Peer Pressure and Early Marriages among School Going Children in Uganda: A Case Study of Kakumiro District Local Government.

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Abstract: The research aimed to find out how peer pressure and early marriages relate to one another in Uganda, focused on the Kakumiiro District Local Government. The study's major and specialized aims, as well as the research questions that formed the basis of its discoveries, served as its guiding principles. To gather as much data as feasible, the researcher used a variety of primary, secondary, and information gathering approaches. The COVID-19 pandemic hindered the researcher's capacity to physically interact with trustworthy respondents, and financial restrictions restricted her ability to go around to gather data from various sources scattered throughout the area. The biasedness tended to vanish as the sample size grew larger and larger. However, the study found out that there is a close correlation between peer pressure and early marriages as many teenagers are driven into unwanted marriages by the influence exerted on them by their peers in their communities. This calls for instant government attention so as to address the vice.

Back ground to the study

Marriage is regarded as a joyous occasion and a positive step in adult life all over the world. Sadly, as this Digest makes obvious, early marriage isn't anything to be happy about. All too commonly, a girl or boy's childhood is cut short and their fundamental rights are breached when a marriage partner is pushed upon them. I've spent the last thirty hours training with UNICEF in Asia, where I constantly ran across the child marriage and early marriage issues. It is without a doubt that millions of children and young people, particularly girls, suffer negative effects, even though much of the impact is still disguised (UNICEF, 2019). Birth, marriage and death are the standard trio of key events in most people's lives.

The only one that is a matter of choice is marriage. Even in Roman times, the right to exercise that option was recognised as a legal principle, and it has long been a part of international agreements on human rights. However, many girls and fewer boys marry without being given the chance to utilize their right to refuse. Some people are pressured into marriage at a young age. Others are simply too young to make decisions about their spouse or the ramifications of marriage on their own. They may have granted what the law or custom would regard to be "consent," but in reality, someone else has given assent to their legally binding union on their behalf (UNICEF, 2001 & 2020). Child marriage is most widespread in the highest poverty rates, according to Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), which offer the preponderance of the most recent country-level statistics on child marriage. As according ICRW (2006) and NRC/IOM (2005), the countries with the highest rates are sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, as well as several regions of Latin America and the Caribbean. One of the nations with the highest rates of early and forced marriage is Uganda. 40% of females get remarried before their 18th birthday, and 10% of girls get married off before they turn 15 (UNICEF 2011). Despite the fact that the legal age for marriage is 18, according to UNICEF 2011 statistics, 46% of all women are married before they turn 18. It is said that once a girl is married, she has become a woman even if she is only 12. A boy who is compelled to marry is also a man today and must put behind childish things. While the average marriage age is rising, early marriage—the union of minors and adolescents before the age of 18—remains a normal practice. Despite the numerous causes and types of early marriage, one problem is crucial. Early marriage seems to be against human rights whether it involves a boy or a girl. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and other later human rights treaties recognize the right to free and informed consent to marriage, which cannot be withheld and 'free and full' when at least one partner is very immature. For both girls and boys, early marriage has profound physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional impacts, cutting off educational opportunity and chances of personal growth. For girls, in addition, it will almost certainly mean premature pregnancy and childbearing, and is likely to lead to a life time of domestic and sexual subservience over which they have no control (UNICEF, 2001).

But many civilizations, specifically those in Africa and South Asia, still uphold the notion that females should get married during or soon after puberty. Their spouses may be more than twice their age, but they are most usually a few years older than they are. With little thought for the personal consequences, parents and family members choose marriages for their daughters and sons. Instead, many view marriage as a plan to start a family, a financial arrangement, or a way to shield ladies from unwanted sexual approaches (UNICEF, 2001).

The two regions with the highest rates of young female marriage are South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. However, marriage at or shortly after puberty is commonplace among individuals leading traditional lifestyles in the Middle East, North Africa, and various regions of Asia. While marriages of girls between the ages of 16 and 18 are prevalent in portions of Latin America and some regions of Eastern Europe, there are also specific regions of West, East, and South Asia where marriages considerably younger than puberty are not unusual. With the help of data from the DHS and the World Fertility Survey, trends have been thoroughly examined.

