the president nominates, and parliament approves the cabinet, known as

the Council of Ministers. There is also a hereditary House of Chiefs that advises the president on governance and policies, as do the 25 members of the Council of State appointed by the president (CLGF, 2019).

Consistently, a conscious review of the legal and policy framework has shown that such is a critical but inadequate part of the solution, according to a systematic analysis of child marriage interventions (UNICEF, 2017). Instead, interventions that empower girls with knowledge, skills, and support networks, improve the accessibility and quality of formal schooling for girls, and provide economic support and incentives for girls and their families to keep girls in school or marry later, according to Hanmer and Elefante (2016), are more successful. Furthermore, reframing the notion of girls transitioning to adulthood without marrying necessitates a conversation with religious and community leaders who have significant power over these issues (Parsons et al., 2015). In this regard, exploring the role of key stakeholders in ending child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana, the study's principal aim is to discover institutional challenges, strengths and lapses in dealing with social ills.

The role of International Laws on Child Marriage

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) all discuss the issue of child marriage, either directly or indirectly (MoGCSP, 2016). The UDHR, for example, guarantees the right to 'free and informed consent to the marriage but adds that consent cannot be 'free and absolute' if one of the parties is not mature enough to make an informed choice about a life partner.

Likewise, Article 16 of the CEDAW provides that a child's betrothal and marriage have no legal consequences and that all appropriate measures, including legislation, must be taken to provide a minimum age for marriage. Furthermore, Articles 1, 2, and 24 of the CRC describe a child and state that the child's best interests should be the primary concern in all acts involving children. State parties are also expected to take all effective and reasonable steps to eradicate common activities threatening children's health. As a result, the Committee on the Rights of the Child strongly urges States Parties to study and, where possible, amend their laws and practice to raise the minimum age for marriage with and without parental consent to 18 years for both boys and girls. The UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage is being implemented and funded in 12 countries by UNICEF and UNFPA with financial assistance from the governments of the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, the Netherlands, Italy, and the European Union (EU) as part of a campaign to end any violation of children's rights. Furthermore, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted the first-ever comprehensive resolution on child marriage by consensus in 2015. Furthermore, all unhealthy activities, such as child, early, and forced marriage, are explicitly targeted under goal five of the new sustainable development agenda (Scolaro et al., 2015).

Several African countries have introduced national policies, strategies, and proposals to end child marriage in the face of this international context. In 2013, Ethiopia published a national policy and action plan to prevent child marriage. Countries including Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mozambique, Uganda, and Zambia established robust anti-child marriage strategies in 2015 (Parsons

et al., 2015). Malawi, for example, has enacted legal reforms to help put an end to the practice. Setting the legal age of marriage at 18 or higher is a common practice. Most African countries have set an 18-year-old minimum marriage age but have not made child marriage illegal (MoGCSP, 2016). Some nations also allow exceptions to the rule, such as parental approval or court permission. In addition, some states make exceptions to the constitution, usually for customary or religious law.

In the case of Ghana, the CRC committee expressed concern about the prevalence of the harmful practice of child marriage within the country, calling on the “State party to implement sensitization programmes for practitioners and the public to promote change in traditional attitudes and prohibit harmful practices, based on observations made in 1997 and 2006 (such as tender age marriage), and interact with family members as well as cultural and religious leaders. There has also been a concerted attempt to counter child marriage in African regional treaties and charters. For example, article 21 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, promulgated in 1990, expressly forbids child marriage; Article 6 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa; and the Commonwealth Kigali Declaration to discourage and eradicate juvenile, early, and forced marriage, adopted in May 2015.

Legal, Policy and Institutional Framework in Ghanaian Perspective

Given the global scope of the issue, there is a growing global movement to end child marriage. The United Nations (UN) General Assembly passed a resolution prohibiting child marriage in September 2013, which Ghana sponsored (United Nations, 2013). In addition, Goal Five of the newly

adopted United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls) included a target to end child marriage in 2015 (SDGs). African leaders have also committed to ending child marriage at the regional level. The African Union (AU) launched a two-year campaign to end child marriage in 2014. The following year, in 2015, the AU convened a high-level Girl's Summit with the Government of Zambia to raise continental awareness of the consequences of child marriage and to promote the end of child marriage in Africa (UNICEF, 2017). The Girls Summit to End Child Marriage resulted in a renewed commitment to eradicating child marriage in Africa by 2030. Funding and services aimed at preventing child marriage are also on the rise.

In that regard, the legal changes that raise the legal marriage age to 18 or higher and eliminate parental and judicial exceptions must be followed by several other policies and interventions (Wodon et al., 2017). Many governments are now implementing national policies to end child marriages. Still more significant is that action plans with concrete measures to postpone marriage and increase investment in the poorest and most vulnerable girls are also being adopted (Kamal et al., 2015; Hossain et al., 2016). According to research, keeping teenage girls in school is one of the best ways to keep them from marrying (Wodon et al., 2017; Wodon & Tavares, 2017).

Significant attempts are also being made in Ghana to resolve child marriage. A person under 18 is considered a child by Ghana's 1992 Constitution and thus cannot marry or be given off in marriage. The government has initiated an Ending Child Marriage Campaign, a National Gender Policy, a Justice for Children Policy, a Child and Family Welfare

Policy, and other policies under the leadership of the MoGCSP, all of which include various sectors of government, civil society, and development partners, Ghana's media, children, social, and traditional leaders are working together to end child marriage. Creating a 10-year National Strategic Framework is one of the priority actions of the Ending Child Marriage Campaign to provide an integrated vision and clear guidance to all stakeholders.

One of the primary lessons from similar strategies worldwide is that the Strategic Framework is more likely to be adopted if it is built with sufficient input from local stakeholders. This allows these players to identify the priority strategies for ending child marriage and foster a sense of shared ownership in the Strategic model's implementation (Hall *et al.*, 2018). As a result, this study focused on the key stakeholders across the study area. Diverse government agencies, media, legislators, civil society, development partners, traditional and religious leaders, parents, and, most notably, children who are about to be married or have already been married are among them. The rationale for limiting the study to these stakeholders is that it is evident that such entities are committed to minimizing child marriage in Ghana. For instance, in 2014, Ghana's Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, along with other stakeholders, formed a Child Marriage Unit to promote and coordinate national efforts to end child marriage. Subsequently, in 2016, the unit partnered with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other primary stakeholders to create a National Strategic Structure for Ending Child Marriage in Ghana. The system aims to ensure that cooperation between state

and non-state institutions is efficient, well-structured, and well-guided (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2016).

The established National Laws to end child marriage.

Ghana prohibits the marriage of minors. The legal age of marriage for girls and boys is set at 18 in the 1992 Constitution and the 1998 Children's Act. The Children's Act, Section 14 (1) (a), (b), and (c), states that:

No person shall force a child to be betrothed; to be the subject of a dowry transaction, or to be married... any person who contravenes this provision commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding 5 million Cedis or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding one year or to both.

Child and forced marriage infringe on children's fundamental human rights, as stated in Article 16(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also goes against Article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which states that women should have the same right as men to "freely choose a partner and enter into marriage only of their own free will." A child is described as under 18 in Ghana's 1998 Children's Act and the 1992 Constitution (Domfe & Oduro, 2018). By 18, young people should have acquired sufficient academic, emotional, and physical skills and resources to support themselves and successfully move into adulthood. Adults must provide them with treatment, encouragement, guidance, and protection before that time comes (Republic of Ghana, 1998). According to Ghana's Children's Act of 1998 (Act 560), no one shall compel a child to: (1) be betrothed; (2) be the subject of a dowry transaction; or (3) be married; and (3) the minimum age of marriage of any

kind shall be eighteen years (18 years). Consistently, Ghana has made its commitment to ending child marriage.

Other laws

Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, 2003 (Act 646)

This 1960 modification to the Criminal Code underlines the illegality of customary slavery, or "Trokosi," a traditional practice in which young girls are forced to work at shrines to atone for family crimes. Such girls are frequently married off at a young age to shrine priests.

Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732)

While primarily aimed at domestic abuse, this act recognizes forced marriages as a type of domestic violence and protects minors who may be pushed into early marriages.

The Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694)

This act prohibits the trafficking of people, particularly women and children, for exploitation reasons such as forced marriages. Offenders may face harsh penalties, including incarceration.

Probate and Administration Act, 2015 (Act 859). This act, among other things, establishes the legal marriage age in Ghana as 18 years, reinforcing the legal age at which a person can marry.

This led to Ghana's Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection's establishment of a Child Marriage Unit to promote and coordinate national efforts to end child marriage.

Specifically, in Ghana, the legal age of consent for sex is 16 years. Sex with a child under 16 is described in Section 101 of the Criminal Offences Act 1960 (Act 29) as an offence punishable by imprisonment for not less than seven

years and not more than twenty-five years. Ghana's adoption of applicable international treaties has aided and consulted the domestic legal system on child marriage (UNICEF, 2015). Among them are the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, among others (Walker, 2012). In addition, various proposals now in place discuss concerns about ending child marriage. There's the Child and Family Welfare Policy, for example, and the Justice for Children Policy. These policies aim to put in place a child protection system suitable for Ghana, to help deter and protect children from all types of violence, and to increase family and community participation in child protection. Child Marriage is also prohibited by the National Gender Policy, which Cabinet approved in 2015. Throughout, the Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy (2000) facilitates the creation and implementation of activities and services that will improve and extend the reproductive health choices accessible to adolescents. The National Youth Policy (2010) has been established to provide a platform for the government to collaborate with youth and other stakeholders to develop effective interventions and services for youth empowerment and growth.

The main problem in Ghana is not a lack of applicable laws and policies but rather a lack of effective enforcement of those laws and policies (Domfe & Oduro, 2018).

The following are some difficulties in enforcing and implementing the law: First, due to social pressure and tradition, impacted children and families cannot disclose child marriage cases. In addition, when families drop their lawsuits, there is a shortage of evidence to sue them. Another issue is the

inadequate access to justice-related facilities, such as police, family and juvenile courts, and legal assistance due to distance, lack of expertise, and financial resources. The rest include restricted funding for implementing departments such as police, family and juvenile courts, and others, due to insufficient training of law enforcement officers in child safety and, in particular, handling cases of child marriage; and corruption in which perpetrators bribe police and judicial staff to either lose files or delay or adjourn proceedings indefinitely due to a lack of birth certificates as evidence in court to validate the child's age as a minor (MoGCSP, 2016; UNICEF, 2017).

Stakeholders' Efforts to reduce Child Marriage

Child marriage is increasingly recognized as a serious national issue in Ghana, which has resulted in an increase in the number of initiatives by several stakeholders to address the issue (Domfe & Oduro, 2018). As previously stated, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection founded the Child Marriage Unit in 2014 to promote and coordinate national initiatives to end child marriage in Ghana.

Establishing an Advisory Committee on Ending Child Marriage comprised of prominent individuals from their respective communities and technically qualified officials to guide measures suggested by the Ministry to end child marriage in Ghana is one of the unit's main activities (MoGCSP, 2016). Creating a network of partners to share best practices, lessons learned, and advice on what works and doesn't work in strategies (Wodon et al., 2017). Public awareness is raised using well-known Ghanaian celebrities as Goodwill Ambassadors and through mass media such as music videos and

documentaries. Involvement of the youth to learn about their plans for ending child marriage. Collaborating with the African Union and other players at the continental stage to share and learn from other African countries efforts to end child marriage (Rumble, 2018). Coordination of the consultation process for the 10-year Strategic Framework growth. Some government agencies have also joined the battle to end child marriage. To inform its interaction with communities on the issues, the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) commissioned research on the existence and scale of child marriage in Ghana in 2014.

The role of Government Ministries/Agencies in ending Child Marriage

The coordinated efforts made by ministries and government agencies in addressing child marriage in Ghana tend to eradicate such social canker. As a result, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection continues to work with the Ministry of Education to enforce policies that, for example, increase the enrolment and retention of girls in schools (MoGCSP, 2016).

The two ministries may implement guidelines and policies to increase girls' access to quality education in collaboration with the Ghana Education Service and the Ministry of Finance. Teacher education plans can also provide methods for reducing the practice of child marriage. It is also proposed that the MoGCSP collaborates with the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney-Department General to strengthen the judiciaries and law enforcement agencies capacity to implement laws that expressly prohibit child marriage. This should aid in the successful application and enforcement of the law and other relevant laws, resulting in a rise in the number of such cases being prosecuted (Petroni et al., 2017; MoGCSP, 2016).

The role of NGOs and CSOs in ending Child Marriage

Both local (NGOs) and international (INGOs), as well as Civil Society Organizations or actors, support the government's efforts to enforce development policies and programmes. Notably, a significant number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) in Ghana, particularly in the three northern regions, have launched advocacy campaigns, including the development of resource documents to help others combat child marriage (UNICEF, 2017). There seems to be a range of ongoing programs to resolve child marriage aspects initiated or supported by local and international organizations. These initiatives, however, are often disjointed and limited in scope. NGOs and CSOs are working harder to address the increasingly negative consequences of child marriage, such as illiteracy, illness, hunger, poverty, gender-related matters, and human rights violations. In recent years, new projects have emerged worldwide to combat the threat of early marriage (Rumble, 2018; UNICEF, 2015). These are large-scale, school-based, and incentive-based initiatives that include collaboration between state ministries, multilateral organizations like the World Bank, and education and healthcare experts. On top of that, scholarships, subsidies, and cash rewards have become the key focus of NGOs in partnership with governments and the use of school systems (Pelayo, 2015). As a result, several problems have been resolved by the NGOs and CSOs to prevent the occurrence of child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana (Domfe & Oduro, 2018; UNICEF, 2017). The core expected mandates of the NGOs and CSOs operating in Ghana are presented in Figure 5.

NGOs and CSOs provide data on prevalence rates, primary factors of child marriage in populations, documentation of lessons learned, and successful approaches to addressing the practice to relevant stakeholders.
NGOs and CSOs launch advocacy campaigns aimed at policymakers, urging them to improve legislation and policies that protect children from crime, bullying, and exploitation.
NGOs and CSOs call for the ratification and implementation of child and women's security protocols.
NGOs and CSOs raise concern about the negative impact of child marriage on girls and society as a whole.
NGOs and CSOs show interest in legal matters where justice for victims is being denied them due to financial constraints and illiteracy.

Figure 3: Roles played by NGOs and CSOs to end child marriage in Ghana
 Source: Adapted from National Strategic Framework on Ending Child Marriage in Ghana 2017-2026

The role of Traditional and Religious Authorities in ending Child

Marriage

According to Howard (2020), religious and traditional leaders are seen as more trustworthy and less corrupt than any other class of public officials in Africa. This observation is not different from what pertains to Ghana. Thus, to end child marriage in Ghana, the traditional and religious authorities play critical roles. Religious and traditional values are highly valued in Ghana, making them ideally qualified to speak against child marriage. As presented in Figure 6, the following are some expected roles to be played by religious and traditional leaders to help reduce child marriage.

Religious and traditional authorities are supposed to properly assess religious faith, customs and traditions which condone the act of child marriage and dialoguing with government and relevant stakeholders to help eliminate them.
They are expected to introduce stringent measures and sanctions within their jurisdiction to serve as a deterrent to potential perpetrators.
Publicly speaking against child marriage is another way the religious and traditional authorities can eliminate the practice of child marriage. Through constant education and community dialogue, attitudes towards the practice can be changed.
Traditional and religious leaders can also refuse to perform marital ceremonies that involve children, instead, they should help the victims and seek support.
Religious leaders can use their gatherings as platforms to open up discussions on ending violence against children particularly child marriage.
They have a role to play in championing girls' education, challenging gender and social norms that restrict opportunities for girls and supporting alternatives for girls.

Figure 4: Traditional and Religious Leaders' Role to end child marriage in Ghana

Source: Adapted from National Strategic Framework on Ending Child Marriage in Ghana 2017-2026

The role of the Media in ending Child Marriage

According to Owusu-Addo et al. (2018), despite the media challenges, evidence shows that when the Criminal Libel Law (Owusu, 2012) limited press freedom and criminalized free speech since the colonial period, was repealed in 2001, Ghana made history for media freedom.

This has given journalists and media outlets the freedom to express their opinions on issues and events in the country without fear of reprisal. Due to the liberalization of the landscape, media proliferation is currently on the rise in Ghana (Ellsberg et al., 2015; Owusu-Addo et al., 2018). In this regard, the role of the Ghanaian media in the national discourse cannot be underestimated since media freedom is enshrined in Chapter 12 of the 1992 constitution of the Republic of Ghana (Agyemang-Asante, 2020). As one of

the stakeholders of any democratic nation, the media have been campaigning against some social ills, such as child marriage, through documentaries and advertisements (Reynolds, 2015). The media has a great influence on public perception and actions. Therefore, the media must cover and analyses reports on children's rights more extensively (Easteal et al., 2015). Victims of violence are often blamed, mocked, and sometimes accused of inciting the crimes committed against them by the media. This operation has the unintended effect of boosting offenders' morale (Adinkra, 2014). As a result, media executives must ensure that their workers undergo adequate training to report in a gender- and human-rights-conscious manner.

The media often disseminates information about child marriage to the general public. Victims and fugitives of child marriage are being asked to share their stories. This would deter future child marriage perpetrators.

Media houses also embark on child marriage awareness campaigns in collaboration with CSO's and pressure groups.

Music is an essential part of our daily life and an influential tool in our society. The media use music to disseminate positive message about education and how girls' empowerment should be promoted.

Ghanaians appreciate the art of theatre, and through this medium, the adverse effect child marriage can be spread to those who may be less aware of the practice.

The media should request accountability for delivery of quality services by Government; support in portraying complex nature and various drivers of child marriage in Ghana through their narratives.

The media also promote positive role modeling and give visibility to individuals, families and communities that are already championing the cause and supporting increased development opportunities for adolescent girls in Ghana.

Figure 5: Media Role in ending child marriage in Ghana

Source: Adapted from National Strategic Framework on Ending Child Marriage in Ghana 2017-2026

Coordination and Collaboration by Key Stakeholders

The National Stakeholders Forum of the Child Marriage Unit of the MoGCSP is the key platform for cooperation and communication at the

national level in the fight to end child marriage. The Forum brings together key players working to end child marriage in Ghana. National Child Protection Committees, Regional Child Protection Committees, District Child Protection Committees, and Community-based Child Protection Committees are the other main forums for preventing and eliminating CEFM (MoGCSP, 2016). Ensuring successful coordination of the various initiatives among the key stakeholders to end child marriage is one of the main priorities for implementing the National Strategic Framework. Thus, the various stakeholders recognize that cooperation is necessary and a need for increased communication, learning, and sharing among the various actors (Parsons et al., 2015; Petroni et al., 2017). Parliament, the media, civil society, development partners, and the private sector are all important players in addition to national and local governments. In this regard, the MoGCSP is expected to provide the necessary leadership to ensure that cooperation occurs at all levels and among all actors.

For example, coordination can occur within the Ministry's various departments. It should also happen between different Ministries, such as Education and Health, and at different levels of government within Regions and Districts (MoGCSP, 2016). In addition, there should be cooperation between the government and non-state actors, such as civil society and the media. There is already a range of networks and forums to facilitate cooperation on child safety and Ending Child Marriage. The aim is to draw on these systems rather than replicate them to improve teamwork and cooperation. The National Child Protection Committee, Regional Child Protection Committees, District Child Protection Committees, and

Community-based Child Protection Committees are the main forums for child protection coordination.

The National Stakeholders Forum, which is currently organized by the Child Marriage Unit of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and brings together relevant stakeholders working to end child marriage across Ghana, is the current platform for coordination and collaboration on Ending Child Marriage. An Advisory Committee also provides technical assistance to the Child Marriage Unit when required.

The Stakeholders Forum will continue to be the main platform for cooperation between key players at the national level in implementing this Strategic Framework. The successes and lessons learned at the stakeholders' forum, as well as national progress in implementing this strategic framework, would be expressed in discussions with the National Child Protection Committee at the national level. In a nutshell, it is anticipated that child marriage will be handled at the state and district levels by Regional Child Protection Committees and District Child Protection Committees, respectively. Thus, to end child marriage, any progress and significant changes should be announced at the national level to the National Stakeholders Forum.

Conclusion

Overall, the various evidence demonstrated in this chapter regarding the legal, policy and institutional framework on child marriage in Ghana point to the fact that concerted efforts are required by the major stakeholders to end child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana. Thus, despite a large global evidence base on the consequences of child marriage, little effort has been made to understand the dynamics and consequences of child marriage in

Ghana, particularly in the Northern part of the country. However, the steps taken by some identified agencies and non-governmental organizations are critical to addressing the inequalities surrounding child marriage to inspire further action toward reducing child marriage rates, especially given that reductions have stalled in recent years, and to examine various legal actions, policies, and programmes as well as the roles of the key stakeholders in tackling Ghana's child marriage issues.

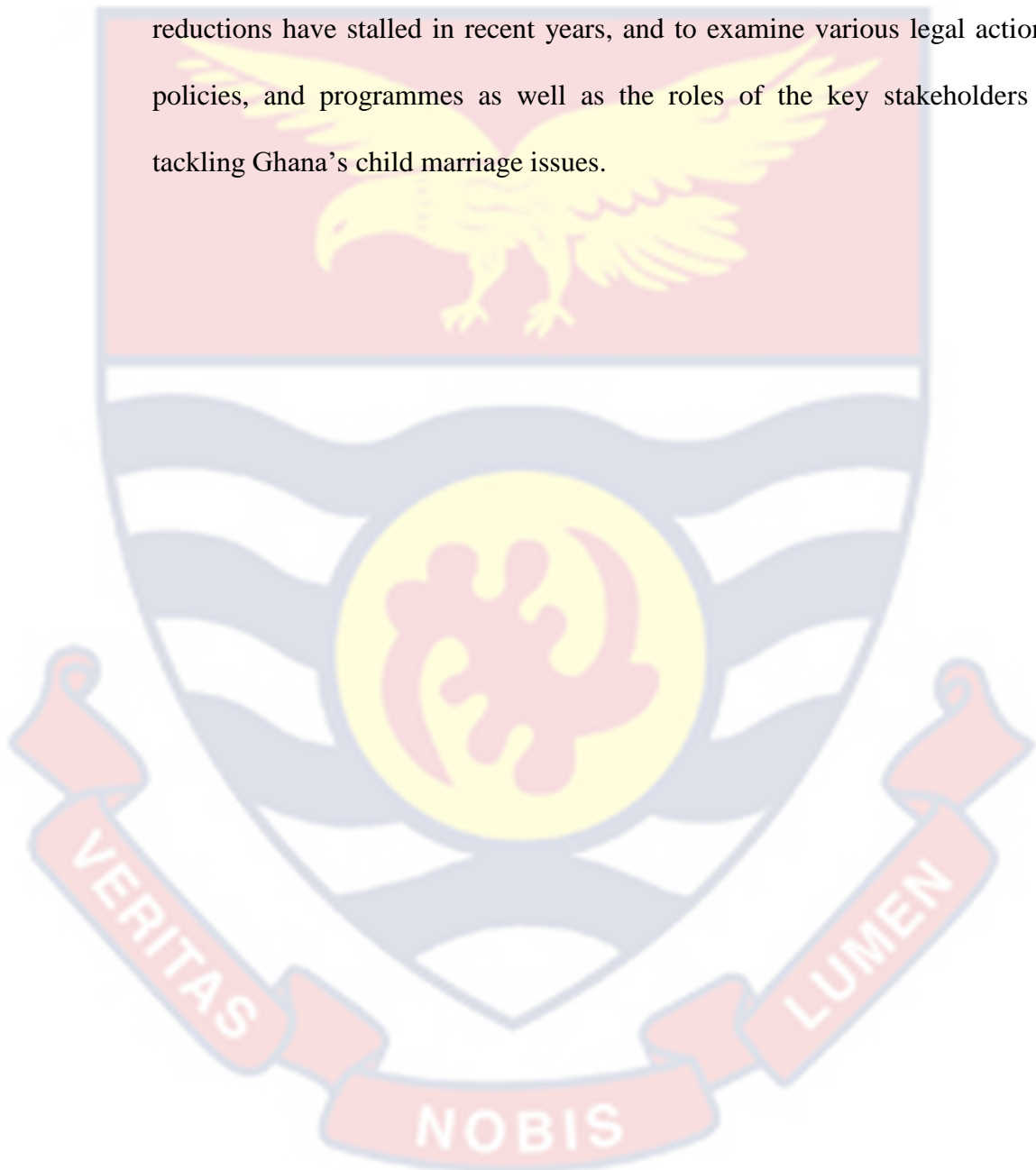


Table 1: A summary of the literature review

Author & Year	Location	Focus of the Study	Methodology	Major Findings
Elumilade et al. (2006)	Nigeria	Evaluation of Nigeria's effort towards child protection	Document Analysis	Legal and Non-Legal efforts made to protect children in Nigeria and Internationally are inadequate.
Emeka (2009)	Nigeria	Assess recruitment, nature and impact of adolescents as domestic servants	Qualitative approach (In-depth Interviews)	Adolescents got into jobs because of the socio-economic status of their families.
Parsons et al. (2015)	Global	Economic implications associated with child marriage	Desk Review	Economic cost associated with child marriage is higher among girls who marry early
Scolaro et al. (2015)	Asia-Pacif Region	Assessment of legal systems in relation to child marriage in Asia-Pacif countries	Desk Review	Efforts to modify national statute laws to international treaties are sometimes hampered by a country's cohabitation of a range of diverse legal systems, combining statutory law with customary law, as well as religious, tribal, and patriarchal traditions and customs.
Hanmer and Elefante (2016)	Global	Utilization of Identification in fighting child marriage	Policy Analysis, Desk Review	Legal changes to build effective legal frameworks against child marriage, together with improved birth and marriage registration systems, are crucial first steps in eliminating this harmful social norm.
Wodon et al., 2017	Global	Economic cost associated with child marriage		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child marriage has a wide range of negative impacts on the wellbeing of girls, their households and countries. • Child marriage negatively affect

Kamal et al., 2015	Bangladeshi	Assess trend and determinants of child marriage among women aged 20 to 49	Quantitative Study (Cross-sectional)	<p>fertility and population growth, health, educational attainment.</p> <p>The average age of a first marriage has risen just little over the last fifteen years, from 14.3 in 1993–1994 to 15.7 in 2011 (a gain of only 1.4 years).</p>
Hossain et al. (2016)	Bangladesh	Utilization of skill development to delay child marriage	cluster randomized controlled research design	<p>Education of women and their husbands, and women's occupation, place of residence and religion were identified as determinants</p> <p>Programs that educate girls, develop their skills for contemporary employment, and include communities may minimize the chance of child marriage by one-third and improve the health, educational, and social outcomes for girls.</p>
Wodon, Tavares, Fiala, Nestour & Wise, 2017	Global	Assessment of child marriage laws and the limitations of the laws	Cross-sectional (Demographic and Health Survey).	<p>Majority of nations have set the legal age for females to marry at 18; however, several also let younger girls to marry with their parents' or a judge's permission.</p> <p>Nearly 100 million girls today are not protected from underage marriage by national law.</p> <p>Legal changes that raise the marriage age to 18 or higher and do away with parental or judicial exceptions must be complemented by a broad variety of other policies and initiatives.</p>

Hall et al. (2018)	United States of America	Implementation of trauma-informed model (Intensive Permanence Services).	Qualitative research (In-depth interview)	employing a youth-driven strategy that places emphasis on youth empowerment and responsibility; Promoting system change for improved collaboration with all stakeholders, including the young people, families, caregivers, and other service providers; adopting an organizational culture of well-being using strategies like secondary traumatic stress education, peer support, and structured supervision.
Domfe & Oduro (2018)	Ghana	Prevalence and trend of child marriage in Ghana	Cross-sectional Survey	In 2014 about one out of every five women aged between 18 and 49 years in Ghana was married as a child Child marriage indicates that the practice has been declining since the 1960s.
Rumble et al. (2018)	Indonesia	Examination of determinants of child marriage	Cross-sectional study	Education, wealth and media exposure are have protective effects across marriage outcomes, while rural residence is a risk factor for the same. In addition, region, religion, ethnic identity and geographical location There are significant variations by region, indicating roles of religious, ethnic and other geographically diverse factors.