Problem statement

Child marriage is most widespread in the world's poorest nations, according to Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), which offer the majority of the most recent country-level information on child marriage. As according ICRW (2006) and NRC/IOM (2005), the countries with the greatest rates are sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and several regions of Latin America and the Caribbean. One of the nations with the highest rates of early and forced marriage is Uganda. 40% of females get remarried before their 18th birthday, and 10% of girls get married off before they turn 15 (UNICEF 2011). Despite the fact that the legal age for marriage is 18, according to UNICEF 2011 estimates, 46% of all women are married before they turn 18. Forced child marriage is a life-changing reality for many of the world's girls. Some as young as 8 or 9 are forced to trade their childhoods for a life that can be defined by isolation, violence and illness. It is a practice rooted more in tradition than religious customs, and one that spans the globe, from Asia to Africa to the Americas.

Specific research objectives

1. The research was guided by the following objectives:
2. To find out the relation between peer pressure and early marriages among the school going children.
3. To examine other causes of early marriages among the school going children.
4. To devise practical strategies and remedies to early marriages among the school going children.

Research questions

1. The researcher mainly solicited responses for the following questions:
2. What is the relation between peer pressure and early marriages among the school going children?
3. What could be the other causes of early marriages among the school going children?
4. Which practical strategies and remedies can be employed to prevent early marriages among the school going children?

Conceptual frame work
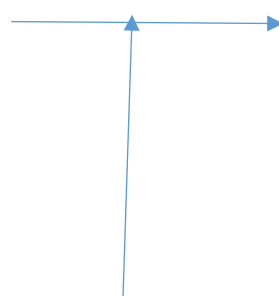
Independent variables   **dependent variables**

Peer pressure

Absenteeism and absconding from school.

Smoking and substance abuse

Romantic relationships and early sex

Early marriages

School drop

Early pregnancies

Abortions

Bride price

Intervening variables

Government laws and policies

Non-government actors' interventions

The community engagement and initiatives

School administration efficiency

Explanation

Peer pressure as the independent variables includes, absenteeism and absconding from school, smoking and substance abuse, romantic relationships and fornication which lead to the early marriages as a result of early pregnancies, abortions, pressure or demand for bride price and eventually school dropout. Development process that includes service delivery, creation of employment opportunities. Government laws and policies on early marriages, the initiatives of the civil society organizations basically NGOs, the community engagement with the children and the nature of the schools' administrations intervene to provide a solution to the problems of peer pressure and prevent early marriages.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The plan for carrying out the research maximizes control over elements that can undermine the reliability of the results. The odds of receiving the data that could be correlated to the real situation are improved when a study is aimed at assisting the researcher organize and carry out the study in a way that will help the researcher obtain the desired results (Burns & Grove 2001:223).

During the research, the researcher can use both the descriptive and analytical research designs. Since both qualitative and quantitative research techniques were used in this study, it was possible to better understand how peer pressure and early marriage relate to one another.

Study population
According to Polit and Hungler (1999:37) population is an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. In relation to this study, the population included officials of kakumiro district both civil servant and political leaders, civil society officials and the a few community members as well as a few school administrators.

Sample size and sampling procedures
Sampling is the process of choosing a subset of the population to represent the complete population (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber 1998:250; Polit & Hungler 1999:95). There have been 40 responders in the sample. These were 10 district workers from the Kakumiro district, 50 representatives of civil society and 10 community people, including 10 school administration and a sample of school leavers. These respondents are fully representative and are presumed to be knowledgeable about the topic.

Table 1 shows the sample size and sampling techniques for respondents selected for research

CATEGORY	SAMPLE SIZE	SAMPLE TECHNIQUE
Political leaders	5	Purposive sampling
Civil servants	5	Purposive sampling
Local people including school dropouts and school officials	20	Simple random sampling
Officials of the Civil Society	50	Cluster sampling
TOTAL	80	

Data source
The study used both primary and secondary data

Primary source
Primary data sources included; observations, questionnaires and interviews,

Questionnaires

The researcher administered questionnaires to a selected number of respondents and use emails, cell phones more especially in cases where it will be difficult to have interviews. This helped the researcher to generate as much information as possible.

Interview

Interview is a face-to-face conversation with the respondent. Structured and unstructured Interviews were used to generate as much information as possible.

Sources of data

This included both primary and secondary sources

First-hand sources

This included gathered information directly from respondents, including CSOs from the sub county as well as political and civic officials.

Primary sources

This included information retrieved from records, statistics, and written literature. These comprised laws, regulations, and reports from CSOs and sub-county officials.