Petroni et al. (2017)	Sub-Saharan Africa	Child marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa	Synthesis of previous studies	Inequitable gender norms and economic instability both lead to a cycle of unwanted pregnancy, school dropout, and child marriage, which is especially prevalent among girls who live in low-income communities.
Owusu-Addo et al. (2018)	Ghana	news media framing of violence against women and girls	Qualitative content analysis	Media's framing of violence against women and girls was episodic in character, with acts of violence against women and girls reported as isolated incidents with little attention to the larger societal circumstances in which they happened.
Owusu (2012)	Ghana	The effect of unethical media practices on development	Document analysis	Journalists are seen to be at the forefront of the trend of polarization and the media landscape is split along party political lines.
Ellsberg et al. (2015)	Global	Interventions to reduce the prevalence and incidence of violence against women and girls	Desk Review	Programs that focus on women's issues, advocate for them, and visit them in their homes may lower a woman's chance of becoming another victim; however, there is less solid proof of the preventative value of programs for perpetrators.
Eastal et al. (2015)	Australia	Media representations of violence against women and their children	Desk Review	news and information media play a crucial role in preventing violence against women and their children

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The methods of data collection and analysis components are critical to research work. They highlight the underpinning research epistemology and design and provide the bases and rationale for the collection of the data, the appropriate tools for analysis and presentation of results (Kabir, 2016; Sönmez, 2013). This chapter presents the research philosophy and study design as well as the methods that were employed to collect the data for this study. It comprises the sources of data, the study area, population, sampling procedure, the data collection tool, and the data collection procedures. Data processing and analysis and ethical considerations are also presented in this chapter.

Profile of the Study Area

The research was conducted in Ghana's Northern Region. The Ghana Water Company Limited (2019) reports that the Northern Region had a total population of 2,479,461, with more females (1,249,574) than males (1,249,574), according to the 2010 population and housing census (1,229,887). Between 2000 and 2010, the region's population grew by 36.2 percent, making it the country's fastest-growing region after the Central (38.1 percent) and Greater Accra regions having a 38 percent increase in its population.

Currently, as shown in Table 3.1, the population of the Northern Region, according to the Ghana Statistical Service (2019), stood at 1,905,628. The new regions carved out of Ghana's three northern regions could be responsible for the region's shrinking population. Regarding landmass,

Ghana's Northern Zone, which covers 70,384 square kilometres, is the country's highest. The region is bordered on the north by the Upper East and Upper West regions, on the south by the Brong Ahafo and Volta regions, on the east by Togo, and on the west by Côte d'Ivoire (Ghana Water Company Limited, 2019). The land is largely flat except for the Gambaga escarpment in the north-east corner and the western corridor. The Black and White Volta Rivers and their tributaries, such as the Nasia and Daka rivers, drain the region (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The region's climate is generally dry, with only one rainy season from May to October. The annual rainfall ranges from 750 millimetres to 1,050 millimetres. The dry season runs from November to March/April, with maximum temperatures in March/April and minimum temperatures in December and January. The harmattan winds, which blow from December to early February, significantly impact the region's temperatures, ranging from 14°C at night to 40°C during the day (Ghana Water Company Limited, 2019; Ghana Statistical Service, 2005).

The low humidity exacerbates the effects of the daytime sun. The region's harsh climatic conditions hurt economic activity and the health sector, allowing cerebrospinal meningitis to thrive to endemic levels. The area is also affected by onchocerciasis. Even though the disease is now under control, the ravages of river blindness have left a large region underpopulated and under-cultivated. The predominant vegetation is grassland, with guinea savannah forest interspersed, with drought-resistant trees such as acacia (*Acacia longifolia*), mango (*Mangifera*), dawadawa, and neem, shea nut (*Vitellaria paradoxa*) (*Azadirachta indica*), and baobab (*Adansonia digitata* Linn), (Ghana Water Company Limited, 2019).

The study considered eight (8) of these 16 districts to be the appropriate study field. Figure 8 depicts a map of Ghana's Northern Region following the formation of six new regions. As a result, the map depicts the region's provincial capital/metropolitan area, municipal districts, and other districts.

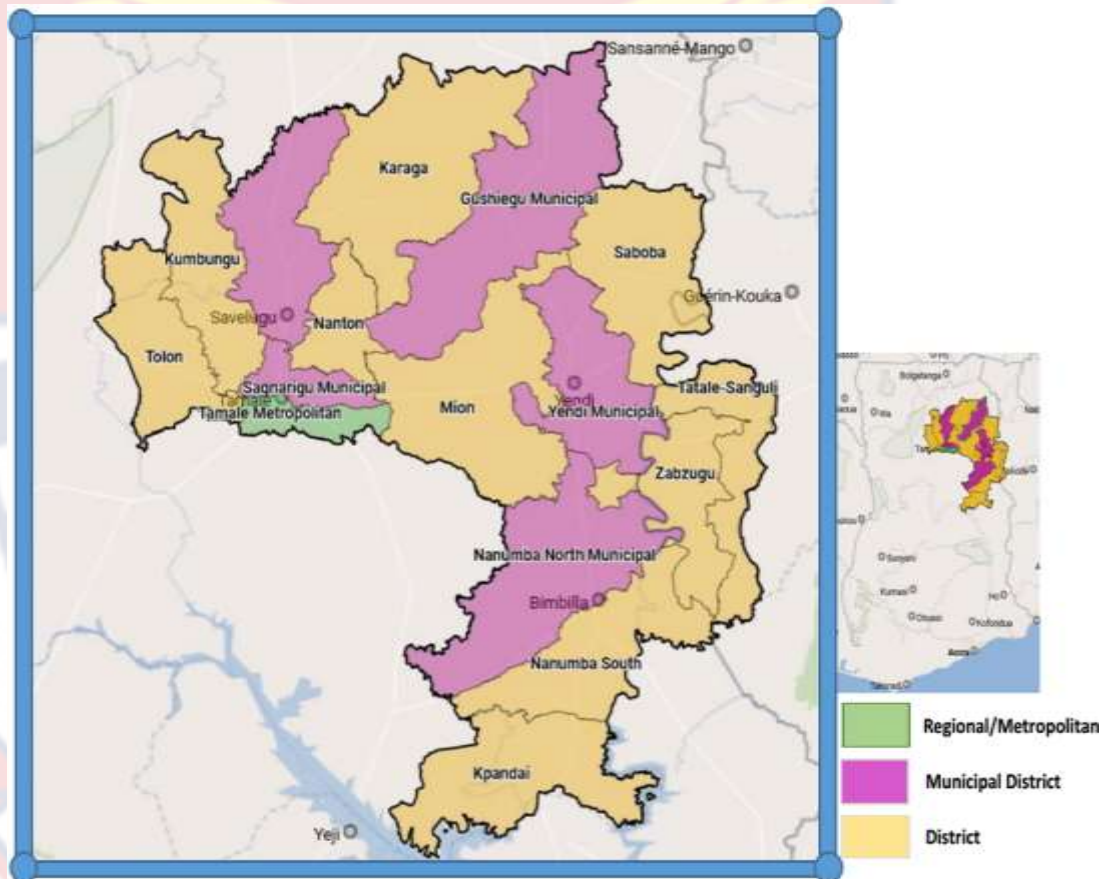


Figure 6: Map of Northern Region
Sources: City Population (2020)

Cultural and Social Structure of the Northern Region

Over half of the people in the area (56.2%) are Muslims, and because their faith allows it, most indigenes practice polygamous marriages; the rest are mostly Traditionalists (21.3%), Christians (19.3%), and other religious groups (3.3%) (Ghana Water Company Limited, 2019). The area is known for its unique architecture, which includes round huts with conical thatched roofs that offer a unique scenic view. The Ya- Na of Yendi, the Yagbon Wura of

Damango, the Bimbila Naa of Bimbila, and the Nayiri of Nalerigu are the four paramount chiefs of the area. Each one represents a significant ethnic group. The Mole and others constitute 17.3 percent; Dagomba is 52.2 percent; the Gurma is 21.8 percent. These groups and Akan and Guan (8.7%) are the region's main ethnic groups. People speak a variety of indigenous languages, which differ by district. East Gonja, West Gonja, and Bole are the districts where the Gonja language is mostly spoken. The Dagomba language, Dagbani, is spoken in nine out of thirteen districts (Ghana Water Company Limited, 2019).

Economic Activities of the People of the Northern Region

Some prior studies (Ahonsi et al., 2019; de Groot et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2017) have revealed that most men in the Northern Region of Ghana who marry young girls are farmers, and their motive is to get female domestic labour who would support them in their farming activities. This suggests that a given geographical area's economic activity (particularly farming) may influence early marriage, as in the case of Ghana's Northern Region. According to the available evidence (Ghana Water Company Limited, 2019), Tamale has the highest proportion (14.3 percent) of economically active people in the Northern Region, whereas Chereponi has the least percentage (2.0 %). The proportions in the remaining districts vary (i.e. between 8% and 2%) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

This is due to Tamale having the highest population density and being the most urbanized district in the country, where economic opportunities abound maybe more than in any other district. As a result, Tamale, once again, has the highest proportion of economically active people (25.5%), while

Chereponi has the lowest (1.8 %). Except for West Gonja, East Gonja, Nanumba North, Tamale, and Mamprusi West, which have a higher proportion of economically active people than those not, all other districts have higher proportions of economically active people than those who are not (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

Agriculture, forestry, and fishery (59.6%), services and company work (13.1%), plant machine operators and assemblers (11.2%), and craft (8.2%) other related workers (11%) are the four most common occupations in Bole District, according to the Ghana Statistical Service (2015). Agriculture, forestry, and fishing are the main sources of income in all districts except Tamale, which is predominantly urbanized and has a relatively small proportion (19.1%) of pure agricultural activities compared to other communities in northern Ghana. Services and sales workers (30.7 %) and craft and related trades workers (21.7%) are the most common occupations in Tamale Metropolis, followed by agriculture, technicians (9.3%), and elementary occupations (7.7%) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015). Farming is the primary source of income for roughly 70% of the population in the area. Maize, corn, sorghum, yams, tomatoes, cotton, and tree crops like shea nut and kapok are among the crops grown. Rice is grown primarily in Walewale, Tamale, Damongo, Salaga, and Yendi (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). Around Tamale, Bimbilla, Yendi, and Walewale, groundnut is widely grown. Guinea corn is also widely grown in the region. Rice and groundnut production is often undertaken on a commercial basis. Livestock rearing is a significant part of the region's economic activity. Agro-based industry includes

processing agricultural products like groundnuts into edible oil and shea nuts into shea butter.

There are many rice mills in the region (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). Non-agro industries are scarce in the region, owing to the region's low mineral resource base. At Bog-Da, near Gambaga and Buipe, high-quality limestone deposits can produce Portland cement. Sheini, also in the Zabzugu-Tatale District, is known for its iron ore deposits. Kukui, Yong, Nabari, Kpaligu, and Bewna all have significant clay deposits. The clay used to make these bricks is considered appropriate for northern climates. Many customary and cultural activities, as well as places of interest, abound in the Northern Region. Housing is usually low quality in all districts (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015). Mud is used for the walls and floors, and thatch is used for the roof. Most housing units lack electricity, drinking water, and new, improved toilet facilities. The region's main economic activities are agriculture, hunting, and forestry (MoFA, 2015).

Farming employs 71.2 percent of the economically active population, described as people aged 15 and older. About a tenth (7.0%) of the region's economically active citizens are unemployed (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). 83.4 the private informal sector consumed percent of the economically active population. The formal private sector accounts for an additional 11.5 percent, leaving the public sector just 4.3 percent. 14.8 percent of the population was unemployed due to old age. A small percentage were unable to function due to a disability (2.2%) or are retired (1.2%), whereas 16.9% are listed as others (Ghana Statistical Service, 2015).

According to data from the Ghana Statistical Service (2019), the Northern Region currently has sixteen districts. Therefore, half of Ghana's Northern Region districts were considered for this report: Tolon, Savelugu Nanton, Karaga, Gushiegu, Nanumba North, Nanumba South, Yendi, and Zabzugu are among the eight districts considered. Since most NGOs, CSOs and other corporate and government agencies operate primarily in Ghana's northern regions to reduce child marriage which is more widespread (Mwakideu, 2016) in the area than in other regions in the country; the Northern Region was chosen as a suitable study area for this research. This was premised on Ahonsi et al.'s (2019) study findings which indicate that compared to their counterparts in Greater Accra and other regions in Ghana, women in the Northern Region, Upper East Region and Upper West Region were more likely to marry young.

In addition, Northern Region was considered appropriate because this study focused on investigating the major stakeholders' contribution towards ending child marriage in the Northern Region, which has become a human right issue. Meanwhile, evidence (UNICEF, 2015) has shown that due to extreme poverty and a high illiteracy rate, the child marriage rate has risen to one out of every three girls in Ghana's three Northern Regions (Northern Region, Upper East, and Upper West regions). Concerning the specific districts in the Northern Region selected for the study, those mentioned earlier were considered due to proximity. In addition, different forms of child marriage have been widespread in all the districts and their communities within the Northern Region stretch. For instance, the available facts (UNICEF & MoGCSP, 2017) indicate that although the three northern regions of Ghana

lead a high rate of child marriage in Ghana, the Northern Region leads with 39.6 percent, compared to Upper West Region (37.3%) and Upper East Region (36.1%).

Research Philosophical Approach

The approach adopted in this study is the pragmatism paradigm. In social science research, the term “paradigm” is used to refer to the philosophical assumptions or to the basic set of beliefs that guide the actions and define the worldview of the researcher (Lincoln, Yvonne, Lynham & Guba, 2011). Although there are several paradigms that structure and organise modern social science research (post positivism, constructivism, and participatory action framework), this study adopted the pragmatism paradigm. The advantage of the pragmatist approach is that it allows the researcher to use philosophical and methodological approach that works best for the specific research problem under investigation. It therefore allows the use of mixed-methods or multiple-methods (Creswell and Clark, 2011).

Since the present study requires both quantitative and qualitative data, the mixed method approach (Creswell, 2008; Yin, 2009) was employed. The approach helped to solicit for their experiences and views on child marriage. The mixed method approach combines both the quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect and analyse data (Creswell & Clark, 2011) and therefore helps to provide a comprehensive analysis of the topic under discussion (Creswell, 2008). The mixed methods approach helps to answer questions that cannot be answered by only quantitative or qualitative approaches alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Thus, this study was situated in the pragmatic philosophy. The major criticism of this approach is that it is time consuming

when analysing digital and quantifiable data. Although it has been criticised, the method guarantees complementary of views, and therefore enhances the understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2008).

Study Designs

According to Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017), a mixed approach design is described as incorporating at least one qualitative and one quantitative component of the study. The mixed methods study approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to take advantage of the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative processes, thus minimizing their drawbacks (Creswell, 2014; Johnson et al., 2007; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). Quantitative research, for example, aids in the verification of theories formulated before data collection; it is observational, with larger sample size, and has greater reliability (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Nueman, 2014). However, since the knowledge gathered may not be directly applicable, qualitative data may be useful in explaining a hypothetical construct. Although some scholars argue that the two paradigms should not be mixed, both are helpful and useful (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The quantitative-qualitative continuum offers immense insights because it provides comprehensive information of both qualitative and quantitative knowledge (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017).

As a result, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) classified various mixed methods in various research fields. Among the key mixed method types are transformative mixed method approach, convergent parallel approach to mixed methods, embedded mixed method design, explanatory sequential approach, explanatory sequential approach to mixed methods and mixed

multiphase approaches. In addition, more than one data collection stage is used in the sequential mixed approaches (qualitative or quantitative) (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

Even so, by integrating two data types in the data analysis, the convergent parallel mixed methods model was used in the data collection process. According to Creswell, a convergent approach typically involves the simultaneous processing of quantitative and qualitative data (2014). As a result of the concurrent study of mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative data are typically collected simultaneously rather than at separate times, allowing for additional trips to the test site. In this case, the reasoning for using convergent parallel mixed methods design is to ensure that data collection is effective. Nevertheless, an informative sequential mixed approach was used in the data analysis. This is where a quantitative data result is explained qualitatively by a more detailed analysis of the quantitative results. This approach is in line with Creswell's (2014) suggestion that when time is a problem, the researcher should consider an embedded model of designs.

Furthermore, an explanatory concurrent mixed methodology was used since the study focused mainly on quantitative analysis, although some aspects of the research findings were interpreted and discussed qualitatively. This is supported by the assumption that if a more focused quantitative approach is required, an explanatory sequential method, as used in the analysis, should be employed accordingly (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the quantitative findings were interpreted using these approaches to explain them in greater detail by incorporating qualitative interpretation. With this goal in mind, the study took

a step-by-step approach, connecting the two datasets and constructing one on top of the other.

Quantitative Method

Several researchers Creswell, (2014); Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, (2004); Myers, (1997) have consistently argued that despite many research method classifications, the most dominant classifications are quantitative and qualitative. In social science research, quantitative research methods are carefully chosen to calculate (Lincoln et al., 2011; Silva, 2017) a given social phenomenon to understand real-world issues. This means that quantitative research tends to concentrate on numerical measurement rather than giving in-depth meaning to socially constructed issues (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln et al., 2011; Saunders et al., 2016). In this context, the quantitative part of the research follows positivist principles by analysing the nexuses between variables resulting from the study's objectives and questions following the study's underpinning theories. Since the study moves systematically from hypothesis to data with the need to clarify the relationship between variables, this method is also referred to as deductive reasoning (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Saunders et al., 2016).

According to Hammersley (2013), to better understand the essence of a given truth, such as an occurrence or situation, one must be able to measure and provide empirical evidence to explain the reality in question. Thus, according to Johnson and Christensen (2004), there are many forms of survey-based quantitative methods, including regression, correlation, causal, and experimental analysis. The survey was the quantitative analysis approach used in the research. In a survey, many people react to questions about a given

pattern in a sample study to test a hypothesis (Badu-Nyarko, 2011; Lancaster, 2005).

The quantitative research method of the study concentrated on the female population residents in the Northern region. The intention of the researcher was to use the quantitative approach in estimating the factors associated with child marriage in the region. In the quantitative study, the research used the age at first marriage of the female population to determine whether they were victim of child marriage or otherwise. The approach further collected information on the social-demographic characteristics of the parents during the time of the marriage. The quantitative approach was use to also collect data on the consequences of child marriage.

Qualitative Research Method

According to Creswell (2014), the qualitative process is another feature of mixed approaches. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), a qualitative methodological approach tries to clarify the phenomenon. Also, it examines individual participants' experiences in a social background analysis (Abdullahi, Senekal, Zyl-Schalekamp, Amzat & Saliman, 2013). The concerns that a qualitative analysis normally aims to investigate are those that deal with "how" and "why," "when", and "where" rather than "what" and "how much" (Yin, 2003; Abdullahi et al., 2013). The qualitative component of this study was used to address the key problems, inconsistencies, and differing viewpoints that emerged from the quantitative survey results. This describes why, to understand the phenomenon better, most researchers who use quantitative techniques conduct a qualitative study by asking open-ended questions (Abdullahi et al., 2013; Creswell, 2014). Guerra (2006) further

maintains that, although qualitative methodology has its robustness, it does not in any way condemn the methodological approach of quantitative studies and that researchers can combine qualitative and quantitative approaches in study review. Silva (2017) asserts that comprehending true research requires a holistic understanding of the meanings of a given subject feature and its actions to conclude factually.

Poliit and Beck (2004) also contend that using the traditional descriptive testing approach improves the study's goal of defining the relationship between an actual case and its associated variables. Furthermore, Silva (2017) argues that the qualitative research technique aims to deliver a thorough understanding of socially formed realities that are typically encountered by a single person or group of people rather than relying on the calculation of variables and that the qualitative research technique aims to deliver a thorough understanding of socially formed realities that are typically encountered by a single person or group of people according to what they consider important. However, it is recommended that researchers be aware of the various theoretical philosophies available to unravel a conceptual reality and that such constructions have a positive relationship (Silva, 2017). This understanding informed the review of theoretical underpinnings such as stakeholder theory, blaming theory and ecological model for providing an in-depth analysis of major stakeholders' contribution to ending child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana.

Given the mixed method approach used in this report, a qualitative exploratory survey design in the form descriptive (Abdullahi et al., 2018; Yin, 2003) would be appropriate for assessing emerging issues regarding

stakeholders' contributions to ending child marriage in Ghana's Northern Region. In an attempt to achieve these, questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions were used as data sources since this approach is accurate and rigorous (Baxter & Jack, 2008) and leads to credible study results (Abdullahi et al., 2013).

Some prior studies have suggested that survey research may provide a quantitative and qualitative summary of specific trends, attitudes, values, or opinions of a population by analyzing a sample or proportion of that population (Creswell, 2014; Fowler, 2009). These data collection methods may include cross-sectional or longitudinal surveys that use questionnaires, structured interviews, or both to gather the survey-based data needed to generalize a population (Fowler, 2009). Olsen (2004), on the other hand, believes that using multiple data collection approaches helps to triangulate data analysis techniques and ensures that robust and comprehensive research results are published. In this regard, the qualitative portion of the analysis explained and reiterated those quantitative aspects. Focus group discussions, interviews, and participatory observation were used to satisfy the qualitative portion of the data collection and analysis process. In addition, a questionnaire and secondary data collected from the sampled institutions' records discussed the current study's quantitative component.

This study employed a qualitative approach to understanding the meaning people have constructed in making sense of the real world and their experiences in their immediate environment (Merriam, 2009). This explains why some researchers (Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Levitt *et al.*, 2017) believe that qualitative research is inductive, and that the researcher generally explores

the meanings and insights people construct in a given situation. Thus, it involves a range of data collection and analytical techniques that usually use a non-probability sampling approach (purposive sampling or convenience sampling) with semi-structured, open-ended interviews to examine specific phenomena of interest (Dudwick *et al.*, 2006; Gopaldas, 2016).

Study Population

All the identified stakeholders, parents and victims of child marriage in the Northern Region constituted the study's population. Based on the available evidence (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014), the study population is limited to all female population of the district. In this study, the 'child' is conceptualized to include all young married females between the ages below 18 years (Ahonsi *et al.*, 2019; Wodon *et al.*, 2017). As part of the established evidence in child marriage incidence in Ghana, Domfe and Oduro (2018) confirmed in their study that the Northern Region has a higher rate of child marriage than the rest of the regions in the country. In her study, Bawa (2019) reports that approximately 97.9 percent of households in the northern part of Ghana are into farming which requires domestic labour mainly involving many wives and children (Britwum & Akorsu, 2016). According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2019), the population of the Northern Region is 1,905,628 people. Using the high incidence of child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana, the estimated study population was estimated using the sex ratio of the region. Data collected by the Ghana Statistical Service in the Northern region [2019] indicated that the female share of the total population was 50.6 percent. Based on the female share of the total population in the northern region, the researcher calculated 50.6 percent of the total population to generate the

number of females in the region ($0.506 \times 1,905,628$). The final product of 964,243.

Table 2: 2019 Population Figures of Districts in the Northern Region of Ghana

District Name	Population	Female share of the population
Gushiegu	137,252	69,450
Karaga	95,870	48,510
Kpandai	134,199	67,904
Kumbungu	48,522	24,552
Mion	100,910	51,060
Nanumba North	174,642	88,368
Nanumba South	115,275	58,329
Saboba	81,051	41,011
Sagnerigu Municipal	182,645	92,418
Savelugu Nanton	171,829	86,945
Tamale Metropolis	275,364	139,334
Tatale Sanguli	74,055	37,472
Tolon	90,027	45,553
Yendi	145,266	73,505
Zabzugu	78,720	39,832
Total Population	1,905,628	964,243

Source: Ghana Statistical Service (2019)

Table 2 shows the latest figures for Ghana's Northern Region, following the separation of the Northeast Region and the Savanna Region. As a result of the addition of six new regions in 2019, Ghana's total number of regions increased from ten (10) to sixteen (16). As a result, the Northern Region's district count was reduced from 18 to 16 districts. The females share of the population for the various districts have been calculated and included in the table.

The researcher also focused on key stakeholders in Ghana's Northern Region as the target population for determining the study's sample size for the qualitative study. Thus, the study specifically targeted 766 potential participants. However, due to financial and time constraints, only eight (8) of the Northern Region's sixteen (16) districts were chosen for the current study.

Table 3.2 shows the study's target population, sample size, and sampling methods used to select the participants. Thus, the study targeted key stakeholders in the various institutions, parents and female married women who were married at a younger age from eight districts in the Northern Region, as shown in Table 3.2.

Study's Sample Size Derivation

Some previous studies (Hoe, 2008; Kyriazos, 2018; Singh, Junnarkar & Kaur, 2016) have found that any sample size greater than 200 is sufficient for maintaining predictive power in the data analysis. One important aspect to consider when deciding the sample size for a study is the population from which the projected sample will be drawn (Bartlett, Kotrlik & Higgins, 2001). The sample size was calculated using Slovin's (1960) formula (see equation 3.1). The Yamane formula for sample size was used to estimate the sample selected from each of the 8 districts selected. (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The sample was calculated for each district differently. The formula used has been provided below.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} \dots \dots \dots \text{equation 3.1}$$

Here n is the study population's sample size, N is the population size, and e is the margin of error. Since the study's population within the selected district in the Northern Region was diverse, the researcher decided that a 0.05 error margin was sufficient. For Gushiegu District, calculating the sample size will be as follows,

Study population (N) = 137,252

Margin of error (e) = 0.05

Sample size (n) = ?

$$n = \frac{137,252}{[1+137,252 (0.05)^2]}$$

$$n = \frac{137,252}{[1+137,252 (0.0025)]}$$

$$n = \frac{137,252}{[3.375]}$$

$$n = 240$$

$$n \approx 240$$

Hence, based on the study population of 137, 252 in the Gushiegu District, the calculated sample size is 240. The sampling size estimation were repeated for the other seven districts.

Table 3: Estimated sample size for the 8 selected districts in the Northern Region

Districts	Female estimated population	Sample size
Gushiegu	137,252	240
Nanumba North	174,642	230
Zabguzu	78,720	220
Karaga	95, 870	150
Yendi	145, 266	225
Nanumba South	115, 275	125
Tolon	90, 027	145
Savelugu Nanton	171, 829	130
Total	1,008,881	1,465

Source: Field data (2021)

Sampling Procedure

Several sampling procedures were employed for different aspects of the study. Both probability (Saunders et al., 2016) and non-probability (Vehovar et al., 2016) sampling methods were used in the study's sampling processes since mixed method techniques followed the appropriate methodology. According to Desilver (2014), sampling the non-probability is rather instructive. In this regard, it is presumed that combining likelihood and

non-probability sampling methods may sometimes be a rational solution for obtaining accurate data. According to Vehovar et al. (2016), population estimates for key target elements can be obtained using a probability survey, which is considered expensive, while an in-depth analysis can be conducted using non-probability surveys, which are considered easy.

Concerning the quantitative study, the sampling procedure for the multistage sampling technique was adopted. The first step was the identification of the 8 districts with the highest cases of child marriage. The district capitals were selected based on the assumption that there is variability of the study outcome and presence of the major stakeholders. After the selection of the 8 districts, the district statistical office provided the various enumeration areas of the selected communities. With the enumeration areas, a balloting strategy was used to select one enumeration area for the data collection. The next step was employing the systematic sampling approach. The systematic sampling was used to calculate the sample interval of the housing structures with an EA, using the formula $i=N/n$ Where N = target structure, n = sample size. After the sampling interval has been estimated, a random number was selected as the first point of contact. $i=N/n =750/240 =3$ The random number selected for this community was 2. After interviewing a female in the second structure, the sampling interval was added to 2 to generate the number of the next house to collect.

With regard to the qualitative aspect of the study, the non-probability sampling technique used was purposive. The purposive sampling was used because it was useful for locating the respondents (stakeholders such as the Police, Immigration Officers, Traditional and Religious Leaders etc.) who

became the key informants, who provided useful information for the study. Specifically, the maximum variation sampling was used. This was because the study collected data from different participants (Police officers, Immigration Officers, Judges, Media Persons, Traditional Leaders, Chiefs, etc.) (Patton, 2022; Suri, 2011).

Data Collection Instruments

Researchers used various data collection methods, including open-ended and closed-ended questions, to collect data for the analysis. This allowed the data collection and analysis to be done using the triangulation method (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). According to Sagor (1992), Triangulation is gathering several data sources for each phenomenon or problem under investigation. As a result, triangulating the data collected will allow the researcher to compare, check, and close gaps in the study's outcome (Sagor, 1992).

Prior to designing the instruments, a thorough literature review was conducted to determine and categorise concepts and variables that had been used in similar studies. Following that, two main data collection instruments were used. These were the in-depth interview and structured questionnaire. The questionnaire for the quantitative data collection was structured under five sections. The first section, Section A, focused on the study's respondents' demographic characteristics, and the remaining sections focused on the study's research questions. The Section B captured the root causes of child marriage in the Northern Regions of Ghana. The Section C of the instrument collected data on the major stakeholders committed to ending child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana, using legal framework, policies and programmes.

The last section, Section D, gathered data on the major challenges stakeholders face in tackling child marriage in the Northern Regions of Ghana. This instrument was semi-structured to allow for flexibility unlike the quantitative questionnaire that was structured. The instruments were structured in such a way that they could solicit similar responses from different groups of respondents to ensure triangulation of ideas. The idea of triangulation as used in the study stems from the belief that the validity of research findings and the degree of confidence in them are enhanced by the deployment of more than one instrument or approach to data collection (Bryman, 2004; Patton, 2002).

During the pre-test, it was discovered that most of the respondents, especially some parents and victims of child marriage, were illiterate and could not complete a questionnaire without the assistance of an interviewer who could translate the demands of the research questions into their native language.

Pre-Testing of Instruments

According to Perneger et al. (2015), pretesting data collection instruments are required to achieve at least accurate study outcomes. Thus, after the pretest, the researcher's ability to recognize issues such as unanswered questions, unfamiliar terms, ambiguous sentence structure, and a lack of appropriate responses from respondents will lead to changes in data collection method redesign and restructuring to avoid inaccurate and invalid or relevant data results (Perneger et al., 2015). Therefore, a pretest was conducted to determine the suitability of the study's data collection instruments and the targeted study participants, as well as their comprehension

of the instructions and research questions produced. The pre-test was conducted in the Northern Region's Kpandai and Nanumba South Districts.

The two towns named above were chosen for the pretest because of their proximity, differences, and commonalities. Also, different types of agricultural activities are the main economic stay in the region, according to Ghana Statistical Service (2014). The data collection instruments were pre-tested to check the feasibility of the instructions, research questions, adequacy and accuracy of questions, and the study respondents' interpretation of the instructions and questions asked. These were done to look at the order of the questions and to see whether there were any differences in the answers from the study's participants. The results of the pre-tests were used to restructure the final survey instruments used to collect the study's data.

The seven-day pretest exercise began on November 23, 2020 and ended on November 23, 2020. For the pretest, a sample size of 35 people was chosen, consisting of 15 key stakeholders, 10 parents, and 10 victims of child marriage. After analysing the pre-test results, it was discovered that some questions had been misinterpreted, while others had been left unanswered by the respondents. More so, Cronbach alpha was used to perform a reliability test for the Likert scales on the questionnaire used in the study. As a result of the reliability test, the 5-point scale items were used to create a construct for the level of stakeholders' contributions towards ending child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana. However, after raw data was collected, the participants were asked to express their opinion on the questions posed by the data collection instruments. Some stated that some of the research questions were unclear and needed to be reframed to the best of their understanding.

As a result, the researcher determined that it was important to answer the things that were not explicit and restructured the research questions and instructions to reflect the respondents' concerns. Furthermore, different anomalies discovered in the responses gathered were corrected to ensure the accuracy and validity of the survey items produced. During the pretest, the main difficulties were that some participants were hesitant to participate in the study and that a language barrier complicated the data collection process. When the researcher consulted and briefed the visited communities' opinion leaders, the researcher overcame the two main challenges. Most target participants decided to participate in the study after speaking with the opinion leaders. To overcome the language barrier, two residents who are graduates and are fluent in the local language spoken in the communities surveyed were employed to translate the interactions between the researcher and the study participants.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher adopted acceptable guidelines in compliance with the rules of engagement in the data collection procedures before the data collection processes, including the pretest and the actual fieldwork data collection stages. Firstly, the major stakeholders in the study areas, such as gatekeepers, community leaders, and government officials, were formally consulted and briefed about the researcher's intent and the study's intention through written and oral media. Once the approval was given, the first stage (pretest) was completed, followed by the actual fieldwork 21 days later. The analysis considered both quantitative and qualitative data collection at the same time. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analysed separately,

and the results were compared to see whether the trends and validity of the findings converged or differed.

To obtain both qualitative and quantitative data, the interview schedule and questionnaire used for data collection were designed to include both open-ended and closed-ended questions. As a result, most closed-ended questions were analysed quantitatively, while the open-ended parts were analysed using qualitative techniques. Such approaches are compatible with Creswell's (2014) observation that qualitative data tends to be open-ended, with no predetermined responses, while quantitative data usually includes closed-ended responses, such as those found on data collection tools, including questionnaires. Fortunately, the more open-ended the questioning, the better since the researcher pays close attention to what people say or do in their immediate environment as part of their way of life (Creswell, 2014).

One aim of using closed-ended questions on questionnaires and interview schedules in the data collection process (Marras, Bendeck, & Laar, 2016) was to obtain data that would allow for a comprehensive study of stakeholders' contributions to ending child marriage in the Northern Region. The quantitative part of the study's analysis was based on the data obtained through the questionnaire, which looked at the root causes of child marriage in Northern Regions of Ghana. In addition, the impact of stakeholders' policies and programs on the state of child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana, On the other hand, the qualitative aspect of the analysis focused on the available legal framework, policies, and programs introduced by stakeholders to end child marriage in Northern Regions of Ghana, and the major challenges stakeholders face in tackling child marriage in the Northern Regions of Ghana.

Within 21 working days, the entire data collection process was completed. Field data collection began on the 10th of May 2021, and ended on the 7th of June, 2021. As a result of the time constraints, each of the regular exercises took place over 7 hours (i.e., from 10 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) each day. In the data collection process, each interview session with a respondent was limited to 30 minutes due to the design of the research questions. On the other hand, the study respondents were given a maximum of 5 days to complete the questionnaires. In addition, three sessions for focus group discussion were held, to the extent that each lasted for two hours. These strategies allowed the researcher to collect the necessary data in the allotted time. The main issue faced in the field during data collection was that some of the study's target participants were unable to participate. However, this difficulty was overcome because the researcher made a greater effort to engage prospective respondents and brief them on the study's rationale to avoid any possible doubt. Another constraint that was likely to come up on the field was the long distance the research team would travel before collecting the necessary data. These challenges were addressed by including weekends in the working days' plan to complete the data collection within the stipulated time frame.

More importantly, the researcher hired six (6) field assistants to help cover all 8 districts selected for the analysis to prevent time and cost overrun. Throughout the data collection process, a blend of English and local languages was used depending on the type of language common to the selected respondents. Thus, the interviews were conducted in the local language, mostly Dagbani and Hausa. Still, those more conversant with the English or Twi language were also interviewed in those languages. In this regard, the

field assistants were carefully selected in such a way that they were conversant with the four main languages (Dagbani, Hausa English, and Twi) that were used to collect the needed data.

Data Processing and Analysis

Data processing and analysis are critical in making meaning out of the general research processes. Sharma (2018) describes data analysis as evaluating and interpreting data to find answers to questions. Data analysis explores the relationships between variables and translates data into information and knowledge. Shamo and Resnik (2015) contend that unique analytical methods aid researchers in concluding empirical evidence on a specific case or topic of interest. Different analytical methods were used in the study's data management and analysis to guarantee that the study's findings were accurate. First, the raw data obtained from study respondents in the form of responses were duly grouped following the instrument used to collect the data. Statistical Packages such as Microsoft Excel 2013, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 21, and Stata version SE 13 were used to code and process the organized data. The researcher was able to allocate unique values to variables and delete elements that were found to be missing owing to the application of data coding techniques.

The data coding also allows for the assignment of numbers to the different responses obtained through the distribution of questionnaires and interviews. For data organization, cleaning, and review, Microsoft Excel 2013 was used in conjunction with SPSS version 21 and Stata Version SE 13. As a result, the quantitative data from the questionnaires and interview schedule was thematically structured in Microsoft Excel, while the coding was

completed in the SPSS app. Finally, the data was transferred to Stata for further data analysis following the study's objectives.

In addition, the data were analysed using a combination of various analytical methods. Descriptive numbers, frequencies and percentages, means, and standard deviation were used in the data analysis process. These tools offered a sense of the data, especially regarding respondent background characteristics. Cross tabulation and Pearson's chi-square for independence analytical tools were also used to examine the relationships and statistical significance of associations among some categorical variables in the sample. Thus, the cross-tabulations were used to compare how certain paired variables related in frequency. The chi-square tests were performed with a default significance level of .05 (5%).

The qualitative data processing focused on the IDI data collected through interviews with the participants. Every audio recording was transcribed within a period of two days. This was to ensure easy remembrance of issues discussed with participants (Creswell, 2012; Sarantakos, 2005). After the transcription, there was proofreading to ensure there were no grammatical errors. To correct errors, transcribed interviews were compared with notes taken in the field and proofread while listening to the audio recordings. Interviews that were not conducted in English were transcribed into English.

Data analysis followed data processing. The transcribed data were prepared for analysis by compiling all the transcripts into one Microsoft word file. The data were then analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The transcriptions were read and re-read to ensure familiarity with the data. First, a codebook was created. Preliminary codes were then. Quotes were

then collated and sorted out based on their shared patterns, to form subthemes and finally the main themes. Where needed, themes were combined, separated, or discarded to define a pattern of shared meaning projected by a central idea (Braun & Clarke, 2019). After this, the themes were defined by providing names and clear working definitions capturing the essence of each theme. Finally, descriptive narratives of the themes together with analytic narratives and data extracts were used to contextualise the analyses based on the existing literature. Statements of the respondents were presented as quotes to substantiate responses given to questions posed during the interviews. Tables 4, 5 and 6 present the major themes and sub-themes that emerged from the qualitative data analysis.

Table 4: Underlying root causes of child marriage in the Northern Region

Underlying factors	Related factors
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand for material goods from men • Orphans • Non-educated girl child/dropouts
Parental/Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of parental care/guidance • Poverty • Lack of parental education • Continuity of family ties
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social values and norms • Morality and honour • Maternal influence
Structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of educational opportunities for girls • Place of residence • Weak law enforcement

Table 5: Legal framework, Policies and Programs used by stakeholders in ending child marriage in the Northern Region

Themes	Sub-themes
Legal Framework (1998 Children's Act, Criminal offence Act)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arresting culprits • Prosecuting culprits • Reporting suspected cases to assembly members/NGOs/traditional leaders
Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic empowerment, scholarships and apprenticeship • Girl Child Education and all school-going age children must be enrolled • Ministry of Gender National Strategic Framework on Ending Child Marriage 2017-2026. • GES Code of Conduct 2017
Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The formation of adolescent groups in schools and communities to educate children • Workshops to build the capacity of stakeholders • Educating parents on the effect of child marriage • Let the girl smile project -Supporting children with school materials • Counselling services for victims

Table 6: Key challenges faced by stakeholders in ending child marriage in the Northern Region

Key challenges	Sub-challenging elements
Structural	Weak response systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No accommodation for rescued victims • Influence from leaders Lack of funds Peer group resistance Police do not bring cases to court
Cultural/Religious	Interference from traditional authorities Traditional leaders as perpetrators Religious interference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim communities
Individual	Non reported cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear and intimidation Lack of evidence (birth cert)
Family	Resistance from parents Illiteracy

Ethical Issues Considered

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board. The present researcher adhered to all ethical rules by making sure that key issues of ethics in research were strictly observed. These included informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy that have been discussed as follows:

Informed consent

As observed by Leary (2001), protecting the rights of participants is important in every research. Informed consent is simply informing research participants of the nature of the study, and obtaining their explicit agreement to participate (Leary, 2001). As such, adequate information about the study was given to all the participants. The study sought verbal information from the participants. That was done to ensure that participants were not coerced in anyway.

Anonymity

Anonymity is ensured when the name of a respondent does not appear on the research instrument or data collected (Sarantokos, 2005:21). According to Babbie (2007) anonymity must be observed to make identification of objects or individuals impossible. Consequently, the use of the semi-structured interview schedules, for example, did not bear the names of participants, thereby making traceability difficult.

Confidentiality

The purpose of confidentiality is to conceal the identity of participants (Babbie, 2007; Sarantokos, 2005). Confidentiality was ensured in order to protect the rights of all participants. The researcher did not divulge any information given by respondents to anyone.

Privacy

“Privacy is observed when respondents are given the opportunity to decide when and where, or to what extent his or her attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour will be revealed to other people who are not part of the research” (Singleton, Straits, Straits & McAllister 1988:454). The present researcher observed this ethical principle by ensuring that a participant’s private life was not questioned. That is, sensitive questions that could make the respondents uncomfortable were avoided. The essence of privacy was to give respondents a relaxed and comfortable environment to answer questions.

Steps to ensure validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of findings

The relevance of validity, reliability and trustworthiness in scientific research cannot be overlooked (Joppe, 2000). Reliability, according to Shenton (2004), measures the extent to which the results of a study are consistent over time or whether the results can be reproduced under the same conditions “Validity determines whether a research instrument truly measures that which it is intended to measure to authenticate findings” (Joppe, 2000:1). Trustworthiness in scientific research seeks to ask the question: “How can an inquirer persuade his or her audience that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:290). Validity, reliability, and trustworthiness were ensured as follows:

Validity

The validity of the questionnaire was assessed on three levels: content, construct and criterion. The questions were adapted from the Demographic and Health Survey questionnaire which have been assessed against these three levels of validity.

Reliability

The Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to determine the internal consistency of the research instrument. The reliability score of the instrument was 0.89 which was within the acceptable reliability score.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, according to Korstjens and Moser (2018) entails credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is concerned with the aspect of truth-value, and it is measured with strategies including triangulation. In the current study, data triangulation was the main method adopted. Findings from the two districts were regarded as communicating similar issues. They were, thus, presented homogeneously without comparisons between the various sites.

Transferability has to do with a thick description. In the current research, transferability was ensured by describing the study setting, providing the sample size and sampling procedure used, and describing the socio-demographics of the study participants.

The reliability criteria concerned the use of methods that were consistent with related pragmatic studies, using acceptable standards and practices of data analysis and reporting that followed the Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) (Tong, Sainsbury & Craig, 2007). The methods (data collection and analysis) used in this study is reported to permit the confirmability of the research findings.

Dependability approaches included independent checking of codes, reporting of discrepant information and the confirmation of the study's results elsewhere. Transcribed data were read out to participants to allow verifications

or corrections. This was to ensure that responses they provided matched their intentions.

Chapter summary

This chapter presented the methodology of the study. It presented the research philosophy and study design as well. The sources of data, study area, population, sampling procedure, and data collection tool and data collection procedures were highlighted. Data processing and analysis and ethical considerations were also presented in this chapter.



CHAPTER FIVE

PREVALENCE OF CHILD MARRIAGE: THE EVIDENCE IN THE
NORTHERN REGION**Introduction**

The analysis and discussion of the findings of the specific objectives of the study have been presented in this and subsequent chapters. This chapter focuses on the prevalence of child marriage in the study area. Using descriptive statistic including, cross-tabulation to show the prevalence of child marriage across the various socio-demographics of respondents selected for the study. In addition, the chi-square analysis was done to examine the statistical difference between child marriage and some identified socio-demographic factors of the parents/guardian of the victims of child marriage. The chi-square test also served as a preliminary analysis for the final multivariate analysis. Finally, the discussion was linked to the literature review's conceptual framework and some relevant aspects.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of respondents**Table 7: Distribution of the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents**

Variables	Frequency	percentage
Age of respondents		
<20 years	304	23.0
20-29 years	417	31.5
30-39 years	350	26.4
40+ years	253	19.1
Years spent in school		
Never	625	47.2
1-3 years	324	24.5
4-5 years	171	12.9
6+ years	204	15.4
Parent/guardian educational level		
No education	726	54.8
Primary education	245	18.5
Secondary and above	353	26.7

Person living with		
Both parent	173	13.1
Mother/Father only	640	48.3
Other relatives	511	38.6
Wealth status of parent/guardian		
Poor	734	55.4
Middle	138	10.4
Rich	136	10.3
Religious of parent/guardian		
Christianity	481	36.3
Islam	570	43.1
African Traditional Religion	273	20.6
Parent/Guardian ethnicity		
Mole-Dagbani	866	65.4
Grussi	190	14.4
Gruma	145	11.0
Others	123	9.3
Parent/guardian occupation		
Not working	308	23.3
Professional/service	96	7.3
Agricultural	553	41.8
Manual	142	10.7
Sales	225	17.0
Total	1324	100

Source: Field data (2021)

Table 8 shows the frequency distribution and percentages of the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents engaged in the study. Concerning the age of respondents, the youngest respondent were below the ages of less than 20 years. From the results of the study, the study revealed that majority of the respondents were between the ages of 20-29 years with 31.5 percentage. The oldest age category of the respondents were more than 40 years. This category was the least presented in the study with a percentage of 19.1 regarding the number of years respondents have spent in school, Table 5 shows that majority of the females selected in the study had never been to school. They constituted 47.2 percent of the sample. The least category of years in schools were respondents who spent 4-5 years in school. For those respondents, the results indicated that they were 12.1 percent of the study. The

category with the highest number of years in school were respondents who spent six (6) and more years.

The study collected data on the socio-demographic characteristics of the parents/guardian. From the data, more than half of the respondents indicated that their parents or guardian had not received any formal education. They constitute 54.8 percent of the sample. The remaining categories of parents or guardian had received some form of formal education ranging from primary, secondary and tertiary. The least proportion was parents or guardian with primary education as indicated by the respondents were 18.5 percent. The remaining category of the respondents stated that their parent or guardian received formal education up to the secondary level and above. For persons whom respondents were living with, majority indicated that they lived with a single parent that is either their mother or father only. The cohort in the study made up 48.3 percent of the sample. Respondents who lived with both parents were least represented in the study. Their percentage was 13.1 percent. The remaining respondents indicated living with other family relatives instead of their biological parent(s).

On the subject ethnicity, the sample of the study was dominated by the Mole-Dagbani ethnic group. Respondents who indicated that they were Mole-Dagbani made up 65.4 percent of the study respondents. The least represent ethnic groups were respondents whose ethnic group has been classified as others. The others ethnic group is a combination of the various ethnic group who were least represented in the study. The percent of this category of respondents was 9.3 percent. Regarding the religion of the respondents, the study was dominated by respondents from the Islamic religion. The proportion

of respondents who indicated that they belonged to the Islamic religion was 43.1. The remaining religions of affiliations of the respondents were Christianity and the African Traditional Religion with 36.3 and 20.6 representation, respectively.

For wealth status of parents/guardian, more than half of the respondents indicated that the wealth status of their parents/guardian could be classified as belonging to the poor wealth quintile. For respondents who indicated their parents/guardian did not possess certain basic equipment and basic necessities, the research classified such parents as poor. For the remaining respondents, some respondents considered their parents/guardian as belonging to the middle and rich wealth quintile. Lastly on the occupation of the parent/guardian, 41.8 percent of the respondents indicated that their parents worked in the agricultural sector. For those whose parents worked in the agricultural sector formed the majority of the sample. Some respondents indicated that their parent/guardian were not engaged in economic activity. The remaining respondents stated that their parents worked in the professional/service sector, sales and some indicated that their parents worked as manual employees.

Prevalence of child marriage in the Northern Region

Prevalence of child marriage.