Equipment for gathering data

Questionnaires for surveys were among them. To gather the respondents' opinions on the subject, self-administered questionnaires were given to each one. In order to direct the interviews, the researcher also had interview guidelines.

Data quality control
This included both validity and reliability tests.

Validity.

Validity is the measure of truth or falsity of the data obtained through using the research tools/instruments. This includes both internal and external validity (Burns et al, 2001). The data collected was subjected to both internal and external validity.

Reliability

This is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument generates constant results or findings in case the study is replicated (Cronbach, 2003). The researcher also ensured that quality control is done by carrying out a pre-test of the questionnaire on at least 10 respondents to test the reliability using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (CAC).

Data collection procedures

Data was collected systematically using questionnaire guide and interview guide on the consent of the respondents after identifying myself with the respondents and explaining to them the purpose and benefits of their participation in the study.

Interpretation and presentation of data.

The qualitative data obtained from the questionnaires was coded and tabulated on a scale and after was computed using statistical package for social scientists (SPSS).

Data analysis

Data were qualitatively analysed. This is because the investigation into the relationship between decentralization and development is mostly qualitative in nature. Thematic qualitative analysis, which is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data, shall be used to analyse data in stages. These strategies will be used so that the respondents' thoughts and opinions can be articulated in full. The study objectives served as the basis for the identification of the themes, and the data will be presented in accordance with the themes that were found. In the case of interviews, quotes were utilized to highlight the respondents' voices, while in the case of observation, pictures were used to clearly convey the information. When it comes to questionnaires, tabulations are used to summarize the outcomes or collect data.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The descriptive characteristics of the sample were based on gender, age, religion, place of residence, marital status and educational levels of the respondent

Age of respondents

Table 2 shows how respondents were grouped in different age groups. This is illustrated in the table below

Age group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
13 – 20	1	2%
21 – 30	15	30%
31 – 40	28	56%
41 – 50	5	10%
51 and above	1	2%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Table 3 shows the descriptive analysis of age

variable	N	MIN	MAX	MEAN	STD	KURTOSIS	SKEWNESS
Age	80	18	71	27.84	11.715	0.457	0.889
Valid N	80						

Source: Primary data

The standard deviation is 11.715, and the minimum and maximum ages are shown in the table above. Age satisfies criteria for a good central tendency since the mean falls within the range of maximum and minimum age. Based on the table above, 1 respondent (2% of the sample) was in the 13–20 age range, 15 respondents (30%) were in the 21–30 age range, 28 respondents (56%), 5 respondents (10%) were in the 41–51 age range, and 1 respondent (2% of the sample) was from the 51–plus age range. This suggested that the majority of people surveyed and Kakumiro District Local Government employees are within the age groups of 21–30 (30%) and 31–40 (56%).