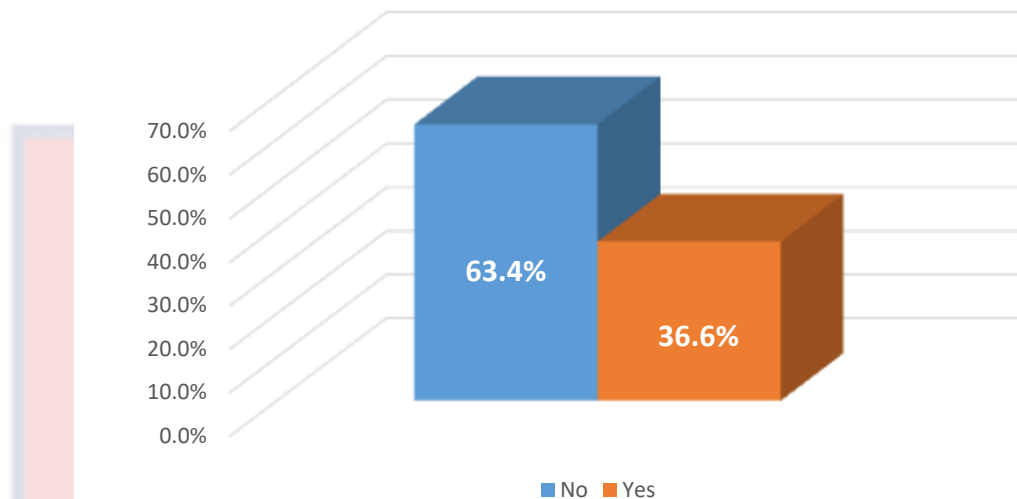


Figure 7: Prevalence of child marriage
Source: Field data (2021).

Figure 9 shows that child marriage is pervasive in the Northern Region of Ghana among the sampled female population from the eight (8) selected districts. The data indicates that about 37 percent (36.6%) of the selected females have been victims of child marriage at some point in their life. The prevalence of child marriage in the eight districts approximates the regional prevalence rate of 38 percent for the Sub-Saharan Region. The prevalence from the eight districts appears to be higher than the national prevalence rates over the years. What is the national average? Data from the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS) indicates the scale of the problem. These findings from the eight selected Northern regions are of great concern.

Bivariate Analysis of child marriage and selected socio demographic characteristics

Child marriage and respondents' age

Table 8: Cross-tabulation between respondents' age and child marriage [n=1334]

Age of respondents	Child Marriage		X ²	Significance
	No	Yes		
			106.358	0.000
<20 years	264	40		
20-29 years	260	157		
30-39 years	193	157		
40-49 years	123	130		
Total	840	484		

Source: Field data (2021)

Table 8 shows that a smaller proportion of the respondents aged less than 20 years had been victims of child marriage than the other age categories. The higher proportions of child marriage were pervasive within 20-29 years and 30-39 years, respectively. The pervasiveness of child marriage across the various age categories indicates that interventions to prevent child marriage in Ghana and the Northern Region have been effective to some extent, with the lowest proportion of child marriage occurring among the younger generation. The observed difference in the prevalence of child marriage among the age of respondents was statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000. The Study results suggest that the older women expressed the view that they experience more child marriage than the younger ones since the phenomenon have been less pervasive in recent times. This difference in experience between young and older women is perhaps the result of the current policy framework enacted to control this menace.

*Child marriage and type of residence***Table 9: Cross-tabulation between child marriage and type of residence [n=1334]**

Type of residence	Child Marriage		X ²	Significant
	No	Yes		
			16.328	0.000
<i>Rural</i>	610	399		
<i>Urban</i>	230	85		

Source: Field data (2021)

Table 9 shows the prevalence of child marriage across the respondents' residence type. A community's urban or rural nature may contribute significantly to the prevalence of child marriage. From the study's findings, it is observed that respondents from rural communities were more likely to experience child marriage than their counterparts from urban communities. The difference across rural and urban communities concerning child marriage is statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.000. From the table, 85 of 315 respondents from urban had been victims of child marriage compared to 399 of 1009 from rural communities. The importance of the campaign, policy framework and other interventions has been more pronounced in urban areas than in rural communities. Given this situation, it is no surprise that the respondents see child marriage as more pervasive among rural communities.

*Child marriage and Wealth Status of respondents' parent/guardian***Table 10: Wealth status of respondent's parents or guardian and child marriage [n=1334]**

Wealth Status	Child Marriage		X ²	Significance
	No	Yes		
			27.438	0.000
<i>Poorest</i>	441	293		
<i>Poorer</i>	136	94		
<i>Middle</i>	92	46		
<i>Richer</i>	98	38		
<i>Richest</i>	73	13		

Source: Field data (2021)

Table 10 illustrates child marriage among the different wealth statuses of the parent or guardian. This variable was captured retrospectively when child marriage happened for each respondent. The wealth status of the parents strongly correlates with the female child's probability of being married off at an early age. Respondents who indicated their parents or guardians belonged to the poorest wealth status were more likely to be victims of child marriage than those who indicated their parents were poorer or richer. Of the 734 respondents who reported their parents were of the poorest wealth status, 293 were victims of child marriage.

Conversely, of the 86 respondents who indicated that their parents belonged to the richest wealth status, only 13 were victims of child marriage. Therefore, it is imperative to argue that the wealth status of the parents or guardians influences the likelihood of female children experiencing child marriage. Also, from the table, it can be observed that as economic status improves, child marriage also reduces.

*Child marriage and the head of household***Table 11: Respondents' relationship to head of household [n=1334]**

Variable	Child Marriage		X ²	Significance
	No	Yes		
Living with parents/guardian			134.066	0.000
<i>Father</i>	103	70		
<i>Mother</i>	340	300		
<i>Uncle</i>	249	27		
<i>Grandparents</i>	63	62		
<i>Auntie</i>	85	25		

Source: Field data (2021)

Table 11 shows the relationship between respondents and the head of household. This was an important variable to be included in the study because the traditional setting gives custody of the child to her parents. However, in some instances, a child could be living with other relatives who might take critical decisions about a child's life. The table indicates that respondents who lived with their mothers and considered them the head of the household were more likely to be given out to marriage at a younger age. This variable measures only those who stayed with their mothers and were considered the household head. The independence chi-square test assumed a statistically significant association between child marriage and the relationship to the household head. There was a statistically significant difference across the various household heads. Respondents who indicated their mother was the household head were more likely to be victims of child marriage than those who indicated their father as the head of the household. The least proportion of victims of child marriage were those who indicated they were living with their aunts. There was a significant statistical association between whom respondents lived with and their chances of being victims of child marriage.

*Child marriage and ethnicity of parent/guardian***Table 12: Ethnic groups of respondents and child marriage [n=1334]**

Ethnicity of parent/guardian	Child Marriage		X ²	Significance
	No	Yes		
			1.418	0.701
<i>Mole-Dagbani</i>	558	308		
<i>Grussi</i>	120	70		
<i>Gruma</i>	88	57		
<i>Other</i>	740	49		
Total	840	484		

Source: Field data (2021)

Table 12 demonstrates the association between child marriage and the ethnic group of the respondents. For ethnic groups in the Northern Region, given the various tribe in the Northern Region of Ghana, a more composite approach was used to cover all the northern tribes under a bigger ethnic group, “Mole-Dagbani” this group consists of the Nanumba, Dagomba, Konkomba, Mossi, Gonja, Mamprusi etc. From table 5, no statistically significant association could be established between the ethnicity of respondents and the ethnic group they belonged. However, the table indicates that child marriage is pervasive among the Mole-Dagbani ethnic group. The ethnic group with the least victims of child marriage belonged to the ethnic groups categorised as others consisting of Ewe, Akan, Ga-Adangbe, etc

Child marriage and Parent/guardian occupation**Table 13: Parent/guardian's occupation and child marriage [n=1334]**

Parent/Guardian Occupation	Child Marriage		X ²	Significance
	No	Yes		
			86.438	0.00
<i>Not working</i>	254	54		
<i>Profession/Service</i>	70	26		
<i>Agricultural</i>	287	266		
<i>Manual</i>	96	43		
<i>Sales</i>	133	92		
Total	840	484		

Source: Field data (2021)

Table 13 shows the association between parents' occupations and child marriage. The analysis of child marriage from the earlier part of this work shows a pervasive trend among the poorest and poorer wealth status of the respondents' parents/guardians. A cross-tabulation of parents' occupations and child marriage was performed to identify which parent's occupation group was strongly associated with child marriage. From the table, the pervasiveness of child marriage was predominant among parents who work in the agricultural sector. Given that agriculture is the main occupation of the people, the poorest and poorer households, a clear understanding emerges from this analysis. Also, it can be noted that agriculture in the Northern region is subsistence and parents who are into agriculture are likely to be poor. The analysis assumed a significant relationship between parents' occupation and child marriage. Respondents whose parents worked in a professional or service sector were less likely to be victims of child marriage than those whose parents worked in other sectors of the economy.

*Child marriage and parent/guardian religion***Table 14: Parents/guardian religion and child marriage [n=1334]**

Variable	Child Marriage		X ²	Significance
	No	Yes		
Religion of parent/guardian			62.372	0.00
<i>Christian</i>	357	124		
<i>Muslim</i>	359	211		
<i>Other</i>	124	149		
Total	840	484		

Source: Field data (2021)

The study further collected information on the religious affiliation of the parent or guardian. This provided a contextual understanding of whether child marriage trended on cultural and religious grounds. From Table 14, it can be observed that there is a significant relationship between child marriage and parent/guardian religion. Respondents who indicated their parents or guardian professed the Islamic religion were more likely to be victims of child marriage than the other religion. Despite the differences across the various religious groups, there was considerable child marriage across all religions. Respondents whose parents were Christians were less likely to be victims of child marriage. For the category of respondents whose parents professed other religions, the majority of them were likely to be victims of child marriage.

*Child marriage and Parent/guardian educational level***Table 15: Parent/guardian educational level and child marriage. [n=1334]**

Parent/Guardian Educational Level	Child Marriage		X ²	Significance
	No	Yes		
			132.975	0.00
<i>No education</i>	376	350		
<i>Primary</i>	154	91		
<i>Secondary+</i>	310	43		
Total	840	484		

Source: Field data (2021)

Table 15 presents results on parents' level of education and child marriage. The association between parent's educational attainment and child marriage has been reported to have a strong correlation. The results indicate a significant statistical association between parents' educational attainment and child marriage from the table. Child marriage was predominant among parents with no formal education; out of the 726 respondents who indicated that their parents had received no formal education, 350 have been victims of child marriage at some point in their lives. The impact of formal education on child marriage is evidenced by Table 8, that a parent's educational level increases, child marriage decreases. Only 43 out of 353 were victims of child marriage for respondents whose parents had secondary education or higher. The statistical difference in the pervasiveness of child marriage is evident as one moves across the various educational levels.

*Child marriage and years spent in school***Table 16: Years spent in school and child marriage. [n=1334]**

Years spent schooling	Child Marriage		X ²	Significance
	No	Yes		
			188.426	0.00
<i>Never</i>	284	341		
<i>1-3 years</i>	239	85		
<i>4-5 years</i>	127	44		
<i>6+ years</i>	190	14		
Total	840	484		

Source: Field data (2021)

The study further tested if there exists some statistical difference between the number of years respondents spent in school and their chances of being victims of child marriage. The association between child marriage and years spent in school has been presented in Table 16. The table illustrates a significant statistical difference between victims of child marriage and those who were not. Most victims of child marriage have never received any form of formal education; 341 out of 625 of those who have never been to a school were victims of child marriage. For the category of respondents who spent 1-3 years in school, most of them indicated they had not been victims of child marriage. Clearly, from the table, the impact of education provides some protection for the females since with not 1-3 years of formal education, the pervasiveness of child marriage reduces from 341 to 85. With higher levels of education in females, child marriage becomes insignificant, and the prevalence reduces quite drastically, which suggests that the more years a girl spends in school, the higher the probability of escaping the phenomenon.

Discussion

This study section focuses on the prevalence of child marriage in the Northern Region. From the study, the prevalence of child marriage was 36.6 percent in the Northern region. This figure is higher than the national average of 26.2 percent but consistent with other studies, which found the prevalence of child marriage in the Northern Region to be 38 percent, the highest in the country (GDHS, 2014; Domfe & Oduro, 2018). Comparatively, this figure is lower as compared to other studies conducted in northern Ugandan which has a child marriage prevalence to be 59 percent (UNICEF, 2015) and others in Nigeria, which had a child marriage prevalence to be ranging from 31 to 69 percent in the northern zones (MICS, 2017). The variation in the prevalence could be attributed to the difference in cultural and traditional systems. Also, the higher prevalence of child marriage in the northern Region than Greater Accra, which has the least number of child marriages in the country, could be attributed to the urbanised nature. The Northern Region is a 30 percent urbanised population compared to about 91percent in Greater Accra (GSS, 2010), leading to higher rural dwellers that have been found to have high child marriages (GDHS, 2014).

The present study shows a reduction in the prevalence of child marriage by age group. As revealed in the study, child marriage among females born within the past two decades has decreased compared to those born before them. Thus, child marriage prevalence varies from the age-to-age group but is more prevalent among older age groups. The younger generation has seen a low prevalence of child marriage, which could be attributed to the

implementation of different policies on child marriage over the last two decades (MoGCSP, 2016).

The prevalence of child marriage varies based on the place of residence. The study shows a large disparity in child marriage among rural and urban dwellers. Rural dwellers had a higher incidence of child marriage than urban dwellers. Similarly, studies (GSS, 2013) GDHS, (2014) Ahonsi et al., (2019) in Ghana found child marriage to be more rampant in rural areas than in urban areas. The rural and urban disparities in the number of child marriages could be partly attributed to access to education and child marriage campaigns in the urban areas compared to the rural areas. In Mali, child marriage was more prevalent among rural residents than urban residents (Zegeye et al., 2021), consistent with this study's findings. This finding similarly conforms to the fishbone root cause analytical framework adapted from Slameto (2016). According to the framework, under the environmental factors, Slameto (2016) indicated that the underlying local economy or location the female child finds herself has a significant impact on the possibility of her experiencing child marriage. Therefore, as reported in this study, the conceptual framework identifies the region or location and the local economy as key factors in the prevalence of child marriage.

As found in the study, the pervasiveness of child marriage varied based on wealth status. Child marriage was more pronounced among the poorest households and declined as wealth increased. Many child marriage incidents happen among poorer households than wealthier households. This finding affirms what was reported by Slameto (2016) in the fishbone root cause analysis. According to the analytical framework, Slameto (2016) indicated

family income under the socio-economic factors that interact with other factors caused the increasing levels of child marriage.

Other studies confirm this finding in the present study in the Ghanaian context, which found that child marriage is more prevalent among the lowest wealth quintile households than the highest wealth quintile households (GSS, 2011; Alhassan, 2013; Ahonsi et al., 2019). Thus, child marriage in Ghana is pervasive among the poorest, less educated individuals living in rural areas (Amoo, 2016; de Groot et al., 2018). Previous studies (UNICEF, 2014; GDHS, 2014; UNFPA, 2017; Rumble et al., 2018; Pintu, 2019, Yaya, Odusina & Bishwajit, 2019) found that child marriage to be prevalent among the poorest and poorer households, as found in this study. Similarly, in Turkey, Duran and Eraslan (2019) found that families with income equal to or less than their expenses have a higher prevalence of child marriage than those whose income is higher than their expenses. The poverty level in the Northern Region (50.4%), as established by the (GSS, 2014), could partly be a reason for the higher prevalence of child marriage in the region.

In this current study, child marriage was prevalent among girls whose household heads were grandparents or mothers compared to households headed by fathers or uncles. The higher prevalence among mothers and grandfathers could be due to their low decision-making power due to the patriarchal system, which gives them less control over their children or grandchildren. As a result, most family decisions are made by other family members. In contrast, a study by Yaya, Odusina & Bishwajit (2019) among 34 countries in sub-Saharan Africa found child marriage more prevalent among households headed by males than those headed by females. The difference in

their findings and the current study could be due to the different categorisation of the head of the household. The current study expanded it into four categories (father, mother, uncle and grandparents), but their study grouped it into males and females.

The study found ethnic variations in the prevalence of child marriage. Child marriage is more pronounced among the Gruma ethnic group (39.3%) than Grussi and Mole-Dagbani, 36.8 % and 35.6%, respectively. Similarly, a study in Ghana found child marriage to be highest among the Gruma (35.4%), followed by Mole-Dagbani and Grussi (32.9%) and (29.1 %,) respectively, by Domfe and Oduro (2018). Comparatively, studies in Turkey (Duran & Eraslan, 2019) and Nigeria (Mobolaji, Fatusi & Adedini, 2020) found the prevalence of child marriage among certain ethnic groups to be higher (i.e., 69.3% and 74.9%, respectively) than the findings of this study. The prevalence of child marriage across ethnic groups and countries could be due to differences in culture and cultural beliefs that vary from one ethnic group to another (Mobolaji, Fatusi & Adedini, 2020).

As found in this study, child marriage was higher among parents or guardians who were into agricultural activities. Agriculture is dominant in the northern region, and most occur in rural areas. The rural setting of most agriculture activities could be a reason for the high prevalence of child marriage among girls whose parents are into agriculture activities since rural areas has a higher prevalence of child marriage, as indicated in this study and other studies (GDHS, 2014; Ahonsi et al., 2019). Also, the high prevalence of child marriage among parents in agriculture could be attributed to poor

conditions, as child marriage is prevalent among poorer households (Amoo, 2017).

Regarding religious affiliation, child marriage is less prevalent among Christians than Muslims. As found in this study, most Muslim households give their daughters out for marriage at a younger age than Christians. The high prevalence among Muslims could be attributed to the dominance of Islam in the region, with more than half (60%) being Muslims (GSS, 2010). In line with this study, studies in Ghana (MICS, 2011; Domfe & Oduro, 2018) and Nigeria (Mobolaji, Fatusi & Adedini, 2020) also found the prevalence of child marriage to be higher among Muslims than Christians. The study finding perfectly confirm the postulations of Slameto (2016). According to the root cause analytical framework adopted for the study, the high prevalence of child marriage observed in some areas of Ghana has cultural and traditional ties. This explains why individuals with stronger bonds to their ethnic groups are more likely to continue practising the phenomenon those the campaigns and warnings of the adverse side effects. In the framework, Slameto (2016) indicated that the high prevalence of child marriage could be explained by the socio-cultural situation in a specific geographical area. Under the socio-cultural factors, he identified religion, beliefs, customs and traditions as the major influencing subfactors associated with the high prevalence of child marriage.

Also, this current study found child marriage more pronounced among parents with no education than those with some form of formal education, either primary or secondary or above. The high prevalence in this category could be attributed to the low level of knowledge on the effect of child

marriage on the child. Also, educated parents are more likely to let their children have some formal education before giving them out to marriage. Similar to the current studies, studies in Nigeria (Envuladu et al., 2016) and Turkey (Duran & Eraslan, 2019; Yüksel & Koçtürk, 2021) found child marriage to be prevalent among girls whose parents have low educational status. A similar postulation was made by Slameto (2016) in his fishbone root cause analytical framework, where he indicated that the family's educational level has a significant influence on child marriage. This is true since areas with high family educational levels, such as urban areas, likely have a low prevalence of child marriages. In the fishbone root cause analytical framework, Slameto (2016) indicated that families with lower formal educational levels could not shield their daughters against child marriage, thereby contributing to the high prevalence rate of child marriage.

Child marriage is prevalent among girls who have never had any form of education compared to those who have had some form of education, no matter the length of stay in school. Consistent with this study, a Ghanaian study also found that girls with no education have a high prevalence of child marriage than their counterparts with higher education (MICS, 2011; MoGCSP, 2016). Similarly, child marriage was prevalent in Uganda among girls who have never attended (Neema et al., 2021). Wodon et al. (2018) made a similar observation.

CHAPTER SIX

UNDERLYING CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES ASSOCIATED WITH CHILD MARRIAGE IN THE NORTHERN REGION: THE EVIDENCE

Introduction

This chapter presents the study findings and discussion on the second objective. The objective was analysed using a binary logistic regression to identify the explanatory factors associated with child marriage in the Northern Region. For multivariate analysis of the parental and child factors, the binary logistic regression fitted two models, with child factors being model one and parent factors being model two. The results are presented in Table 17, which demonstrates the odds ratios at a 95 percent confidence interval and other summary statistics. The factors analysed were grouped into four major themes: parental/guardian/family factors and child/individual factors, cultural and structural factors. The two consequences are presented in cross-tabulation. Finally, results on the multicollinearity of the consequences are equally discussed and presented.

Individual/child factors

These are factors that pushes or make the individual vulnerable to child marriage. In many cases, the individuals have limited control over the decision of marrying early or not since their parents take most decisions on their behalf. Some of the identified child related factors are the child's age, educational level, demand for material goods from men, orphan, non-educated girl child or dropouts and if child stayed with parents.

Child age

Table 17 shows the estimated odds ratios, at 95percent confidence intervals and model summary statistics for the associative effects of the parental and child factors on child marriage. The first model (Model 1) identified respondents' age, the number of years spent in school and those with whom the respondents lived were identified as statistically significant in determining child marriage. The results showed a reduction in trends of child marriage's pervasiveness among the younger generation. Comparing the pervasive child marriage among respondents aged < 20 years was less than among those over 40+ years. The observed associative effect was statistically significant (OR = 0.14; 95% CI = 0.10, 0.22). The category of respondents less than 20 years had 86 percent reduced odds of being victims of child marriage. However, as the age of the respondents increases, the probability of being a victim of child marriage increases as well. The results indicate the effectiveness of current policies and campaigns against child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana. Respondents aged 20-29 years and 30-39 years equally had a reduced risk of being victims of child marriage compared to those 40 and above.

Years spent in school

The binary logistic regression assumed a significant associative effect with child marriage for years spent in school. From the results presented in table 10, it can be observed that respondents who have never been to school had 13 times the risk of being married off as a child compared to those who had spent six or more years in school (OR = 13.37, 95% CI = 7.54, 23.70). The impact of education in reducing the pervasive of child marriage in the

Northern Region has been highlighted by the association between the number of years spent in school and the pervasiveness of child marriage. Respondents who indicated that they spent 1-3 years in school had a reduced risk of being married off at an early age compared to the referenced category (respondents with six or more years in school). For respondents who had spent 1-3 years in school, their odds were approximately 5.6 folds higher than the referenced category. A similar pattern was observed among the respondents with 4-5 years in school. However, the risk compared to the referenced category was lower than the other categories in the reference group.

Who the child stayed with

Regarding the respondents who lived with their parents before their marriage, respondents who lived with both parents had higher odds of being victims of child marriage than those who stayed with other relatives (OR= 1.38, 95% CI 0.91, 2.10). However, the effect was not large enough to be statistically significant. Nevertheless, the study findings confirm the cultural underpinning of marriage decisions, which indicates marriage decisions are handled mainly by the child's custodians. Similarly, respondents who indicated they stayed with either biological parent equally had higher odds than those who stayed with other relatives (OR= 1.43, 95% CI = 1.04, 1.95); this observed difference was statistically significant.

Demand for material goods from men

Reporting from the qualitative aspect, three main issues were linked to individual or child factors that cause child marriage in the Northern Region. These are demand for material goods from men, orphan, and non-educated girl child or dropouts. The respondents explained that child marriage happens in

the region because young girls demand material goods from men, which most research participants supported. However, some of them had this to say:

“Some young girls end up in such situations because of their deeds. They demand things from men, and when the time comes, and the man asks for your hand in marriage, you are lured into accepting his proposal because of the material things he has been providing for you” [Department of Social Welfare, Regional Office, Tamale]

“If you are a young girl and you like to take things from men, they will capitalize on that and take advantage of you. Since the man is playing the role of a husband although he is not married to the young girl, indirectly, they are living as husband and wife” [Department of Social Welfare, Regional Office, Tamale]

Orphans

Participants also expressed their views that being an orphan or a school dropout is a cause of child marriage in the study area. Some believed that orphans and school dropouts are vulnerable in society and anyone could take advantage of their situation. Because they go through some form of economic hardship, they easily accept marriage proposals from men even when they are not of the legal age to marry. Two of the participants expressed this:

“Being an orphan is very difficult because you are exposed to various forms of abuse and violence, especially when you have no one to protect you. The best option for many of them [orphans] at that particular moment of suffering is to accept marriage proposals from men” [A victim, Zabzugu]

“...the moment they drop out of school, the next thing to do is to get married. These are young girls who are not even of age to get married. They see marriage as a way of dodging sufferings”
[CHRAJ officer, Savelugu].

Parental/family factors

These factors are more or less based on decisions of parents of child marriage victims. This can be as result of wealth status of parents, parents' educational level, parents' occupation, and parents' religious affiliation, lack of parental care or negligence, and continuity of family ties.

Parents' wealth

The results showed a significant association between the parents' wealth status and the respondents' child marriage risk. Comparing the prevalence of child marriage among respondents who indicated they came from households with the poorest wealth status, the odds for child marriage were 1.89 times higher than respondents from the richest households. The observed association was statistically significant (OR = 1.89; 95% CI = 0.86, 4.14). The category of respondents who indicated their parents belong to poorer wealth status equally had a higher odds (OR = 1.88; 95% CI = 0.87, 4.13) of being married off at an early age compared to their counterparts from the richest households. However, the association between respondents from the poorer household and their risk of getting married at an early age compared to those from the richest households was not large enough to be statistically significant. The results indicate a specific trend of the influence of wealth status on the risk of child marriage. From Table 17, one can observe that as the wealth status of the parents' increases, the odds of a child marrying

early decrease. In the initial stage, from poorest to poorer, the rate of decrease in the odds ratio is shallow. Therefore, it can be considered negligible; however, beyond the median wealth status category, the rate of decrease is much higher.