Gender of the respondents

The respondents were categorized into two gender groups that are male and female and their distribution presented in the table and in a bar graph as shown below.
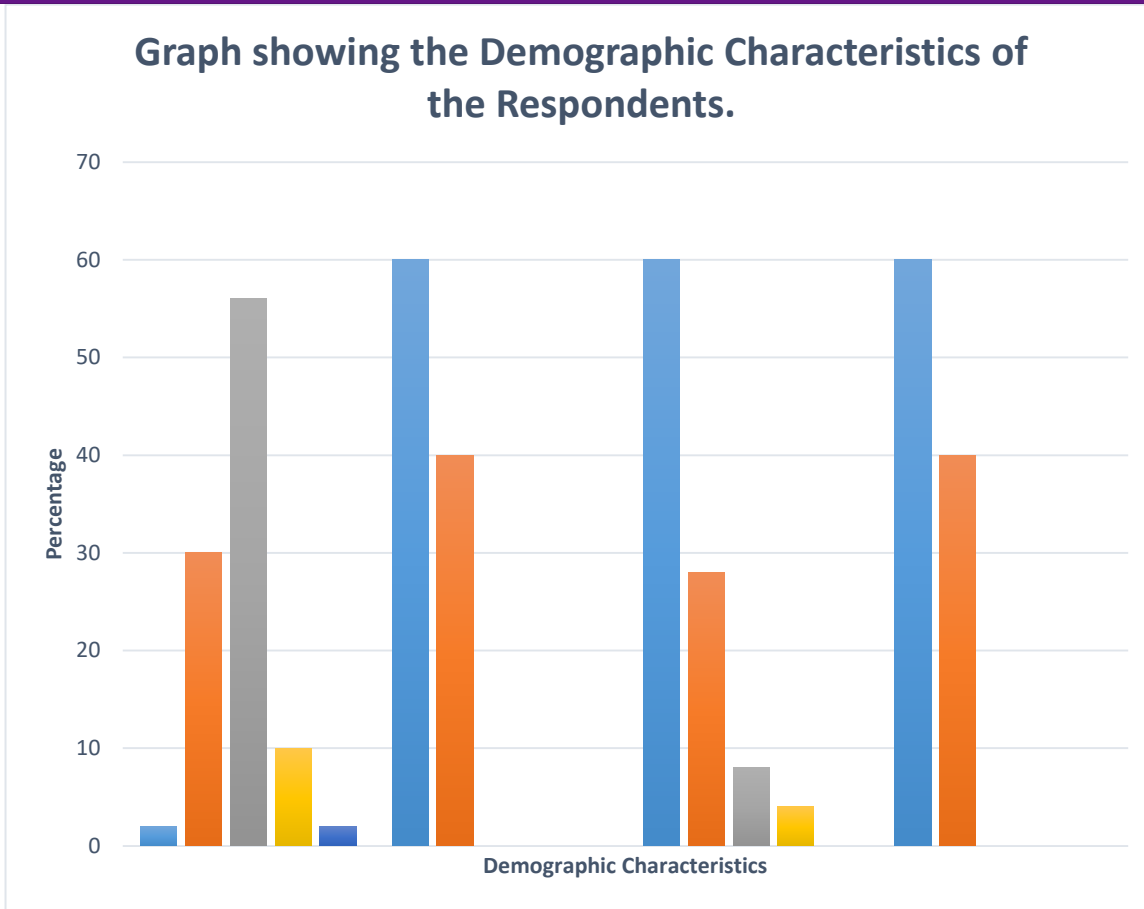
Table 4 shows gender distribution of respondents.

Category	Males	Females	Percentage
Political leaders	10	10	20%
Local government civil servants	10	8	20%
Officials from the ministry of education	10	2	20%
The local masses or the beneficiaries of kakumiro	20	10	40%
Total 80	**50**	**30**	**100%**

Source: Primary data

As seen in the table above, the sample was comprised of 40% of the local populace or beneficiaries in the kakumiro district local government, 20% of the staff members of the local government of the district, 20% of the staff members of the ministry of finance, and 20% of the officials of the ministry of local government. By using a case study of the kakumiro district local government, this meant that the sample is sufficiently representative and may be used to offer informed data on the relationship between peer pressure and early marriages in Uganda.

 Figure 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Graph showing the Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents.

The table illustrates the age and gender distribution of the respondents. Most of the respondents were males while there were also female participants in the study. The males constituted 60% of the study while 40% of the respondents were women. The majority of the respondents were in the age bracket 31 to 40 followed by those between 21 to 30 years of age.

Types/forms of decentralization in Uganda

Table 5 shows the different forms or sources of taxes collected under decentralization in Uganda in kakumiro district local government

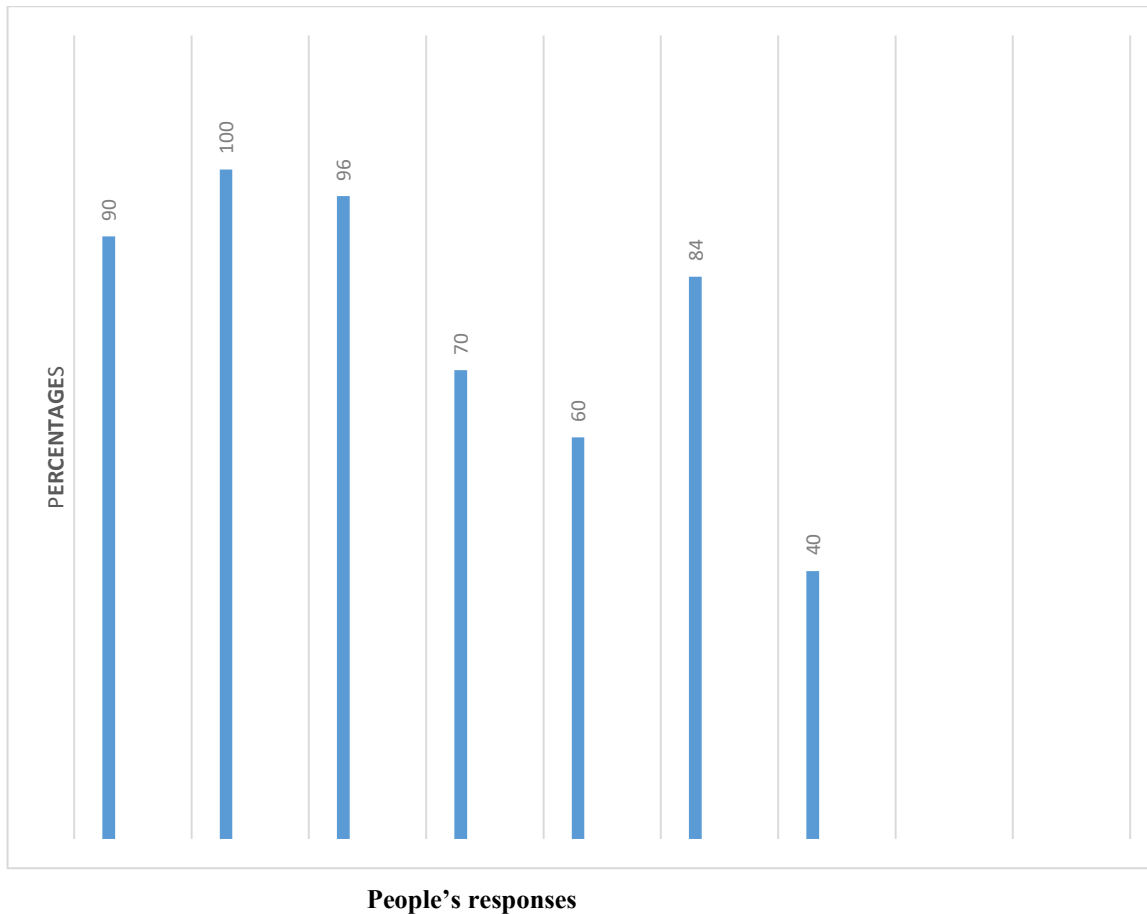| S/no	Type or source of revenue	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Grants from central government	60	70
2	Property tax/rate, market dues, licenses and fees	30	25
3	Donations and loans	10	05

Source: Survey

According to the above data, the central government provides payments to the local government of the Kakumiro district, both unconditional and conditional grants. This contributes for 70% of the district's overall revenue. Conditional grants are funds provided to the district to support certain activities, whereas unconditional grants are funds given to support any activity that the district authorities deem appropriate.

Locally, the district only receives 30% of its revenue, and this is attributed, among other things, to low tax compliance and a small tax base.

Loans and donations. Furthermore, the district receives some contributions from organizations like private citizens and non-governmental groups with the financial clout to give anything, including cash. Here is however, the least source of district revenue standing at only 10% as represented in the table above.

Figure 2 shows the responses of the respondents on whether peer pressure leads to early marriages among the school going children.

People's responses

Source: survey

The graph indicates that all interviewees (100%) knew there were early marriages in the society. 90% of respondents are strongly concur that peer pressure and early marriages in the Kakumiro district are strongly related. 96% of participants agree that peer pressure, which pushes youth into early marriages, poses a serious threat to society. 70% of the respondents recognized that peer pressure had forced them into their youthful marriages. In additional to peer pressure, 30% of the respondents said that other forces forced them into young marriages.

Table 6 shows how the respondents opinionated on whether peer pressure leads to early marriages among the school going children