Result from the qualitative data confirms this result from the quantitative data. For instance, some participants mentioned that many parents give away their children to marriage due to poverty. They expressed their views that economic hardship compels some parents to force their children to marry men who are old enough to be their parents. When their children are married, it becomes the man's responsibility to take care of the child. In some circumstances, the parents receive huge sums of bridal prices. Some of them use the money to settle debts and also use some to solve family problems. Below are some explanations provided:

“Some families are poor, and therefore, they are compelled to give their children to marriage at an early age. They do this because they want to ease the burden of caring for the child. The moment the child gets married, she becomes the caretaker of the man” [Renel Foundation, Tolon]

“Some time ago, a man gave his daughter to a rich man to marry. This happened just a few years back. Parents who are poor get a lot of money when their daughter's bride price is paid. The money they receive goes a long way to solve some of the family problems. And when their daughter is married, the son-in-law assumes the responsibility of taking care of them” [World Vision International, Kpatele, Karaga]

Parents' education

Regarding the binary logistic regression results, there was a significant association between the parent's educational level and the risk of child marriage for the respondents. Comparing the pervasiveness of child marriage among respondents who indicated that their parents have never received a formal education, the odds for child marriage were 3.67 times higher than respondents who indicated that their parents had formal secondary education or higher. The observed association was statistically significant (OR = 3.67, 95% CI= 2.23, 6.04). For those who indicated that their parents had a primary level of education, their odds of child marriage were 1.08 folds higher than those whose parents had secondary education or higher. For this category, their risk was significantly reduced to an appreciable extent. Imperatively, parents' educational attainment extensively impacts the risk of respondents getting married early in the Northern region of Ghana. For those whose parents have received some form of formal education, the risk of their female children being married off was significantly lower when compared to those whose parents have not received any formal education. The parent's level of education tends to be a protective factor that shields female children from being victims of child marriage.

In-depth interviews with all stakeholders pointed to the fact that parents' education plays a role in child marriage. They explained that because some parents are not educated and do not know enough about the negative effects of child marriage, they give their children in marriage. One of them had this to say:

“...the issue is that some parents in this community have not had any formal education to learn about the negative effects of child marriage. No, they have not. This makes them ignorant that they are even committing a crime. I am not sure an educated parent will give her young girl into marriage”

[Teacher, D/A basic School, Savelugu]

Parents' occupation

Table 17 further show a significant association between the parents' occupation and the risk of child marriage for the respondents. Comparing the pervasiveness of child marriage among respondents who indicated that their parents worked in the professional or service sector, the odds for child marriage were 12 percent lower than respondents who indicated that their parents were not working. The observed association was marginally statistically significant (OR = 0.88, 95% CI= 0.52, 1.52). For those who indicated that their parents worked in the agricultural sector, their odds of child marriage were 1.88 folds higher than those whose parents were not working. Their risk was significantly higher than the other categories in the study for this category. Imperatively, parents' occupational status extensively impacts the risk of respondents getting married at an early age in the Northern region of Ghana. The occupational status of the parents had an equal effect on that the education and wealth status of the parents. Parents who could not earn enough were more likely to push their children into early marriages than those who had enough means of taking care of their children.

Parents' religious affiliation

Based on religion, the pervasiveness of child marriage among respondents who indicated that their parents professed the Christian religion (reference category) was considerably lower when compared to the other religious groups. The odds for child marriage were 47 percent higher for respondents who indicated their parents professed the Islamic religion than those who indicated their parents Christians. The difference in child marriage between the two religious groups was statistically significant (OR = 1.47, 95% CI = 1.06, 2.04)). The risk of child marriage was higher among those whose parents professed other religions than Ghana's two major religious bodies. For respondents who indicated their parents professed other religions, their risk of child marriage was 2.19 folds higher than those whose parents were Christians.

Parents' ethnicity and place of residence

After the final model, place of residence and ethnicity were not statistically significant after estimating the effect size associated with child marriage and the risks of child marriage. However, the odds ratio for respondents who lived in rural communities was 48 percent higher than those who lived in urban communities. Respondents who indicated their parents resided in rural areas had higher odds of getting married when compared to those whose parents lived in urban areas. However, the effect size of the place of residence was not large enough to be considered statistically significant. For ethnicity, respondents who indicated that their parents belong to other ethnic groups had lower odds of being given out for marriage early. Their odds were 0.90 times lower than those who indicated that their parents belonged to the

mole-Dagbani. All other ethnic groups in the study had higher odds when compared to the reference category. Respondents who indicated that their parents belonged to the Gurma ethnic group had a risk of child marriage 1.47 times higher than the risks of those who indicated that their parents belonged to the Mole-Dagbani ethnic group.

Continuity of family ties

The qualitative data brought out other issues that led to child marriage in the Northern region. For example, some participants also believed that due to the continuity of family ties or relationships, young boys and girls are betrothed to each other at a very young age. Some families in the study area do this to sustain the good relationship between the two families. This is what one of them had to say regarding this issue:

“There are families who like to maintain an existing relationship between them, and so in some situations, they use marriage to do that. It is rather unfortunate that they use child marriage as a medium of sustaining this” [NORSAAC, Kpandai]

Lack of parental care

Others were equally of the view that lack of parental care is a cause of child marriage in the Northern Region. They further indicated that some parents do not cater to their children; hence, children are left on their own to survive, and some, unfortunately, end up as victims of child marriage. These were some of their words:

“As a parent, if you neglect your child and do not take care of her, she will end up being a victim of child marriage. She is not under your [parent] care and guidance and so the little comfort she gets from a man, she will accept the marriage proposal of that man even though she is not of age” [President of Queen mothers’ Association, Northern Region]

Cultural factors

Cultural factors comprise of set of values and ideologies of a particular community or group of people. It is the culture of this group of people which decides the way they should behave. Some cultural reasons for child marriage include social values and norms, morality an honour and maternal influence.

Respect for cultural values and norms

Respect for social values and norms was one of the cultural reasons for child marriage practices in the Northern region of Ghana. Participants shared that other peer in the community ridicule children who were not married early. They explained that such marriages bring honour and respect to the family. This is supported by one of the respondents who argue that:

“People in this community have high regard for cultural values and norms. Generally, there is respect for families who have married people, and because of this perception, parents give their children into marriage at an early age. They do this for respect and honour” [Traditional Officer, Yendi]

“Nobody wants the child to get pregnant outside marriage. It will be a shame for the family. To avoid this, young girls are

given into marriage at 17 years and old at that age, they have seen as women” [Assemblies of God Care, Tolon]

Morality and honour

Participants identified initiation rites as due to maternal influence. In the study area, initiation rites are seen as a cultural heritage every young girl should go through. These passage rites recognize young girls as women after they have gone through them, exposing them to child marriage. For instance, participants revealed that parents, especially mothers, are keen on ensuring that the girl child goes through this initiation to avoid shame from fellow women. Some of them had this to say:

“For some of the young girls who are victims of child marriage, their mothers were the reason for that. Mothers make sure that their children go through the initiation rite. It is a cultural heritage inherited from the forefathers. The mothers themselves went through it, and so they make sure that their children also go through it. The truth is that, after going through these rites, you are now seen as a woman who is ready for marriage whereas, in actual sense, you are a minor” [Officer, Department of Children, Tamale]

“To parents and even some community members, rites of passage are very important events that must be respected. If a girl child does not go through such initiation, it brings shame and dishonour to the family” [Unit Committee member, Nanton, Savelugu]

Structural factors

Structural factors are the broader political, economic, social and environmental conditions and institutions at national regional or international levels that leads to child marriage. From the analysis, three main structural factors were identified. These are lack of educational opportunities for girls, place of residence and weak law enforcement.

Lack of educational opportunities

The lack of educational opportunities for girls exposes them to early marriage. Participants were of the view that since the girl child is not attending school, she spends none or few years in school and, therefore, marries at an early age as compared to her colleagues who spend more years in the classroom. They also narrated that since the community is rural, young girls have less exposure to education, information and other opportunities, which increases their chances of early marriage. For instance, some of them highlighted that in the community, young girls are seen in homes than in school as compared to some urban communities where the girl child is seen attending school. Some of these narrations were given as follows:

“In this community, young girls do not have the opportunities for education. You see that there are more boys who are attending school than girls. If they are not in school, the next action is to get married, and that is exactly what is happening”
[Opinion leader, Pusuga, Nanomba North District].

“The mere fact that a girl child is located in the rural community alone is a risk factor for marrying early. The opportunities are not there for her. Her mates who are in the

urban communities have better chances than them in terms of education, resources and any other thing that will make life comfortable for a girl child” [Circuit Supervisor, GES, Nanomba South]

Weak law enforcement

Other participants were also of the view that weak law enforcement contributes to child marriage generally in the country and not only in the study area. According to them, others are encouraged to do the same thing when perpetrators are not punished and arrested. This is what one of them said:

“When the perpetrators are allowed to go scot-free, others in the community are likely to repeat the same thing, but when they are arrested and punished, they will learn their lessons. If the law is weak and not properly enforced, young girls will continually be abused” [Journalist, Sagani TV].

Place of residence

The residential place environment of a child has the potential of exposing her to social problems including child marriage. From participants children who live in rural areas are more likely to be married at an early age compared to their counterparts who dwell in urban environment. The reason was that cultural practices are more intense and respected in rural communities than in urban settings. One of them narrated:

“The fact that you are a young girl and you find yourself in a rural community like this, you are more likely to marry at an early age than your friends who live in the big cities like Kumasi, Accra and the rest. People marry very early in this

community and once you find yourself not married, you will be the most person to be gossiped about so, every young girl wants to marry early to avoid that” [Victim, Kpandai].

Table 17: Binary Logistic Regression of parental or child factors associated with child marriage

Variables	Model 1 OR (95% CI)	Model 2 OR (95% CI)
Child Factors		
Respondent age		
<i><20 years</i>	0.14 (0.10, 0.22) **	0.32 (0.19, 0.54) **
<i>20-29 years</i>	0.57 (0.42, 0.78) **	0.80 (0.55, 1.15)
<i>30-39 years</i>	0.77 (0.56, 1.06) **	0.84 (0.58, 1.20)
<i>40+ years</i>	1.00	1.00
Years spent schooling		
<i>Never</i>	13.37 (7.54, 23.70) **	16.78 (8.40, 33.52) **
<i>1-3 years</i>	5.57 (3.04, 10.19) **	4.83 (2.55, 9.14) **
<i>4-5 years</i>	4.75 (2.48, 9.11) **	3.189 (1.60, 6.34) **
<i>6+ years</i>	1.00	1.00
Persons living with		
<i>Both Parents</i>	1.38 (0.91, 2.10)	1.42 (0.91, 2.22)
<i>Mother/Father only</i>	1.43 (1.04, 1.95) *	1.44 (1.03, 2.01) *
<i>Other relatives</i>	1.00	1.00
Parental Factors		
Type of residence		
<i>Urban</i>		1.00
<i>Rural</i>		1.48 (0.95, 2.30)
Wealth Status		
<i>Poorest</i>		1.89 (0.86, 4.14)
<i>Poorer</i>		1.88 (0.87, 4.13)
<i>Middle</i>		1.80 (0.82, 3.97)
<i>Richer</i>		1.27 (0.58, 2.80) *
<i>Richest</i>		1
Level of education		
<i>No education</i>		3.67 (2.23, 6.04) **
<i>Primary</i>		1.08 (0.56, 2.10)
<i>Secondary +</i>		1
Occupation		
<i>Not working</i>		1
<i>Professional/service</i>		0.88 (0.52, 1.52)
<i>Agricultural</i>		1.88 (0.99, 3.58) *
<i>Manual</i>		1.52 (0.98, 2.36)
<i>Sales</i>		1.56 (0.96, 2.55)
Religion		
<i>Christianity</i>		1
<i>Muslim</i>		1.47 (1.06, 2.04) **
<i>Other</i>		2.19 (1.50, 3.20) **
Ethnicity of Parent		

<i>Mole-Dabani</i>		1
<i>Grussi</i>		1.15 (0.78, 1.69)
<i>Gruma</i>		1.47 (0.93, 2.33)
<i>Other</i>		0.90 (0.57, 1.42)
Summary Statistics		
<i>-2loglikelihood</i>	1462.85	1387.16

Consequences of child marriage

After modelling the statistically significant factors associated with child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana, it became imperative for the researcher to identify the likely consequence of child marriage. Given the availability and willingness of the respondents, 1 collected information on the sexual and physical abuse experienced by respondents in the study.

Physical abuse

The physical abuse variable was estimated from other lists of variables, given the sensitivity of the variables, as respondents were more likely not to respond to this variable if the questions were posed directly to them. Table 18 illustrates the results of physical abuse as estimated by the respondents. Respondents who indicated having been physically abused by their partner constituted 48 percent (636 respondents) involved in the study. Out of the total number of respondents who have experienced physical abuse, [343%] of them indicated they were married at an early age, and for that matter, they have been victims of child marriage. The remaining [283%] respondents were not victims of child marriage. The study findings show that physical abuse is limited to experienced child marriage. However, the issue of being physically abused is higher for those who were married at an early age than those who were not. The findings illustrate a statistically significant association between physical abuse and child marriage. The bivariate analysis indicates a

significant difference between victims of child marriage and those who are not. The difference shows that most of those who were physically abused in the study are likely to be victims of child marriage compared to those who were not physically abused by their partner.

Table 18: Cross-tabulation between physical abuse and child marriage

Variable	Physical abuse		X ²	Significance
	No	Yes		
Child marriage			38.324	0.00
<i>No</i>	497	283		
<i>Yes</i>	201	343		
Total	698	636		

Source: Field data (2021)

Sexual abuse

This variable is like the indexing done to have physical abuse variable, given the inherent sensitivity of the variable. To generate responses for this variable, indirect questions were posed to respondents to estimate on the average their chances of being abused by their partner. Table 19 presents the findings generated from the bivariate analysis. From the table, the analysis shows a statistically significant relationship between sexual abuse and child marriage. Weed, 636 of 1334 respondents indicated their partners sexually abused them. Of those sexually abused, approximately 55 percent [actual %] of the respondents were victims of child marriage. For respondents who were not sexually abused, approximately 72 [actual %] percent of them were not victims of child marriage. The difference in abuse between those who were victims of child marriage and those who were not victims is indicated in the proportion of those abused and those not abused in the study.

Table 19: Cross-tabulation between sexual abuse and child marriage

Variable	Sexual abuse		X ²	Significance
	No	Yes		
Child marriage			44.589	0.00
<i>No</i>	500	288		
<i>Yes</i>	196	340		
Total	698	636		

Source: Field data (2021)

Discussion

This section of the study focuses on the determinants or factors that cause child marriage and the consequences in the northern region. As found in this study that the prevalence of child marriage is higher in the northern region as compared to the rest of the other regions in Ghana; this section presents a discussion on the factors responsible for the high prevalence and compares with other previous studies conducted on child marriage as well as the consequences of child marriage.

From the results, the respondent's age was seen as influencing child marriage. From this current study, child marriage occurs within all age groups but is higher among certain age groups than others. The phenomenon was higher among the older age groups than the teenage groups. As found in the study, the likelihood of experiencing child marriage increases with age and individuals in their teens are at less risk of experiencing child marriage. Previous studies have also found this decline in child marriage among age groups (Domfe & Oduro, 2018; Gaston et al., 2019) and (Maswikwa et al., 2015) attributed the decline to the rise in the age at first marriage and consistent laws against child marriage. Also, change in child marriage at different age groups can be attributed to the various initiatives implemented

within the last two decades by various Child Marriage Units to tackle child marriage and the launching of the Ending of Child Marriage Campaign (MoGCSP, 2016) and the “send your girl child to school” campaign which garnered much attention and interest (see Mensch, Bagah, Clark & Binka, 1999). The likelihood of experiencing child marriage among the older age group could be attributed to less modernisation during those years than in the last two decades (Domfe & Oduro, 2018). Corroborating the study findings to the ecological model by Dahlberg and Krug (2002), the respondents' age falls under the model's characteristics. According to Dahlberg and Krug (2002), age as an individual characteristic could be a driver of child marriage since victims of child marriages do not have sufficient control to make decisions concerning their lives and living arrangements at such a young age. In the current study context, the findings affirm the postulations made in the ecological model. However, due to the recent campaigns on ending child marriage and the interventions of the various stakeholders, the prevalence of child marriage has reduced significantly among the younger generations. Notwithstanding current development in ending child marriage, the child's age, as indicated under the individual characteristics of the ecological model, is a significant driver of child marriage.

It was evident from the results of the current study that lack of material possessions contributes to the cases of child marriage in the Northern region of Ghana. In many cases, young girls who lack some necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter etc., are compelled to accept love proposals from men who, in an actual sense, provides these things for them. For instance, in the study area, it was revealed that young girls demand items from men and

indirectly, they are obligated to accept the man's marriage proposal when necessary. Even though poverty was a contributing factor to child marriage, stakeholders were of the view that it is sometimes their stubbornness, inquisitiveness or materialistic desires that make them marry early. This finding is consistent with previous studies conducted in Ghana (Ahonsi et al., 2019; Gariba, 2020). These studies documented that children's demand for material goods that their parents cannot afford from men is a key determinant of child marriage. A similar study in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) also indicated that sexual relationships are major ways young people can access money or material possessions (Dunkle et al., 2008). In Kenya and Zambia, many young girls demanded items such as lotions, perfumes, or money from their boyfriends and men.

Orphanhood, a state of being a child without living parents, emerged from the study's finding as an individual-level factor that exposes children to child marriage. For instance, a study conducted in Pakistan showed that orphans are just one of the many groups affected by child marriage. According to the authors, the vulnerability of orphaned and step-children to child marriage is high (Ullah, 2019). This finding corroborates the current study, where orphans in the Northern region of Ghana have also exposed to child marriage due to the lack of protection from the larger community. Another reason why orphans are vulnerable to child marriage is that many of them are taken care of by extended family members. When they reach puberty, guardians may think that their duty of care has been met and that it is acceptable to seek out marriage for non-biological children in the house. Again, it is asserted that most orphans are maltreated by their caregivers.

Hence, child marriage becomes more attractive to them as they consider that as a way of running away from what they deem an unbearable living situation (Schaffnit, Urassa, & Lawson, 2019; Ullah, 2019). Thus, in certain cases, the girl child, especially orphans, see marriage as a chance to escape challenging economic and material conditions and as a solution to their very basic needs. A study by Adjei (2015) also indicated that if a family had poor economic status, there were higher vulnerabilities for orphaned young girls to give to marriage.

The researcher also found that years of schooling influence child marriage. The number of years girls spend in school impacts their decision to marry. In the current study, girls who have no formal education were more likely to get married than their counterparts who have had some form of education, irrespective of their stay in school. The longer the stay in school, the less likely a girl will be given out in marriage at a younger age. Thus, the present study found that years of school stay is a protective factor against child marriage. The longer a girl is kept in school, the less likely that girl will be married out at a younger age (Bantebya et al., 2014) and therefore, keeping girls in school protects them against child marriage (MoGCSP, 2016; Behrman, Peterman & Palermo, 2017; Amoo, 2017, Ahonsi et al., 2019). Some Ghanaian studies consistently found girls with no education to be more likely to be married than their counterparts with higher education (MICS, 2011; MoGCSP, 2016).

A similar finding was reported by Dunkle et al. (2008) in a study conducted on child marriage in SSA. The author indicated that school dropout always preceded child marriage in Kenya, Zambia and Senegal. A possible

reason for this could be that children with no formal education may be ignorant of the consequences of child marriage and are likely to be influenced by their peers, parents or guardians. For instance, stakeholders in the Northern region indicated that children who have dropped out of school are more vulnerable to child marriage than their peers. Also, a publication by Hodgkinson, Koster, and Miedema (2016) indicates a strong association between a lack of education and higher rates of child marriage and that not going to school means that girls remain uneducated and their future possibilities diminish. Schaffnita and colleagues also indicated in their study that when a female girl cannot continue her education or fails a school exam, the next alternative for her is to get married even if she is 18 years (Schaffnit et al., 2019). Similarly, when a girl has dropped out of school, the options for further educational improvement or a livelihood are limited. Under these circumstances, marriage or union with a man becomes a viable option and potentially a way out of poverty (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2017).

Linking the study findings to the ecological model, the years spent in school by a female child is a strong driver of child marriage. This individual characteristic is elaborated in the model since the fewer years spent in school, the higher the likelihood of a girl being given out to marriage. Despite years of schooling being an individual characteristic, it could be noted that this variable interacts with family situations and other community-level drivers to influence child marriage. With fewer years spent in school, the parents and the external family identify such children as a burden and extra mouths to feed with limited family resources. As such, they are given off for marriage early.

The study also found respondents who lived with both parents were more likely to experience child marriage than their counterparts who lived with other relatives. And those who lived with either parent (mother or father) were found to be statistically significant. From this study, parents influence child marriage decision-making more than other relatives. Envuladu et al. (2016) found parents have a more significant influence on their child's marriage, as most girls were forced into marriages by their parents. However, their study did not specify whether both parents and one of them took the decision. It is instructive to note that in Iran, parents were seen to influence their daughters to get married at an early age as early marriage is desirable (Montazeri et al., 2016), and mothers want their daughters to get married at the same age as them (Magnelli et al., 2017). On an interpersonal level, according to the ecological model, the household characteristics categorically explain the associated reasons for which children staying with both parents are likely to be given out for marriage, as indicated in the study findings.

In contrast to the current study, a Moroccan study found grandparents and other relatives have a greater influence on marriage decisions in the household (Sabbe et al., 2015). As such, the likelihood of getting married is higher due to the submissive system, which makes girls respect the decisions of their elders, whether it benefits them or not (Kohnno et al., 2020). This could be because of the diversity of cultures as child marriage, as Wahhaj (2015) indicated, has a socio-cultural linkage and varies from place to place. The girl's decision-making about marriage is greatly influenced if she is being encouraged by family members to marry (Kohnno et al., 2020). The idea of whether girls were living in the same household with parents, father only,

mother only or other relatives before marriage was not specified in previous studies (Sabbe et al., 2015; Envuladu et al., 2016; Montazeri et al., 2016; Magnelli et al., 2017; Kohno et al., 2020) as done in the current studies but in all the studies examined except Magnelli et al. (2017) parents influenced child marriage.

Lack of parental care and guidance was attributed to the cause of child marriage in the Northern region of Ghana. Stakeholders believed that the moment the child is neglected and not taken care of by the parents, she will likely end up in early marriage. The reason is that she will depend on a man to take care of her. In many cases, when men cater for young girls, they are obliged to accept marriage proposals as they see the union as a means to an end or survival. A similar study conducted in Ghana in 2019 corroborates such a finding. In the study, Ahonsi et al. reported that parental neglect and lack of supervision were the causes of child marriage in Ghanaian communities (Ahonsi et al., 2019). A report by the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection in 2017 indicated that rapidly changing family patterns in Ghana today make parenting a complex issue. Parents regularly report their inability to “control” their children. As children become more exposed through the media and other means, their communication with their parents becomes increasingly strained. This lack of inter-generational dialogue may begin when the children are quite young and may become more deeply entrenched with the onset of adolescence. The problem becomes more acute when the girl becomes pregnant, when a boy gets a girl pregnant or when the girl runs away from home (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2017).

Child marriage is more common among the poorest and poor households than the rich and richest households and declines as wealth status improve, as the current study finds. This finding corroborates with Ghana studies that found that children within the fourth or highest quintile are less likely to marry than those in the lowest quintile (GSS, 2011; Alhassan, 2013; Ahonsi et al., 2019). Child marriage in Ghana is among the poorest, less educated individuals in rural areas (Amoo, 2016; de Groot et al., 2018). A study in Ghana consistently found that families with the poorest wealth status, due to their poor conditions, lure their young girls to marry old fishermen to be catered for (Tsekpo et al., 2016). There is evidence that age at marriage increases with better socio-economic conditions (UNICEF, 2014). Previous studies (Dietrich et al., 2018; Rumble et al., 2018; Pintu, 2019; Ahonsi et al., 2019) found child marriage to be high among the poorest and poorer households as found in this study, and most of them see marriage to ease their financial burden to survive. Low-income families may see their daughters as a burden. Therefore there is the need to give them out in marriage to ease the economic burden on them (Lee-Riffe et al., 2012), but this is a short-term measure, not a long-term one (Marinescu & Triyana, 2016).

Similarly, in Turkey, Duran and Eraslan (2019) found that families whose income is equal to or less than their expenses are more likely to give their children out for marriage to free themselves from their daughter's expenses. Consistently with the ecological model, the household's wealth status, considered an interpersonal characteristic, is a significant driver of child marriage. This is the situation in the poorest households because they benefit more if their younger daughters are married. The benefit of reducing

pressure on family resources and the dowry from the marriage is the additional benefit the family gets from the prospective partner.

Parental poverty has been documented extensively in the literature as a driver of child marriages in many countries, and Ghana is no exception (UNICEF, 2014; Jain & Kurz, 2007; Nour, 2009; Parsons, Edmeades, Kes, Petroni, Sexton, Wodon, 2015; Duflo, 2012). In the current study, it came out quite clear that economic hardship pushes parents to give their children to early marriages. It was a common thing reported to be done by parents in the Northern region of Ghana. According to stakeholders, families or caregivers see female children as a “financial burden” and thus marry them off almost as an economic survival strategy. In other instances, if the family does not have sufficient money to pay for the children's education, girls are forced to leave school, and marriage is arranged for them later. Adjei (2015) reports that the poor conditions and poverty rates in the three northern regions of Ghana majorly affect early marriages. Parental poverty significantly increases the vulnerability to child marriage in the Northern part of Ghana (Awumbila, 2006; Wrigley-Asante, 2008).

Studies conducted in Pakistan also reported similar findings that poverty is one of the most common, widespread and significant factors driving child marriage, especially in rural communities where sometimes parents and families find child marriage as an impending opportunity to benefit financially from the bride price for their daughter and also as an opportunity to ease the strain on household resources (Ambereen, Aziz, Khan, Zulfiqar, & Abbas, 2021; Ullah, 2019). A study on the causes and consequences of child marriage in Milannagar Shantipur Village in Goalpara District, India, also reported that

poverty increases the risk of child marriage (Khanom & Islam Laskar, 2015). Their research findings showed that child marriage was concentrated in the poorest families. Also, a girl from the poorest household is more than one time as likely to marry before the age of 18. The finding of the current and previous studies suggest that poverty leads to a higher prevalence of child marriage because low-income families feel they have fewer resources and incentives to invest in alternative options for girls. Stakeholders indicated that families say they marry their daughters early because girls are an economic burden that can be relieved through marriage.

Moreover, poverty not only contributes to increasing the risk of early marriage but also increases the likelihood that a girl will give birth at a young age, as child brides tend to have children early. Poverty, as a factor hence, allows the practice to continue and endure for a very long period in many communities and countries across the globe (Dunkle et al., 2008). Poverty creates powerful and rational incentives for child marriage, especially where the dowry or bride price is included (Hodgkinson et al., 2016).

Parental poverty increases the vulnerability of child marriage. According to academic research into marriage in Africa, it is perceived that a girl's own family is compelled to educate the boy child to the detriment of the girl child due to inadequate funds (Hodgkinson et al., 2016). In many African homes, parents have the notion they will not be able to reap the benefits of investing in their daughter's education because her income will go to her husband's family. With this perception in mind, coupled with household poverty, parents are indirectly motivated to give the girl child to early marriage. Similarly, Nour (2006) also reported that parents who marry their

children off early “are not necessarily heartless parents but, rather, parents who are surviving under heartless conditions”, as some parents use child marriage as a strategy to break out of poverty. This suggests that the poverty-child marriage nexus is complex because different perspectives and mentalities influence parents’ actions regarding household/parent poverty.

The level of education of the child’s parent influenced marriage in this study. Parents with no education were more likely to give their daughters out to marriage than those educated. Thus, the higher the parent’s level of education, the less likely a parent will give her daughter out for marriage at a younger age and vice versa. This is because education leads to knowledge acquisition, and knowing the consequences of child marriage will compel parents not to allow their girl child to marry at a younger age. Consistent with this study, a study in Nigeria found a lack of education among parents to be a factor in child marriage because uneducated parents are less likely to delay their daughters’ marriage than educated parents (Envuladu et al., 2016). Previous studies in Turkey (Duran & Eraslan, 2019; Yüksel & Koçtürk, 2021) corroborate this study’s findings as they found the parental educational level influences child marriage.

The researcher established an association between parental occupation and the risk of child marriage. Girls whose parents were in agriculture as their occupation were more likely to get married at a younger age than their counterparts whose parents were in professional occupations. Agricultural activities, especially subsistence ones, are common among individuals with low educational and socio-economic status and occur in rural areas. These factors have been identified in the current study to be associated with child

marriage. In line with the current study, girls whose parents were into farming, a form of agriculture, were more likely to be married, as found in a study in Nigeria (Envuladu et al., 2016). Also, the low income associated with subsistence agriculture activities (Rapsomanikis, 2015) has rendered most people engaged in agriculture activities poorer. Therefore, to survive, families give their daughters for marriage in exchange for agricultural goods such as cattle to make them survive. Studies in Ghana (Domfe & Oduro, 2018) and Uganda (Neema et al., 2021) found families trading their child's marriage for cattle. Also, parents who were not working were more likely to give their daughters out for marriage than those in a professional occupation. In Turkey, the occupation of the mother of the girl was seen to influence child marriage as mothers who are not working were found as a determinant in child marriage (Yüksel & Koçtürk, 2021).

Religion was found to influence child marriage. However, the researcher found variations in the impact of religion on child marriage. The current study found that child marriage was higher among Muslims than among Christians. Similarly, in other studies in Ghana, child marriage was found to be higher among Muslims than Christians (GDHS, 2014) and found in Nigeria to be a driver of child marriage (Mobolaji, Fatusi & Adedini, 2020). The higher rate of child marriage among Muslims has been attributed to religious beliefs enshrined in the Quran.

Similarly, Kohno et al. (2020) found that Islamic religious beliefs influence child marriage, and parents use these beliefs as the justification. For instance, older age for marriage was seen not to be in line with Islamic laws, and a girl can marry after experiencing puberty, which is 16 years (Raj,

Gomez & Silverman, 2014). Braimah (2014) gave a plausible reason for the high child marriage among the Fulani and Hausa men in Northern Nigeria due to their strong Islamic background, which has been intertwined with their tradition. As such, child marriage is higher among them because they follow in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammed, who married Aisha at a younger age, as indicated in the Hadith. The strong Islamic background of the people of the Northern Region is similar to that identified by Braimah in Northern Nigeria. As a result, it could be said their religion influences their decision towards child marriage.

Ghana is a culturally sensitive country with highly esteemed cultural values and norms. Some of these cultural values, norms, and practices indirectly expose children to some form of early marriage. For instance, the current study found that there is respect and prestige attached to marriage; hence, families with married individuals are respected and honoured. With this mind-set, children are betrothed or given into early marriages, which have consequences. Giving children early marriages due to social norms and values has been reported in other countries, parallel to the current study. For example, Iustitiani and Ajisuksmo (2018) argued that many child marriages in Indonesia result from traditional/cultural reasons. According to the authors, for fear of stigma and gossip from community members, they arrange marriages for their children at early ages.

Talking stigma and gossip, morality and honour were mentioned by stakeholders as contributing factors to child marriage in the Northern region. Whereas community members respect families with married individuals, parents also feel obliged to prevent pregnancy outside marriage, which is

culturally unacceptable; children are given into early marriages. A possible reason could be that parents would rather wish that their children become pregnant while married rather than a pregnancy outside marriage which is not culturally accepted and is seen as immorality. Therefore, to avoid this, parents are influenced by these cultural practices, norms, beliefs, and practices to give their children into early marriages. According to McCleary-Sills, Hanmer, Parsons and Klugman (2015), countries where religious and traditional justifications for child marriage are deeply entrenched, will not see an end to child marriage without shifts in social norms. For instance, several cultural, harmful practices and customs in Pakistan, like Swara, Walwar, WattaSatta, Ghag and others, condone child marriages (Ullah, 2019). Ullah argued that in areas where child marriage is prevalent, communities are often closely linked and expected to confirm the norms and expectations of society. The author mentioned that there is a common belief among communities in Pakistan that if a girl indulges in a sexual relationship before her marriage, she will destroy the image of the family and ruin their honour. Therefore, many families, especially those living in rural areas, force their daughters into child marriage. Initiation of legitimate sexual life is linked with marriages, and for most families, child marriage is a way to control girls' sexuality and protect family honour (Ullah, 2019).

Also, initiation rites, influenced by parents' decisions, such as puberty rites, contributed to child marriage in the Northern region. Typically, young girls who have gone through such puberty rites and initiations are seen as 'grown' women and ready to bear marital responsibilities even though many are minors (less than 18 years). Stakeholders from the study confirmed this

when they disclosed that many young girls are forced to go through puberty rites. In any case, compelling children to do what is against their wishes is a breach and violation of the child's rights. Yet, knowingly and unknowingly, many parents in the Northern influence their children to participate in these rites. This finding is bolstered by an earlier study by Johansson (2015). The author reported that once a girl child experience menarche (first menstruation), she is arranged for puberty rites. Later, the girl is then considered for childbearing and is therefore considered an adult.

The study also indicates that unequal opportunities for males and females encourage child marriage. Specifically, unequal access to educational opportunities in the Northern region contributes to early marriages. According to the UNICEF (2011) report, lack of education has proven to be one important factor for the high number of child marriages, especially for girls, who often are the most exposed. Similarly, a UNICEF report indicated that when given proper education, opportunities are given to young people; studies have not only proven that girls tend to enter marriage and deliver children later in life but also to give birth to fewer children (UNICEF, 2011). Families do, in most cases, not prioritize education for girls since it is considered an unnecessary cost for girls to be educated. Denying a girl's education means she will be deprived of the opportunity to work professionally outside the house and be self-sufficient. Instead, taking care of the household and children tends to be the major task for young brides and the social norm in many communities (Mutya, 2011).

According to the Save the Children organisation, 6.7 million girls will not complete primary school by 2030, let alone secondary education, without

accelerated action to achieve universal education and end child marriage. This shows that educational opportunities for both sexes, especially young girls are important in ending child marriage. Without these opportunities, the girl child is affected more than the boy child. Also, the current study's findings confirm that of McCleary-Sills et al. (2015). According to the authors, millions of girls worldwide are barred from entering and completing their education due to social norms about gender roles that limit women and girls' agency; the choices they are allowed to make about their own lives. Further, Mourtada, Schlecht and Dejong (2017) concluded that the inaccessibility of education may have encouraged many women to marry before turning 18 and may have pushed many parents to marry off their daughters at an earlier age.

Weak law enforcement was also recognised as a cause of child marriage in the Northern region of Ghana. Stakeholders believed that the practice continues in the region due to the non-enforcement of laws on child marriage. When perpetrators are punished by law for committing such a crime, it will deter other potential culprits. A study in Nepal confirms this assertion. For instance, the study reported that the phenomenon still prevails because perpetrators of child marriage are left unpunished due to weak law enforcement (Mahato, 2016). Even though there are laws to protect children from child marriage, enforcement is weak due to interference from some key influencers in some communities in the Northern region. For instance, this was made clear when some of the stakeholders opined that limited knowledge of the law by members of the society that engaged in child marriage. Girls Not Brides (2014) also reported that the inadequate legislative framework

encourages child marriage. While most countries legislate for a minimum legal age for marriage, this is often not effectively enforced.

Again, a study by Hanmer and Elefante (2016) on the role of identification in ending child marriage among 25 top countries with the highest child marriage rates revealed that despite the presence of laws that criminalises child marriage in these countries, due to their weak enforcement, child marriage still prevails (Hanmer & Elefante, 2016). Possible reasons for this could be lack of awareness and training among law enforcement officials; corruption prevalence of customary practices and traditions related to marriage; lack of formal registration of marriages, and lack of birth certificates. Similar findings were reported in India, where implementation mechanisms at the state and district levels are weak and inadequate despite the formulation of laws. This may be due to a lack of role clarity among different personnel, and the inadequate capacities of the personnel implementing the various laws and programmes have led to the non-implementation (UNICEF, 2021). A study conducted in SSA also concluded that implementation and enforcement of laws on child marriage across various African countries experience several common problems (Svanemyr, Scolaro, Blondeel, Chandra, & Temmerman, 2013). These include weak judicial systems in general; lack of effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms that could prevent or sanction child marriages; poor understanding of the laws; lack of adequate training and poor coordination between relevant government ministries; lack of a clear delegation of responsibilities to specific authorities, a lack of guidelines on how to handle child marriage cases, and ad hoc responses (Svanemyr, Scolaro, Blondeel, Chandra, & Temmerman, 2013). Similar

findings have been reported in Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2015), Pakistan (Ullah, 2019), Indonesia (Iustitiani & Ajisuksmo, 2018) and developing countries as a whole (Jensen & Thornton, 2003).

The study found that the place of residents and ethnicity did not influence child marriage. However, rural dwellers and girls from the Gruma ethnic group were more likely to experience child marriage than urban dwellers and Grussi and Mole-Dagbani ethnic groups (GDHS, 2014; Domfe & Oduro, 2018). Thus, child marriage is common among girls residing in rural areas and those who belong to the Gruma ethnic group but are not associated with residential areas and ethnicity, as found in this study. Contrary to this study, place of residence and ethnicity are associated with child marriage (Domfe & Oduro, 2018; Rumble et al., 2018; Mobolaji, Fatusi & Adedini, 2020).

Consequences associated with child marriage

Child marriage is seen as a form of abuse by the United Nations (Adhikari, 2018). This act has several consequences: health, economic, or social. As found in this study, one of the consequences of child marriage is physical abuse. A study in India found that girls who got married before age 18 reported being physically abused. The abuse included beatings and being slapped or threatened (ICRW, 2005). Other studies (UNICEF, 2005; Raj et al., 2014; Nasrullah, Zakar & Zakar, 2014; Kidman, 2017) reported similar findings. The reason for the physical abuse in child marriages could be a result of the low level of education, poor households and rural settings, which makes the girls have low knowledge about gender violence and always submissive to their husbands due to mostly the age gap between the husband and wife in

child marriages and traditional values which makes women believe men have the right to beat their wives (Abramsky et al., 2011). In Ghana, MICS (2011) found physical violence to be high in Northern Region due to the belief by women that men have the right to beat their wives if they go wrong. There is always an age gap in child marriage (UNICEF, 2014). Similarly, Solotaroff and Pande (2014) find the submissive nature of girls to their husbands due to the age gap, which makes them powerless to defend themselves when physically abused. Also, most child marriages are arranged, and girls are, to an extent ‘sold’ to the men, and as such, those men develop masculine ideologies and are most likely to physically abuse their wives (Santana et al., 2006).

Also, the study found sexual abuse because of child marriage. The age gap in child marriage (UNICEF, 2014), the low knowledge and the powerless nature of child brides make them unable to have a say in their sexual life, and their husbands abuse them sexually. Consistent with this finding, the ICRW (2005) indicated that sexual abuse occurs in child marriages and results from post-traumatic stress. Similarly, Kidman (2016) found sexual abuse was prevalent among women who married as early as 15-17 years in 19 of the 34 countries studied. A study in Nepal also found sexual violence prevalent among women who married at a younger age than their counterparts who married later (Adhikari, 2018). A similar observation was found by Wahi et al. (2021) in the United States of America (USA) among women who married at the age of 13-17 years.

Summary of the chapter

This thesis chapter examines the underlying cause of child marriage in the Northern region. Discussions with the major stakeholders indicate that four

main underlying factors contribute to regional child marriage. These are broadly categorised as individual-level factors (demand for material goods from men, orphans, non-educated girl child/dropouts); parental/family-level factors (lack of parental care/guidance, poverty, lack of parental education, continuity of family ties); cultural level factors (social values and norms, morality and honour, maternal influence) and structural level factors (lack of educational opportunities for girls, place of residence, weak law enforcement).



CHAPTER SEVEN

LEGAL, POLICIES AND PROGRAMME FRAMEWORKS TO END
CHILD MARRIAGE: THE EVIDENCE OF NORTHERN REGION

Introduction

This Chapter presents the results and discussion of the legal policies and programmes by stakeholders seeking to end child marriage. Legal actions such as arresting and prosecuting culprits are used. In addition, policies are used, including girl child education, Ministry of Gender National Strategic Framework on Ending Child Marriage from 2017-2026. NGOs and the formation of adolescent clubs are some programmes used by stakeholders in the Northern region to end child marriage.

Results

Table 20 shows the major themes and sub-themes developed during the data analysis.

Table 20: Legal policies and programmes by stakeholders to end child marriage

Themes	Sub-themes
Legal Framework (1998 Children's Act, Criminal offence Act)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arresting culprits • Prosecuting culprits • Reporting suspected cases to assembly members/NGOs/traditional leaders
Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic empowerment, scholarships and apprenticeship • Girl Child Education and all school-going age children must be enrolled • Ministry of Gender National Strategic Framework on Ending Child Marriage 2017-2026. • GES Code of Conduct 2017
Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The formation of adolescent groups in schools and communities to educate children • Workshops to build the capacity of stakeholders • Educating parents on the effect of child marriage • Let the girl smile project -Supporting children with school materials • Counselling services for victims

Source: Field data (2021)

Discussion with participants indicated three main actions they took to end child marriage in the Northern region of Ghana. The first was through legal means. The police arrested perpetrators of child marriage in the region. Participants were of the view that since the act is a criminal offence and a human right violation, perpetrators are reported to and arrested by the police. The following statements by one of the key stakeholders tend to support this:

“We arrest offenders when cases of child marriages are reported to our station. This can only be possible when the perpetrators are reported. We cannot make any arrests if no reports are brought to our station. We are mandated by law to arrest people who violate the human rights of others, and child marriage is a violation of the girl’s child right and dignity”
[Investigator, DOVVSU, Tamale]

“...since child marriage is a border crime, we liaise with our counterparts in Neighbouring countries such as Burkina Faso, Togo and Cote d’Ivoire to rescue victims who suffer marriage from the region have been sent outside Ghana with the help of other stakeholders in the same vein, perpetrators who go into hiding in other countries are arrested and brought back to the immigration service” [Ghana Immigration Service officer, Northern region]

“...for instance, last year, we arrested a man who got married to a young girl of about 16 years. The families were trying to hide the issue, but one NGO came to report the case, and we

went there to arrest the culprit” [Investigator, DOVVSU, Tamale]

“The use of the law court was a legal means of addressing the menace of child marriage in the region. Culprits who the Ghana Police Service arrests are arranged for court. When the court finds them guilty, they are sentenced to imprisonment” [Lawyer, CHRAJ, Tamale]

Others were also of the view that cases of child marriage are reported to assembly members, non-governmental organisations, traditional leaders and other stakeholders in the community, as the following statements tend to support:

“We do receive reports of child marriages, and what we do is to channel the issues to the appropriate authorities such as the police and social welfare” [Savannah Signatures, Karaga District]

“Some traditional leaders are against the act, so when something happens like that, we report the culprits to the assembly man or woman and the traditional leaders. They are the custodians of the land, and so they have to be in the known of such violation that is going on in their jurisdiction” [World Vision, Tolon District]

Policy implementation is the second line of action used by stakeholders in the Northern region to end child marriage. There were scholarship projects for young people, especially the girl child. These were done to empower them to stay in school and avoid any risk associated with child marriage. For young

girls who do not want to go to school for one or two reasons, there was economic empowerment in the form of life skill training for them. The rationale is to make them independent and avoid requesting material things or goods from men.

“We do offer scholarships to young girls. This is to help them stay in school and concentrate on their education. We do not want them to drop out of school and become vulnerable to child marriage” [World Vision, Northern Region].

“Last year, there was training on beads and soap making for some young girls. We do this to empower them economically. When they are independent, they will not rely on any man who will take advantage of their vulnerability later” [Christian Belief, Northern Region]

Stakeholders were also guided by the Ministry of Gender National Strategic Framework on Ending Child Marriage 2017-2026. For instance, participants from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection indicated they create safe spaces for young people to discuss issues of concern. More so, under the policy, parents are empowered by providing information so that they will be well informed about the adverse effects of child marriage. Two of them had this to say:

“Since its inception, I think, in 2016, we have been working tirelessly to empower parents by providing timely and accurate information. If the girl child is married to a man, then the parents might be known. Therefore, we try to educate the parents, and when they are well informed, they are less likely to

give their children to early marriage” [Department of Gender, Tamale]

“Creating safe spaces is very important, especially when you want young people to come and talk to you about their problems. That is exactly what we do here. We allow them to be heard. This is very important” [UNICEF, Northern Region].

Some participants also highlighted the use of professional code of conduct. For instance, staff from the Ghana Education Service also hinted that any teacher directly or indirectly involved in child marriage would be dealt with. They further explained that they are mandated to educate children so they do not fall victim to child marriage. One of them expressed:

“As professional teachers, it is against our code of conduct to be involved in such human right violation act. We are supposed to educate children and their families on child marriage. When a teacher is found involved in such activities, they will be dealt with by the law” [GES, Gushiegu District]

The final means of ending child marriage in the Northern region was through implementing programmes by some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other stakeholders. A project such as ‘Let the girls smile; say no to child marriage’ was implemented to end the act in the region. This project sought to identify vulnerable children in the communities and talk to them, especially young girls. For example, one NGO had this to say:

“We reach out to vulnerable children in the community and talk to them. They need the information to make informed choices and decisions, which is exactly what we are doing. In addition,

we encourage children to report cases of child marriage to the appropriate authorities for legal actions to be taken” [NORSAAC, Tolon District].

Similarly, the project also provides school materials to children. Participants believed that, since some children lack some school materials, they are forced to depend on men because their parents cannot provide them with such items. Therefore, to help prevent the exploitation of the child by men who offer help, the project also provides school materials freely to young people in need, as this statement tends to support.

“We do not want any child to stop school and end up being married at an early age, and so, we make sure we provide them with the needed school materials that will make their schooling experience a very comfortable one” [World Vision, Northern Region].

Participants also mentioned the formation of clubs in schools and communities. Participants expressed their views that clubs formed in schools and communities serve as platforms for children to discuss their problems. They share information on child marriage and protect each other. When one is forced to marry, one reports the case for appropriate action. Below is one of the narrations:

“There are clubs that these young boys and girls are part of. They join these clubs to learn and share information. In addition, being part of the club serves as a form of protection because when anyone in the club is given out into early marriage, the club members will report the case to the

appropriate authorities. Sometimes they report to chiefs, queen mothers and opinion leaders in the community” [World Vision, Northern Region].

There is the provision of counselling services for victims of child marriage. Stakeholders disclosed that when these young girls are rescued because some of them had gone through some forms of violence and abuse, they provide counselling services to them as a form of emotional or psychological support. For instance:

“We do provide counselling services for some victims who have been rescued. But, you know, they might have gone through a lot of trauma and abuse, so it is very important to counsel them” [Department of Social Welfare, Northern Region].

Discussion

This subsection attempts to interpret the findings of the results with the existing literature on ways stakeholders deal with child marriage. The issues discussed include Legal, Policies and Programme frameworks used by stakeholders in the Northern region to attempt to end child marriage practices.

Legal Framework

Child marriage is outlawed by law and the constitution of Ghana, a lower-middle-income country. According to Ghana’s 1992 constitution, anyone under 18 is considered a child and hence cannot marry or be married off. The 1998 Children’s Act, which sets the legal age of marriage at 18 for both boys and girls, emphasizes this point (Republic of Ghana, 1998). Child marriage has a disproportionate impact on Ghana’s Northern region.

Compared to the national average of 21 percent, 34 percent of females marry before they turn 18. In Central and West Africa, Ghana has the lowest rates of child marriage (UNICEF, 2016). Although child marriage is prohibited in Ghana because of legal penalties, this is not the case in Iran, where the family court works hand in hand with the patriarchal local society to enable early child marriage of females. In making his decision, the family court judge must consider the child's best interests. What advantages have been highlighted by the court awarding the marriage license to 11 or 12-year-olds? The law does not identify the circumstances in which these interests arise, and it is up to the judge to make the decision (Mirzaee et al., 2021).

Even though Ghana has legislation against child marriage, preventing early and forced marriage has historically been slow and difficult to abolish. The fight against child marriage has been going on since the 1920s. In 1929, India established the “Sarda Act,” which made marriage unlawful for girls under 18 (Mukherjee, 2006). However, the South Asian country now has the most child brides of any country in the world, accounting for one-third of all married girls worldwide (UNICEF, 2013).

Young girls in Ghana’s northern area have been empowered via education and career counselling, making them more aware and less likely to be victims of early marriage. In comparison, child marriage may have several effects on female labour market participation, including a decrease in expected returns from paid work due to lower educational attainment and a rise in the relative worth of unpaid family labour due to increased lifetime fertility (Klasen & Pieters 2012). Lack of participation in the labour force may have long-term consequences not only for women and their families but also for

communities and society as a whole (Chaaban & Cunningham 2011; ElborghWoytek et al. 2013; Smith & Haddad 2015). Early marriage, as stated in the preceding section, restricts young women's access to education, affecting employment options and the kind and terms of their employment. Entry into formal paid jobs is hampered by a lack of education (Grown et al. 2005). Although secondary and post-secondary education are highly linked to labour force involvement (Cameron, Dowling, & Worswick 2001; Mammen & Paxson 2000), most girls who marry young do not complete their schooling. Young married females who have had their schooling cut short also lack the knowledge base and marketable skills required for a formal job. As a result, they are relegated to informal or home-based labour, which is generally associated with poor working conditions and low or non-existent pay (Parsons et al., 2015).

Policies

The eradication of child marriage by 2030 became a global commitment in 2016 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) objective 5 on gender equality, resulting in a surge in policy and programmatic initiatives to abolish the practice. The proportion of women aged 20-24 years married or in union before the age of 18 years has doubled, according to data, tracking, and accountability mechanisms for measuring progress on the indicator for SDG target 5.3.1 (Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18) (United Nations, 2015). In a setting where prospects for additional learning, labour force engagement, or other valued roles are restricted, girls and their families may perceive marriage as the only realistic pathway. For starters, mounting

research suggests that girls' access to education may delay marriage, partly because school enrolment is often regarded as incompatible with marriage and childbearing in many cultures. As demonstrated in West Africa (Avogo & Somefun, 2019), Nepal (Sah et al., 2014), India (Prakash, et. al, 2019), Malawi (Glynn et al., 2018), Kenya, Senegal, Uganda, Zambia (Petroni, et al., 2017), and Ethiopia (Petroni, et al., 2017), persons who marry before the age of 18 tend to finish fewer years of schooling (Jones, et al., 2014). However, in other circumstances, the link between marriage and education may be weaker than thought due in part to poor school quality, which leads to weak abilities, prompting girls and their parents to question the worth of a girl's education (Psaki et al., 2019). The effects of societal norms, particularly gender standards, as drivers of child marriage have received much attention in the theoretical and empirical literature (Bicchieri, 2006). Chae and Ngo stated that empowerment material is an important component of successful programs based on results from 14 extensively reviewed interventions, indicating that further information is needed on the circumstances in which this strategy is most beneficial (Chae & Ngo, 2017).

Early child marriage is strongly linked to a lack of education and career chances. Especially when the most significant role for women is that of a wife, mother, and homemaker, and there are no work prospects for females or restricted opportunities to attend school or grow in their careers. Other impediments to educating the child include low-income families' lack of access to schools and their ability to pay for school expenditures (Chae & Ngo, 2017; Hotchkiss, Godha, Gage, & Cappa, 2016; Malhotra & Malhotra, 2010; Rumble, Peterman, Irdiana, Triyana, & Minnick, 2018; Sayi & Sibanda,

2018; Yaya et al., 2019). In addition, females are disproportionately affected by deprivation at the household and neighbourhood levels. Parents may also assume that marrying their daughters is the best way to shield them from risks if their family dwell in dangerous areas (Malhotra & Malhotra, 2010).

According to 'Girls Are Not Brides', child marriage has a negative impact on girls' education. Child brides frequently drop out of school and are denied the opportunity to complete their education, limiting their capacity to earn a living and pull themselves and their children out of poverty.

The benefits of girls staying in education and avoiding early marriage, on the other hand, are universally felt. Girls who have received an education are more likely to understand and advocate for their rights and raise healthy, educated children. Education can also be one of the most effective instruments for preventing early marriage and allowing females to reach their full potential. When a developing world woman completes seven years of schooling or more, she marries four years later on average. Early child marriage is primarily motivated by customs and traditions. Traditional values such as preserving virginity before marriage (Motamedi et al., 2016) and community pressure to prevent girls from becoming sexually active before marriage, for example, encourage parents to marry off their daughters as soon as feasible. They are also concerned that if they do not marry their children according to social norms, they will not be allowed to marry them at all in the future (Malhotra & Malhotra, 2010; Matlabi, Rasouli, Behtash, Dastjerd, & Khazemi, 2013). Another main reason contributing to the high rate of Early Child Marriage (ECM) worldwide is a lack of awareness about the implications of ECM (Matlabi et al., 2013).

Programmes

In many communities, child marriage is rooted in socio-cultural practices and religious beliefs, although the linkages between faith and child marriage are complex and vary depending on the society (Gemignani & Wodon, 2015). The current study revealed that stakeholders organised workshops for traditional leaders, religious leaders and other individuals to empower them to help deal with child marriage in the Northern region. Capacity building through workshops has been used in other countries to end child marriage, which corroborates with the current study's finding. For instance, Karma (2015) argued that engaging church and community leaders, as well as faith-based organizations, in critically examining the reasons and consequences of early marriage can aid in developing support for policies aimed at ending the practice (Karam, 2015). In some countries, dialogue with religious and community leaders can be part of discussions about family law reform, and even more broadly, women's empowerment (McCleary-Sills et al., 2015).

Most programmes work on three levels: engaging with girls, their peers, and the legal system and regulations that affect their life. Despite their acute needs and worries, program scans suggest a focus on prevention, leaving married girls largely ignored. Researchers from the International Centre for Research on Women (2011) conducted a review demonstrating the need to tackle many social factors. The results of the study categorized program strategies for preventing child marriage into five categories: (i) empowering girls at risk of early marriage with programs to reduce their social isolation (by providing them with information, safe spaces, skills, and support networks),

improving their access to school while also improving the quality of that education; (ii) providing economic support and incentives for girls and their families (including unconditional cash transfers to parents who are struggling to make ends meet). According to the assessment, such initiatives aim to delay the age of marriage by educating and organizing parents and communities who select when and to whom girls will marry to influence social norms linked to girls' expectations and marriage possibilities (Smith, et al., 2012). (iii) Similar findings emanated from the current study, where safe spaces such as adolescent clubs and groups were formed in schools and communities to allow children to express their thoughts and report cases of child marriage for appropriate actions to be taken.

(iv) Engagement of parents and the community is a common method. The understanding that the decision to marry girls early is generally in the hands of family and community elders and that the broader community administers the resulting stigma and sanctions for failing to meet social expectations is the driving force behind this strategy to “create an enabling environment.” Girls rarely have the power or agency to choose if, when, or with whom to marry. As a result, parental education and community mobilization work to shift societal norms and create a more accepting, less punishing environment for girls and families who want to modify the early marriage tradition (Karam, 2015). (v) Enlisting parents and community help can help offset any unintended outcomes of a girl’s participation in a program while also reinforcing its teachings and activities. This strategy is used in a variety of programs, including one-on-one meetings with parents and community and religious leaders to gain support, group and community

education sessions on the consequences of and alternatives to child marriage, parental and adult committees and forums as guides to life skills and sexual and reproductive health curricula, and parent and adult committees and forums as guides to life skills and sexual and reproductive health curricula.

Information, education, and communication campaigns use a variety of channels to spread messages regarding child marriage, schooling, rights, reproductive health, and other issues, as well as public statements and promises from influential leaders, family heads, and community members (Karam, 2015). It is worth noting that stakeholders such as NGOs, the police, CHRAG, Social Welfare Department etc., provide education to members of various communities and not only parents in the Northern region. This strategy is used to provide parents with information on various issues, such as the causes of child marriage and its enormous effects at the individual, household, community and national levels.

The power of community mobilization is demonstrated by the relatively few programs that have made this form of engagement their core activity, such as the Integrated Action on Poverty and Early Marriage program in Yemen (which sponsored a campaign to raise awareness of the consequences of early marriage among parents, grandparents, and youth), where advocacy efforts were instrumental in the introduction of the program. The Tostan NGO's strategy in Senegal does not focus on legislative change but rather on informal community education and awareness raising that allows community mobilization, often in the form of public declarations against harmful practices like female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage (UNFPA, 2012). "Let the girls smile: say no to child marriage" was one of the

programs implemented in Ghana's Northern Region. Other countries have established similar programs to end child marriage.

To address the issue of child, early, and forced marriages (CEFM), the United States uses a "whole-of-government" social determinants approach. For instance, at the UN General Assembly's Third Committee, the US Department of State and USAID support international and non-governmental organizations working to reduce the incidence of CEFM, including projects to raise community awareness, focusing on FBOs, of the legal provisions against CEFM. CEFM Projects are integrated with sector-specific programs such as health or education to increase impact, as is the nature of a social determinants approach. The United States also sponsors various projects focused on keeping teenage girls in school, as CEFM is significantly linked to educational outcomes (USAID, 2015). Let Girls Learn is a social media and public awareness campaign that aims to engage the worldwide community and raise awareness about the importance of girls' education and investment. This program's commitment involves working closely with civil society, particularly Faith Based Organisations (FBOs), to plan and implement a robust response. In addition, USAID is funding studies to learn more about effective CEFM interventions and initiatives to meet married adolescents' needs in areas where the practice is most common. For instance, USAID (2015) supports a study on successful community-based ways to prevent CEFM in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Burkina Faso. In addition, USAID aims to reduce the prevalence of CEFM in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Yemen by addressing the practice's legal, societal, and economic causes. In Benin, the Department of State and USAID have begun a new campaign to raise community awareness,

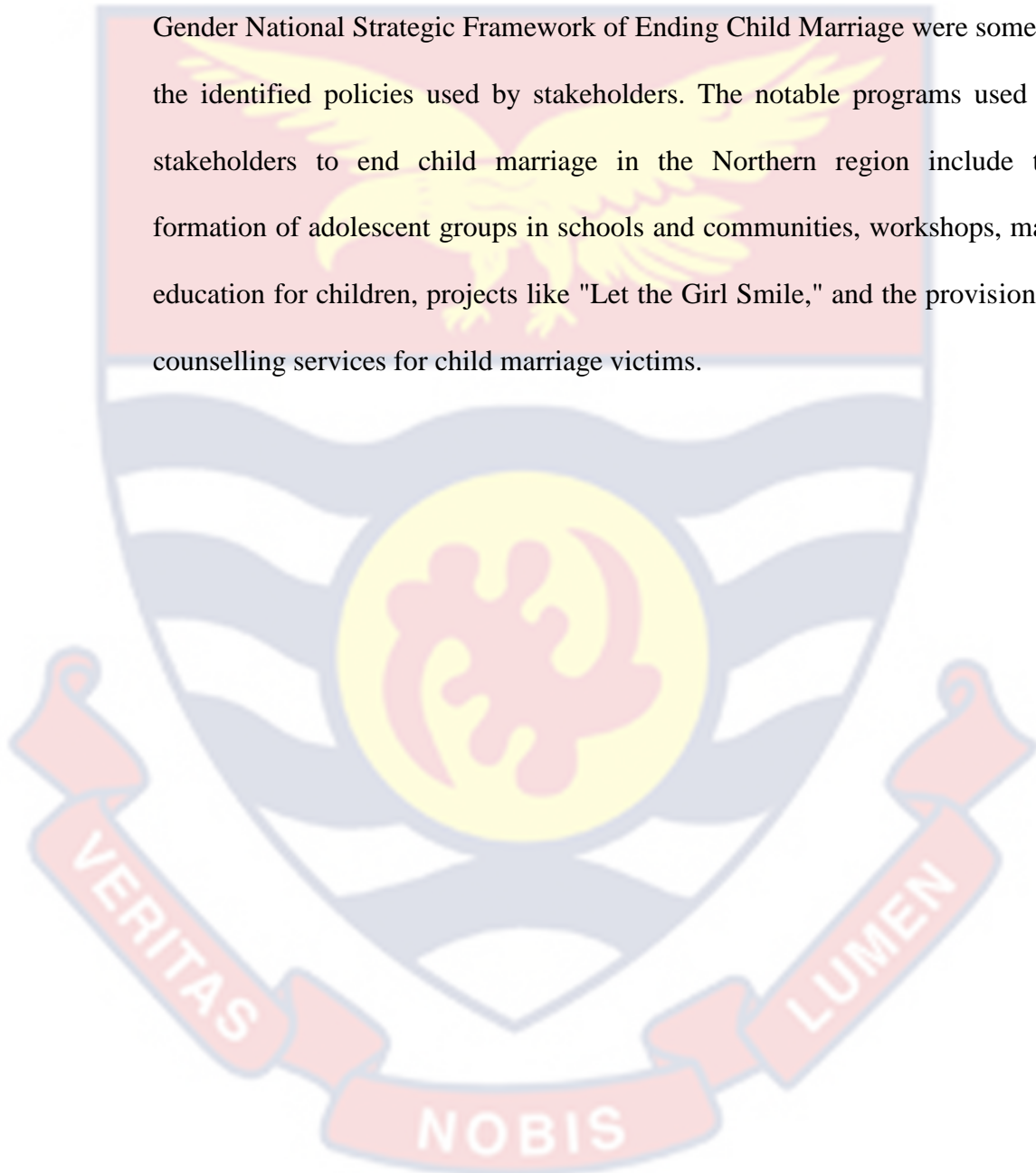
including targeted outreach to FBOs. The program aims to educate people about the dangers of forced marriage, promote knowledge about the law against it, and establish “one-stop” gender-based violence (GBV) care facilities that give medical, legal, emotional, and financial help to survivors of GBV, including married children (Karam, 2015). All the above empirical evidence presented to support the current findings of the study indicates that community mobilisation and support are effective in ending child marriage. Hence, this was used by the key stakeholders in the Northern Region of Ghana.

Using legal policies and programme frameworks by key stakeholders such as the police, the court and the immigration service in the Northern Region to end child marriages confirms the stakeholder’s theory. The theory stipulates that stakeholders are persons or a group of persons who can influence or be influenced (Freeman, 1984). In the case of the current study, legal stakeholders such as the Ghana Police Service, the law court, and the Ghana Immigration Service were identified as key stakeholders who influenced decisions regarding prosecuting perpetrators of child marriage. In addition, other key stakeholders, such as NGOs, traditional leaders, religious leaders, the media etc., also influenced decision-making regarding child marriage through programmes and policy implementations. Many of these programmes and policies were aimed at ending child marriage directly or indirectly (Freeman, 2006).

Summary of the chapter

This thesis chapter looks at the legal policies and programme frameworks to end child marriage in the Northern region. From the results,

arresting culprits by the police, prosecution by the law court, and reporting of suspected cases by natives to assembly members were the most cited legal actions used by stakeholders. Also, policies such as economic empowerment, scholarships and apprenticeship, girl child education and the Ministry of Gender National Strategic Framework of Ending Child Marriage were some of the identified policies used by stakeholders. The notable programs used by stakeholders to end child marriage in the Northern region include the formation of adolescent groups in schools and communities, workshops, mass education for children, projects like "Let the Girl Smile," and the provision of counselling services for child marriage victims.



CHAPTER EIGHT

**CHALLENGES PREVENTING THE ENDING OF CHILD MARRIAGE
IN THE NORTHERN REGION**

Introduction

This chapter presents the results and discussion on challenges preventing stakeholders in ending child marriage in the Northern region of Ghana. Some of these challenges are structural in nature. Others are cultural/religious, family level challenges and individual challenges as summarised in Table 21

Table 21: Major challenges preventing the ending of Child marriage in the Northern Region

Key challenges	Sub-challenging elements
Structural	Weak response systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No accommodation for rescued victims • Influence from leaders Lack of funds Peer group resistance Police do not bring cases to court
Cultural/Religious	Interference from traditional authorities Traditional leaders as perpetrators Religious interference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim communities
Individual	Non reported cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear and intimidation Lack of evidence (birth cert)
Family	Resistance from parents Illiteracy

Source: Field data (2021)

The current study also sought to identify the major challenges in ending child marriage in the Northern region of Ghana. Four main challenges were identified by the participants. The first challenge is structural in nature. Participants expressed their views that weak response systems such as no accommodation for rescued victims and political interference hinder their

efforts in ending child marriage in the Northern region. Some participants had this to say:

“It becomes very difficult to deal with child marriages especially when there are no provisions such as accommodation and other resources that will be used to support victims when they are rescued. Sometimes when the girls are rescued, they cannot return to their homes because they may not be accepted by family members. When this happens, where does the victim stay? It is really a major challenge for us” [Department of Social Welfare officer, Northern Region]

“Some of these perpetrators are people who have social connections in the community. When they are charged with such crime, there will be calls from government officials to release them” [Freelance media personnel, Tamale]

“Sometimes traditional rulers come to plead on behalf of those where engaged in child marriage to be set free” [Public Relation Officer, CHRAG, Tamale]

Others also were of the view that lack of funds as well as peer group resistance makes their work very difficult. Due to lack of funds, programmes that ought to organise to create awareness and sensitize communities on the negative outcomes of child marriage are not done. There are some cases where there is confrontation from peer groups when arrest is warranted as recounted by the following:

“Every programme that we organise must be done with money. When the money is not there, how can you organise your

programmes. The school materials that secure to support these children are bought with money and so when there are no funds, the programmes are stalled” [Department of Children officer, Northern Region]

“Sometimes, we do face peer resistance. They will prevent us from arresting the perpetrator and they even hide some of them” [Police, Zabzugu]

None filing of cases for court proceedings were also mentioned as a structural challenge in ending child marriage in the Northern region. Failure on the side of police officers to forward cases to the law court poses a challenge in ending the menace. One of the participants had this to say:

“There are case of child marriages in the community but some police officers do not file them for court proceedings. Parents of both the victim and perpetrators plead and case ‘dies’ automatically. It is when cases are brought to the court that we can prosecute offenders when they are found guilty” [Assembly member, Savelugu District]

The second major challenge is cultural and religious in nature. For participants, religious interference, especially from Muslim communities pose a threat to ending child marriage. They were of the view that Muslim communities are typically known for high cases of child marriages and when any attempt is made to arrest culprits, there is that resistance and interference from religious leaders as recounted by this statement:

“In the Muslim communities, they marry at a very early, especially the women. Some of them believe that it is part of

their religion and so even when you want to arrest perpetrators, their leaders come in to interfere” [CHRAJ officer, Northern Region]

“There are some traditional leaders who also try to solve the issue without forwarding it to the police. Traditional leaders are not mandated to solve cases of child marriage. This is an abuse of human rights and it is the laws that must deal with perpetrators. This must not be solved at home” [Assembly member, Yendi District]

While some traditional leaders were identified as those who interfere with legal processes, some of them were also identified as perpetrators as the following seems to suggest:

“There are some traditional leaders who marry young girls. Some of them are very old yet, they get married to children. If these leaders are supposed to help solve the issue and they are committing the crime themselves, it becomes a challenge” [World Vision, Northern Region]

The next major challenge is at the individual level. Participants were of the view that victims do not report cases due to fear and intimidation from parents and perpetrators. Victims are threatened by parents and perpetrators and therefore makes it difficult for them to report cases to the right authorities as recounted by two participants:

“The underlying fact is, when reports are not made, how can we take action? Someone needs to report before another person will take an action. If you keep quiet over it, how can we come

to your aid? Sometimes, they [victims] are threatened by parents not to report cases” [Police officer, Bimbila]

“A girl child who falls victim to child marriage may want to report the case but due to intimidation from the husband, they remain silent for the rest of their lives” [Teacher, Tolon District]

Lack of evidence in terms of providing birth certificate of the victim is one of the challenges expressed by participants of the study. They were of the view that, when cases are filed for court proceedings, there must be evidence that the victim is really a minor but, in many cases, the evidence, that is birth certificates are not provided. One of them had this to say:

“When the cases are brought here, due to lack of evidences, our hands are tight. You cannot just look at someone’s face and physic and determine their age. There must surely be an evident [birth certificate] and in the absence of this, how do you make your argument?” [DOVVSU, Tamale].

The final major challenge faced by stakeholders in ending child marriage in the study area is familial in nature. Some participants narrated that some parents resist arrest. Because parents of children who are married receive some financial benefits from supposedly son in-law, they do anything possible to resist arrest. Others also expressed their views that due to illiteracy of parents, some of them are ignorant about the negative outcomes of child marriage. If they were aware, they probably would not have given their children into early marriages. These were some of their expressions:

“Some of these parents due to the financial support they get from the marriage, they interfere with the whole process. They make sure they do everything possible so that the ‘son in-law’ will not be arrested because when that happens, she or he will not get any financial support” [Renel Foundation, Northern Region]

“Parents who have not had any form of formal education and as a result of this are ignorant about the adverse outcomes of child marriage, make it difficult to end this canker. It is simply because they do not know that is why they are giving their children out to marriages that are criminal. If they know it is criminal and punishable by law, they will desist from it” [Register, Regional House of Chiefs, Northern Region]

“Ever since I started working in this court, I have not recorded any case of child marriage yet. There are claims of numerous cases in the media and literature maybe they occur but do not get to us as a court” [Tamale District Court].

Discussion

This subsection interprets the research’s results in relation to what other researchers have discovered. The issues addressed in this subsection comprise institutional, cultural/religious, individual, and familial challenges to stopping child marriage in Northern Ghana.

Structural Challenges to Ending Child Marriage

Findings from the research indicate that there are various structural challenges that mitigate against the efforts to end child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana. According to findings from the research, structural challenges that impede the ending of Child Marriage in Northern Ghana include weak response systems, lack of funds, peer group resistance as well as failure by law enforcement personnel in sending cases to court. The study results revealed that weak response systems such as no accommodation for victims who have been rescued from child marriages as well as influences from political actors contribute extensively in hindering efforts in bringing child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana to an end. Unavailability of accommodation is a major challenge as a result of the fact victims need protective space which will enable them to escape from the perpetrators of child marriage. This finding has been corroborated by (Gariba, 2021; Guha, 2019). In addition, interference from political actors in absolving perpetrators of child marriage from legal ramifications also counter intuitively promote the phenomenon thereby making it difficult to curtail child marriage in the Northern Region. This finding is similar to previous studies done by Gariba (2021) and Pelayo (2015).

Lack of funding was also identified as a key challenge to eradicating child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana. Funding is identified as a critical resource that is needed to eradicate child marriage in the Northern Region in terms of organizing sensitization campaigns and programmes. However, the absence of adequate financial resources makes it difficult for relevant institutions and stakeholders to organization sensitization and

awareness creating programmes that are critical in ensuring that child marriage is eradicated from the Northern Region of Ghana. This supports previous research (Kaseke, 1991; Mupedziswa 2005; Chogugudza 2009), which claimed that the social welfare department and victims support unit (DOVVSU) are ill-equipped to deal with Africa's societal issues. Furthermore, resistance from peer groups was also identified as a challenge to ending child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana. Peer groups from the perspective of the respondent prevent relevant stakeholders and institutions from enforcing laws and taking actions that are meant to curtail child marriage in the region. This finding is consistent with previous researches that have been done. Also, the study revealed that law enforcement officials tend to deliberately avoid sending child marriage cases to court. This also affects the effort in ending child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana. This is congruent with findings from Gariba (2021) whereby law enforcement agencies were identified as refusing to send child marriage cases to court.

Cultural/Religious Challenges to ending Child Marriage

According to the respondents, a key cultural challenge that militates against ending child marriage in the region is as a result of interference by traditional leaders. Traditional leaders who by customs wield a certain level of authority in their communities tend to make it difficult to end child marriage in the region by marrying underage girls. They, therefore, become perpetrators of the very act making it difficult to uproot child marriage from the region. This was confirmed by a previous study that reported that attendance of child marriages by local politicians and government officials contradicts their role

as duty bearers against child marriage hence, they indirectly become perpetrators (Mahato, 2016).

Furthermore, traditional leaders are also viewed as a problem because of their failure to report cases of child marriages that occur in their communities to law enforcement agencies such as the police. This consequently engenders child marriage within the various communities in the Region. This is congruent with findings from Gariba (2021). In addition, with Northern Region having predominantly Muslim communities where cases of child marriages are rife, leaders of such Muslim communities are reported to interfere with efforts meant to curb child marriage. This consequently hinders the possibility of ending child marriage in the region as viewed by the respondents. This is consistent with research by Tristam (2019), which found that child marriage is a result of cultural and religious practices that devalue and discriminate against women and girls.

Individual Challenges to ending Child Marriage

The study also revealed certain factors at the individual level which hinder the efforts of stakeholders to end child marriage in the Northern region of Ghana. Fear of being reprimanded and intimidated by parents as well as perpetrators of child marriage dissuade victims from reporting such cases to law enforcement agencies. This finding corroborates with previous researches that have been done. For instance, research conducted in Bangladesh revealed that young females are routinely harassed by young unmarried men, jeopardising the security of many families. Girls are therefore married off at a young age to prevent being exposed to the provocations (Chowdhury, 2004).

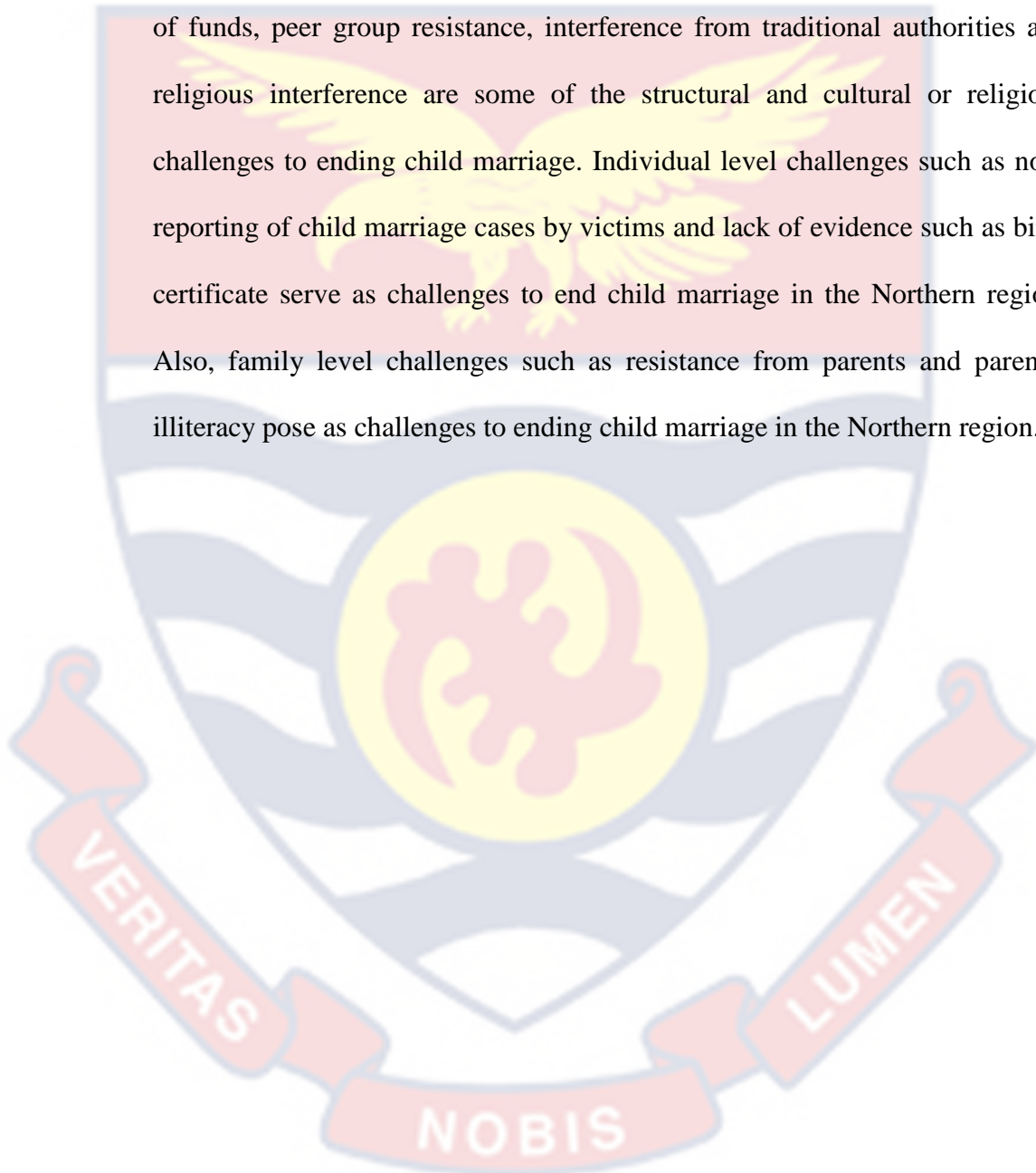
Findings from the study also revealed that the absence of birth certificates of victims of child marriage is a critical barrier to ending the phenomenon. This is due to the fact that a birth certificate determines whether a victim is underage or otherwise. Such critical evidence is needed to prosecute perpetrators of child marriage. This finding is corroborated by Ansong (2019). A report by 'Girls Not Brides' indicted that weak birth registration systems, which prevent girls from providing official proof that they are too young for marriage (Girls Not Brides, 2014).

Family Challenges to ending Child Marriage

This study also found that at family level, some parents of victims of child marriage prevent perpetrators from getting apprehended by law enforcement officials. This stems from the benefits or perceived benefits that parents of victims of child marriages get as a result of the marriage. According to the UN Women Report (2013), economic factors for marrying at a young age comprise women's access to housing and offering possibilities to address financial concerns. El-Mowafi, et. al (2017) observed that young brides typically have less options since their families relinquish obligation, which contributes to their intention to pursue marriage. Finally, the study also established that lack of knowledge of possible the consequences of child marriage among parents also is a major challenge in ending the phenomenon. This is because parents are unaware of the health, socio-economic and legal consequences of child marriage. This finding is conformity with findings made by Bokaie, Bostani Khalesi & Ashoobi (2021) and Chowdhury (2004).

Summary of the chapter

This chapter of the thesis presents the results and discussions of key challenges that stakeholders face in ending child marriage in the Northern region. From the results key challenges such as weak response systems, lack of funds, peer group resistance, interference from traditional authorities and religious interference are some of the structural and cultural or religious challenges to ending child marriage. Individual level challenges such as non-reporting of child marriage cases by victims and lack of evidence such as birth certificate serve as challenges to end child marriage in the Northern region. Also, family level challenges such as resistance from parents and parental illiteracy pose as challenges to ending child marriage in the Northern region.



CHAPTER NINE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter covers three main areas. The first area constitutes the summary of the study, focusing on the study objectives; the theoretical issues including the conceptual framework adopted for the work; the methods of data collection and analysis and key findings made. The second comprises the conclusions drawn from the findings; the recommendations suggested based on the conclusions are covered in the third area.

Summary

This study focused on the interrogating stakeholders' contribution to ending child marriage in the Northern Regions of Ghana. Specifically, the study profiled major stakeholders contributing to ending child marriage; analysed the causes of child marriage in the Northern region; examined the legal, policies and programmes introduced by stakeholders to end child marriage in the Northern region and; explored the major challenges stakeholders face in tackling child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana. The following research questions helped to achieve the main objectives of the study:

1. Who are the stakeholders contributing to ending child marriage in the Northern region?
2. What are the causes of child marriage in the Northern region?
3. How are stakeholders contributing to ending child marriage in the Northern region?

4. What are the challenges stakeholders are faced with in ending child marriage in the Northern region?

The study was guided by the stakeholder theory, the victim blaming theory, the ecological model, and the root cause analysis model. The study was guided by a conceptual framework adapted from Dahlberg and Krug (2002) and Slameto (2016).

The study adopted a mixed method approach to answer the research questions and to address the objectives. Specifically, concurrent triangulation design was used. The target population for the study consisted of women and stakeholders such as the Ghana Police Service, the Ghana Immigration Service, CHRAJ, Traditional authorities, Religious authorities, Victims of child marriage, Parents, Ghana Education Service, Non-Governmental Organisations etc. In all, 1,465 respondents participated in the quantitative study while 44 participants took part in the qualitative aspect of the study. Questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data from respondents while in-depth interview guide was used to gather qualitative data from participants. Quantitative data was process and analysis were done with SPSS analysis tool. Qualitative data was processes and analysed manually using thematic analysis.

The result from the study showed that stakeholders identified four main underlying factors contribute to regional child marriage. These are broadly categorised as individual-level factors (demand for material goods from men, orphans, non-educated girl child/dropouts); parental/family-level factors (lack of parental care/guidance, poverty, lack of parental education, continuity of family ties); cultural level factors (social values and norms, morality and

honour, maternal influence) and structural level factors (lack of educational opportunities for girls, place of residence, weak law enforcement).

With regards to the legal policies and programme frameworks to end child marriage in the Northern region, arresting culprits by the police, prosecution by the law court, and reporting of suspected cases by natives to assembly members were the most cited legal actions used by stakeholders. Also, policies such as economic empowerment, scholarships and apprenticeship, girl child education and the Ministry of Gender National Strategic Framework of Ending Child Marriage were some of the identified policies used by stakeholders. The notable programs used by stakeholders to end child marriage in the Northern region include the formation of adolescent groups in schools and communities, workshops, mass education for children, projects like “Let the Girl Smile,” and the provision of counselling services for child marriage victims.

When it comes to challenges faced by stakeholders in ending child marriage, key challenges such as weak response systems, lack of funds, peer group resistance, interference from traditional authorities and religious interference are some of the structural and cultural or religious challenges to ending child marriage. Individual level challenges such as non-reporting of child marriage cases by victims and lack of evidence such as birth certificate serve as challenges to end child marriage in the Northern region. Also, family level challenges such as resistance from parents and parental illiteracy pose as challenges to ending child marriage in the Northern region.

Conclusions

1. Child marriage is still relatively high in the Northern region of Ghana.
2. Stakeholders such as the Ghana Police Service, the Ghana Immigration Service, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) (Renel Foundation, World Vision etc.), the Judiciary, the Media, Traditional and Religious Leaders among others are major stakeholders that are contributing to ending child marriage in the Northern region.
3. Individual, family, structural and cultural factors influence child marriage.
4. Stakeholders use legal frameworks, policies and programmes developed by government, international bodies and NGOs to end child marriage in the Northern region.
5. Stakeholders are faced with several challenges that are experienced at the individual, family, cultural and structural levels.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are given:

Recommendation for practice

1. Ensure that every child especially the girl child has attained SHS educational status since higher level of education decreases the odds of child marriage.
2. Intensive sensitisation of parents especially parents with Muslim background. The reason is that child marriage is more likely to occur among children from Islamic background than Christian background.

3. There should be provision of funds to support victims of child marriage since some of them live in fear and do not want to return to their parents' home after their marriage is dissolved.
4. Parents should ensure to register the birth of their children since it provides legal evidence to fight against child marriage.
5. Sensitisation of traditional leaders on the need to report child marriages cases rather than trying to resolve them amicably.
6. There should be periodic monitoring by the DOVVSU and other key stakeholders in the various communities to observe marriage ceremonies periodically.
7. The use of birth certificate should be a requirement when one of the parties involved is suspected to be less than 18years.

Recommendation for further research

1. There should be further research to assess the impact of the efforts of stakeholders in ending child marriage in the Northern region.
2. Further study may be conducted to assess how the Free SHS policy has impacted child marriage in the Northern region.

Contribution to knowledge

The study has contributed to literature on stakeholder contributing to ending child marriage. Among the significant contributions of this study to knowledge on stakeholders' contribution to ending child marriage, the study also documented importantly that factors influencing the incidence of child marriage are more culturally and parentally related than child factors

Female children who were victims of child marriage never went to school or spent less than 3 years in schools High school dropout rate among victims of child marriage

Also victims of child marriage are likely to experience physical and sexual abuse in their relationship. Stakeholders contributing to ending child marriage are from public, private and non-governmental organisations.



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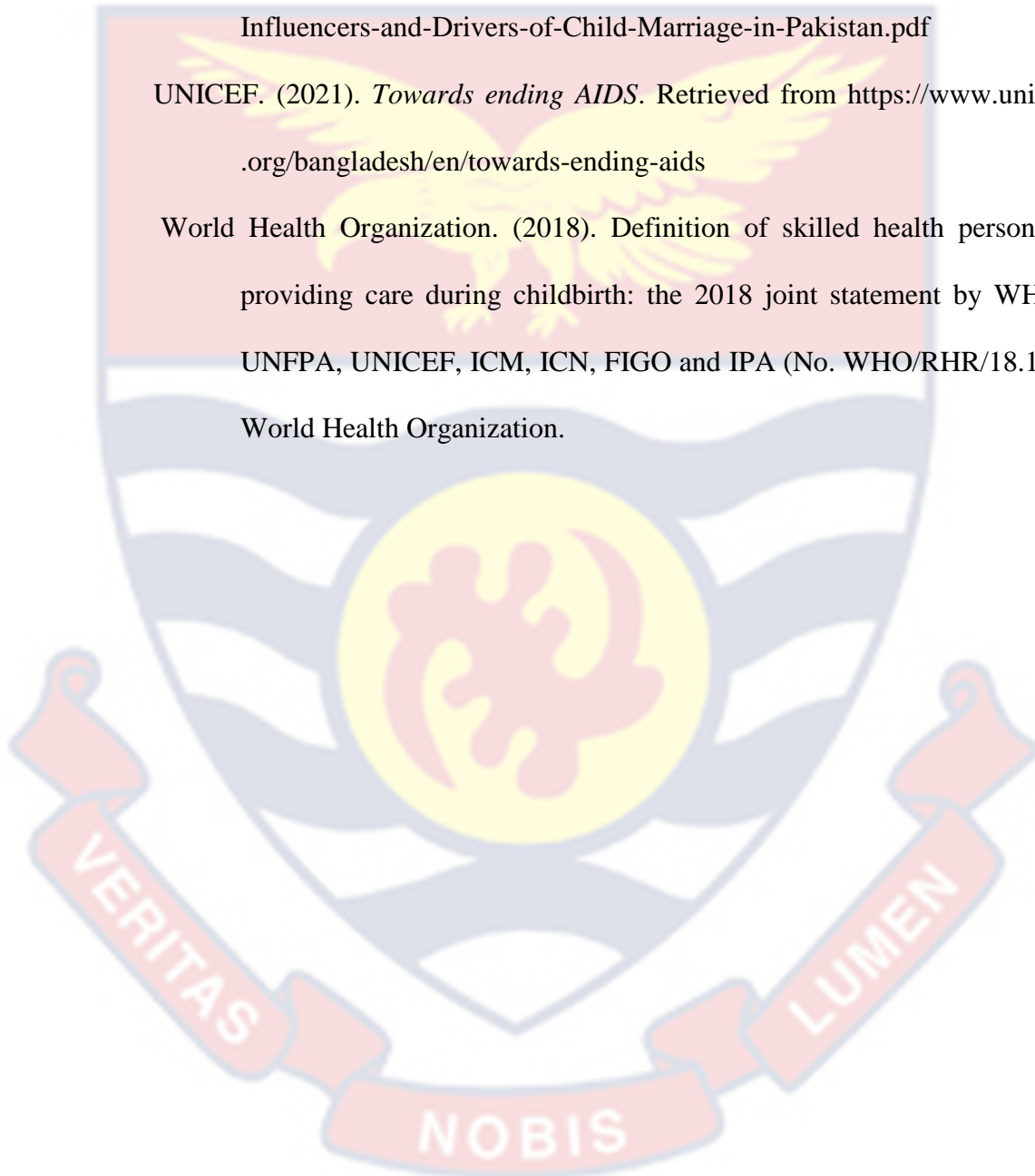
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APPENDICES**Appendix A**

Interview schedule for Victims

Interview Schedule for Child Marriage Victimis

I am a PhD student from the University of Cape Coast, who is carrying out a study on the topic: CONTRIBUTION OF STAKEHOLDERS IN ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA, and I respectfully request your participation in this academic study. Your participation in terms of providing candid views and viewpoints would be extremely beneficial to the research's succes. Your ability to panteipate in the study is, however, voluntary. As a result, you can Treasured that any information you provide will be handled with respect and used solely for academic purposes.

Are you willing to participate in the study willingly after being briefed on the study's intent and informed of the concept of confidentiality in data collection?

a. Yes []. No []

By answering "yes" to the above question, you are confirming that you have given me the permission to sign that your consent to participate in the study was sought and that you agreed to participate willingly and without coercion.

Basic info

Name of interviewer

- Option 1
- Option 2

Interview Date

yyyy-mm-dd

Community

Start time

hh:mm

Section A: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A1. Sex of respondent

- Male
- Female

A2 Age of Respondent In complete years

A3. District in which the respondent resides.

A4. Marital status

- Single
- Married
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed

A5. Religious affiliation

- Christianity
- Islamic
- Traditional
- Other

A6. Highest education attainment

- No formal education
- Primary education
- Secondary education
- NVTI/Vocational
- Diploma First Degree

A7. Current employment Status

- Employed (Yes)
- Unemployed (No)

A8. Type of job if employed.

- Farming
- Trading
- Teaching
- Nursing
- Other(s)

- Specify
-

A9. Number of children

A10. How many of the children attend school, if any?

Section B: Victims Awareness of the Existence Stakeholders Institution Responsible for Addressing Child Marriage Issue in the Northern Region of Ghana

B1. Are you aware of existing stakeholders responsible for ending child marriage in the northern region of Ghana?

- Yes
- No

B2. How many of them are you aware of if your answer to B1 is yes?

B3. Please indicate the stakeholder institution(s) you are aware of their existence in your community or district.

NOTE: You can select more than one

- Law courts
 - CHRAJ
 - Religious Leaders Traditional Leaders (Chiefs)
 - Media
 - NGOS/CSOS
 - Others
 - Specify
-

B4 For how long have you known the stakeholder institution(s) that deal with child marriage issue in your community/district? Answer in years

B5. Do you consider the activities of the stakeholder institution(s) to be useful and effective in tackling child marriage issues in your community/district?

- Yes
- No

86. Please briefly explain why your answer to question B5 is 'yes' or 'No!'

Section C: Specific Support Received by The Victims And Parents From Stakeholders

C1. Have you ever received support from any stakeholder institution in their attempt to help you out of child marriage related issue?

- Yes
- No
- Specify

C2. If yes, kindly identify this stakeholder institution(s)

C3 What kind of support did you receive if your answer to question C1 is Yes

- Counseling support
- Legal support
- Dialogue with family
- Training (apprenticeship)
- Scholarship
- Business capital

Other

Specify

C4. How many times did you receive such support?

- Once
- Twice
- Thrice
- Four times
- Five times
- More than five times

C5. How did such support affect your livelihood if any?

C6. How do you describe the stakeholder institutions' support for child marriage victims in your community?

- Very low
- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Very High

C7. Why did you describe the support as you have indicated in C6?

Section D: Victims View On The Causes Of Child Marriage In The Northern Region Of Ghana

D1. In your view, what is/are the root cause(s) of child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana?

You can select more than one

- Cultural/traditional beliefs
- Religious beliefs
- Poverty

Need for young girls labour

D2 Please rank the various root causes 5 in terms the magnitude of effect of each of them.

Illiteracy

from 1st to 5th Illiteracy Cultural Traditional beliefs

Religious beliefs

Poverty

Need for young girls labour

Section E: Legal And Policy Frameworks Put In Place By Stakeholders' Institutions To End Child Marriage In Norther Regions Of Ghana

E1. Which specific stakeholder institutions do you think should come together and effectively deal with the issue of child marriage in the Northern Region? Please list them in the space provided below:

E2. Why do you think that the stakeholder institutions you have named above can effectively deal with the issue of child marriage in the Northern Region?

E3. What legal framework do you think would be appropriate for the stakeholder institutions to be able to tackle with the issue of child marriage in the Northern Region?

E4. What policy framework do you think would be appropriate for the stakeholder institutions to be able to address the issue of child marriage in the Northern Region?

F: Challenges And Future Strategies F1. What are some of the challenges that impair your ability to curb child marriages?

F2. Kindly enumerate key strategies you wish to deploy to facilitate your efforts in curbing child marriages?

New Question strongly disagree agree hhhhhhh

kofi is a bad boy

Appendix B

Interview schedule for parents Interview Schedule for Parents Who

Allowed their Children to Enter into Child Marriage

I am a PhD student from the University of Cape Coast, who is carrying out a study on the topic: CONTRIBUTION OF STAKEHOLDERS IN ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA, and I respectfully request your participation in this academic study: Your participation in terms of providing candid views and viewpoints would be extremely beneficial to the research's success. Your ability to participate in the study is, however, voluntary. As a result, you can be assured that any information you provide will be handled with respect and used solely for academic purposes.

Are you willing to participate in the study willingly after being briefed on the study's intent and informed of the concept of confidentiality in data collection?

a. Yes [b. Noll

By answering "yes" to the above question, you are confirming that you have given me the permission to sign that your consent to participate in the study was sought and that you agreed to participate willingly and without coercion.

Basic info

Name of interviewer Option 1

Option 2

Interview Date

yyyy-mm-dd

Community

Start time hh:mm

Section A: Demographic Characteristics Of Respondents

complete years

A3 District in which the respondent resides.

A4. Marital status

- Single
- Married
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed

A5. Religious affiliation

- Christianity
- Islamic
- Traditional
- Other

A6. Highest education attainment No formal education

- Primary education
- First Degree
- Secondary education
- NVTI /Vocational
- Diploma

A7. Current employment Status

- Employed (Yes)
- Unemployed (No)

48. Type of job if employed

- Teaching
- Nursing
- Farming
- Trading
- Other(s)
- Specify

A9, Number of children.

A10. How many of the children attend school, if any?

Section B: Parents' Awareness of the Existence Stakeholders Institution Responsible for Addressing Child Marriage Issue in the Northern Region of Ghana

B1. Are you aware of existing stakeholders responsible for ending child marriage in the northern region of Ghana?

- Yes
- No

B2. How many of them are you aware of if your answer to B1 is Yes?

B3. Please indicate the stakeholder institution(s) you are aware of their existence in your community or district NOTE: You can select more than one

- Law counts CHRAJ
 - Religious Leaders
 - Traditional Leaders (Chiefs)
 - Media
 - Others
 - Specify
-

B4. For how long have you known the stakeholder institution(s) that deal with child marriage issue in your community/district? Answer in years

B5. Do you consider the activities of the stakeholder institution(s) to be useful and effective in tackling child marriage issues in your community/district?

- Yes
- No

B6. Please briefly explain why your answer to question B5 is 'yes' or 'No'

Section C: Specific Support Received by Parents From Stakeholders

C1. Have you ever received support from any stakeholder institution in their attempt to help you out of child marriage related issue?

- Yes
- No

C2. If yes, kindly identify this stakeholder institution(s)

Illiteracy

Cultural/traditional beliefs

Religious beliefs

Poverty

Need for young girls labour

Legal And Policy Frameworks Put in Place By Stakeholders Institutions To End Child Marriage In Norther Regions Of Ghana

E1. Which specific stakeholder institutions do you think should come together and effectively deal with the issue of child marriage in the Northern Region? Please list them in the space provided below:

F2. Why do you think that the stakeholder institutions you have named above can effectively deal with the issue of child marriage in the Northern Region?

E3. What legal framework do you think would be appropriate for the stakeholder institutions to be able to deal with the issue of child marriage in the Northern Region?

E4. What policy framework do you think would be appropriate for the stakeholder institutions to be able to deal with the issue of child marriage in the Northern Region?

F: Challenges and Future Strategies

F1. What are some of the challenges that impair your ability to curb child marriages?

F2. Kindly enumerate key strategies you wish to deploy to facilitate your efforts in curbing child marriages?

Appendix C

Interview schedule for stakeholder

Interview Schedule for Stakeholders Committed to End Child Marriage in the
Northern Region Of Ghana

I am a PhD student from the University of Cape Coast, who is carrying out a study on the topic: CONTRIBUTION OF STAKEHOLDERS IN ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA, and I respectfully request your participation in this academic study. Your participation in terms of providing candid views and viewpoints would be extremely beneficial to the research's success. Your ability to participate in the study is, however, voluntary. As a result, you can be assured that any information you provide will be handled with respect and used solely for academic purposes.

Are you willing to participate in the study willingly after being briefed on the study's intent and informed of the concept of confidentiality in data collection?

a. Yes [] b. No []

By answering "yes" to the above question, you are confirming that you have given me the permission to sign that your consent to participate in the study was sought and that you agreed to participate willingly and without coercion.

Section A: Background Information of the Stakeholder Institution

A1. Name of institution

A2. Institution's location/Community

A3. Please indicate your position

A4. Main mandate of the Institution

A5. Child marriage-related initiative introduced by your

Organization/Institution

A6. Years of operation in the area/community

Section B: Root Causes of Child Marriage in Northern Regions of Ghana

B1. Do you agree that child marriage is pervasive in the Northern Region or Ghana?

- Yes
- No

B2a. In your view, what is are the root cause(s) of child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana

- Illiteracy
- Cultural /traditional beliefs
- Religious beliefs
- Need for young girls labour

B2b Please rank the various root causes ...4 -5 in terms the magnitude of effect of each of them From 1st to 5th NOTE:First-1, Second-2,Third-3 ,Fourth-4,|

- Illiteracy
- Cultural traditional beliefs
- Religious beliefs
- Poverty
- Need for young girls labour

Section C: Existence Stakeholders Institution Responsible for Addressing Child Marriage Issue In The Northern Region of Ghana

C1. Do you partner with other stakeholder institutions in tackling child marriage in the Northern Region of Ghana?

- Yes
- No

C2 How many of them do you work with if your answer to B1 is 'yes'?

C3. Please indicate the stakeholder institution(s) you work with in addressing child marriage in the Northern Region

- Law courts
- CHRAJ
- Religious Leaders
- Traditional Leaders (Chiefs)
- Media
- NGOS/CSOS
- Others
- Specify

C4. How long have you worked with the stakeholder institution(s) in dealing with child marriage issues in your community/district? Answer in years

C5. Do you consider the activities of the stakeholder institution(s) to be effective in tackling child marriage issues in your community/district?

Yes

No

C6 Please briefly explain why your answer to question CS is 'yes' or No

SECTION D: LEGAL FRAMEWORK, POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES INTRODUCED BY STAKEHOLDERS TO END CHILD MARRIAGE IN NORTHERN REGIONS OF GHANA

D1. What legal framework have you designed to deal with the issue of child marriage in the Northern Region?

D2 What policy framework have you put in place to tackle child marriage in the Northern Region

D3. What specific programmes have you introduced to address child marriage in the Northern Region?

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement on the scale based on legal framework, policy framework and programmes [SDA Strongly Disagree to SAG = Strongly Agree)

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

D4. We use the law court to restrict parents to force the children into child marriage

D5. We educate people on what the laws of Ghana say about child marriage

D6. We defend children who are being forced into child marriage at the law court through lawyers

D7. We use the law court to prevent adult men from marrying underage.

D8. We report child marriage cases to the law enforcement agency to take children appropriate action.

SDA DA Neu AG SAG

D9. We encourage underage children to report perpetrators of child marriage to the law enforcement agency for them to take appropriate action.

B10. We ensure that perpetrators of child marriage are sanctioned by law.

DII. We have legal committee in place to handle all matters relating to child

DI2. Collaboratively, we have enacted Local by law against child marriage

D13 We have contributed to a review of weak laws that cannot effectively deal with the issue of child marriage in Ghana

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement on the scale based on legal framework, policy framework and programmes (SDA = Strongly Disagree to SAG)

Strongly Agree

POLICY

FRAMEWORK

D14. We have introduced quarterly stakeholders' consultative meeting to discuss child marriage issue in the Northern Region

D15. We have contributed in the setting up of policy advisory committee to tackle child marriage in the Northern Region to address the issue of child

D16. We have helped in the establishment of annual stakeholders' workshop Northern Region

marriage in the

D17. We have contributed in the setting up a regulatory body to help redefine cultural and traditional beliefs that allow permit child marriage in the Northern Region

D18 We have contributed to the creation of a mechanism to build a consensus among the key stakeholders in dealing with child marriage in the Northern Region

D19 We have contributed to the designing of a laid down procedure in addressing child marriage in the Northern Region

SDA

SD

Neu

AG

SAG

D20: We have contributed in drawing a long term roadmap for tackling child marriage in the Northern Region

D21. We have assisted in the establishment of implementation body responsible for ensuring that all policy guidelines for ending child marriage are implemented.

D22. We have contributed to the drafting of policy document for protecting child right in the Northern Region 123. As part of our policy, we write annual reports on the state of child marriage in the Northern Region

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement on the scale based on Legal framework, policy framework and programmes [SDA Strongly Disagree to SAG Strongly Agree]

CHILD MARRIAGE REDUCTION PROGRAMMES

D21. We have introduced poverty reduction programmes through grant and supply of improved seed to local farmers

D22. We are offering skills training for young girls who do not want to go to school and are at risk of child marriage

D23. We have set up funding to address child marriage in the Northern Region

D24. We promote girl child education through scholarships to prevent child marriage in the Northern Region

D25. We have formed girl-child club to educate young girls on the consequences of child marriage

D26. We run TV and radio shows to educate the masses on the negative effect of child marriage

D27. We contribute to provision of learning material to young girls to keep them in school

D28. We take part in traditional durbars and speak to the audience and traditional leaders on the need to end child marriage in the Northern Region

SDA

AG

SAG

DA

D29. We go to mosques and speak to the leaders and members on the need to end child marriage in the Northern Region

D30. We visit churches and speak to the leaders and members on the need to end child marriage in the Northern Region Please indicate the impact level of child marriage reduction programme on the 5-point scale from the following statements comparing Before and After their implementation [VI- Very Low to VH-Very High]

Before the program

After the program