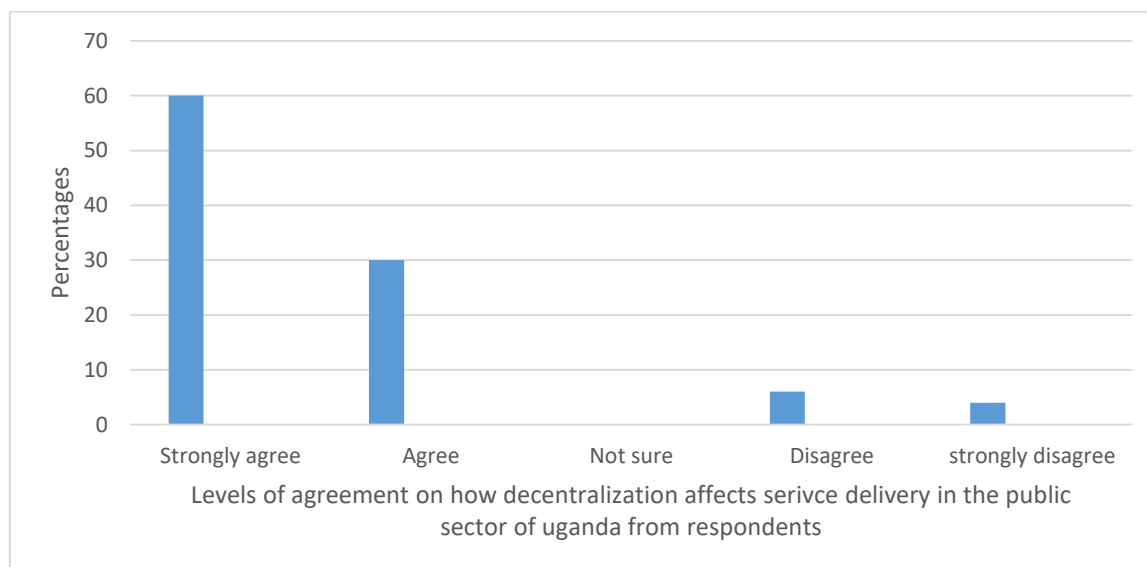| Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	30	60
Agree	15	30

Not sure	0	0%
Disagree	3	6
Strongly disagree	2	4
Total	**50**	**100**

Source: Primary data

According to the above table, the majority of respondents (60%) strongly agreed that peer pressure and early marriage among school-age children are closely connected; 30% of respondents agreed that peer pressure creates early marriage among school-age children; 6% of respondents disagreed that peer pressure causes early marriages by citing other reasons; and 4% disagreed strongly that peer pressure cannot lead to early marriages. This suggests that peer pressure and early marriages typically have a high and close link, which strongly supports the need for efficient and effective institutionalized government interventions. This implies that on the average, there is a strong and close correlation between peer pressure and early marriages which strongly calls for efficient and effective government institutionalized policies. This is most likely to curb the vice so to meet the objectives of the education policy of Uganda.

Figure 3 shows whether peer pressure leads to early marriages among the school going children

Source: primary data

From the graph above, it can be seen that the majority of respondents strongly agreed (60%) that peer pressure and early marriage among school-age children are positively intertwined, 30% of respondents agreed that peer pressure causes early marriage among school-age children, 6% of respondents disagreed that peer pressure causes early marriages by citing other reasons, and 4% disagreed strongly that peer pressure cannot cause early marriages. This demonstrates that peer pressure and early marriages generally have a high and close link, which strongly supports the need for efficient and effective institutionalized government interventions. This will probably just stop the vice in order to meet.

Table 7 shows other factors that lead to early marriages among the school going children in kakumiro district local government

Factors that lead to early marriages	Male	Female	Frequency	Percentage
Poverty	20	20	48	40

Closure of schools due to the pandemic	2	5	02	30
Tradition	4	4		10
Religion	4	3		10
Ineffective child laws and policies	**10**	**6**	**50**	**05**
Child neglect by parents	**5**	**4**		**05**

Source: Primary data

According to the results in the table above, 20 men and 20 women agreed that there are other factors beyond peer pressure that cause early marriages among school-age children in the kakumiro district local government. Then came these: According to the statistics in the table above, parents often marry off their daughters in exchange for bride price when they are poor, which is why early marriages are so common. This received support from 20 men and 20 women respondents, totalling 40%. Further research showed that education cuts were a major contributor to early marriages since they resulted in the automatic dropout from school of many pregnant teenagers. The response rate for this was 30%. Due to some cultures' encouragement of early marriage and denial of education to the girl youngsters in favor of the boys, tradition has indeed been pointed to as another factor contributing to school dropout. 10% of people have responded to it. Children as young as 14 are sometimes forced into early marriages by religions like Islam. Ineffective laws and policies of government were cited to be another cause since the authorities are reluctant to punish the perpetrators, there is a high rate of early marriages among school-age youngsters. Teenagers are believed to enter early marriages for a wide range of reasons, include childhood abuse, especially for girls. This is because of the absence of parental supervision and care. 05% of the total responses were given to this. Out of the 40 respondents in the sample, these people were chosen, indicating that 96% of them replied and only 4% could not be reached. According to the survey, just 40% of respondents were women, while 60% of respondents were men. There was a reasonable distribution of replies by gender, indicating that there was little prejudice in the selection procedure.

Table 8 shows the remedies to the factors that lead to early marriages in kakumiro district local government.
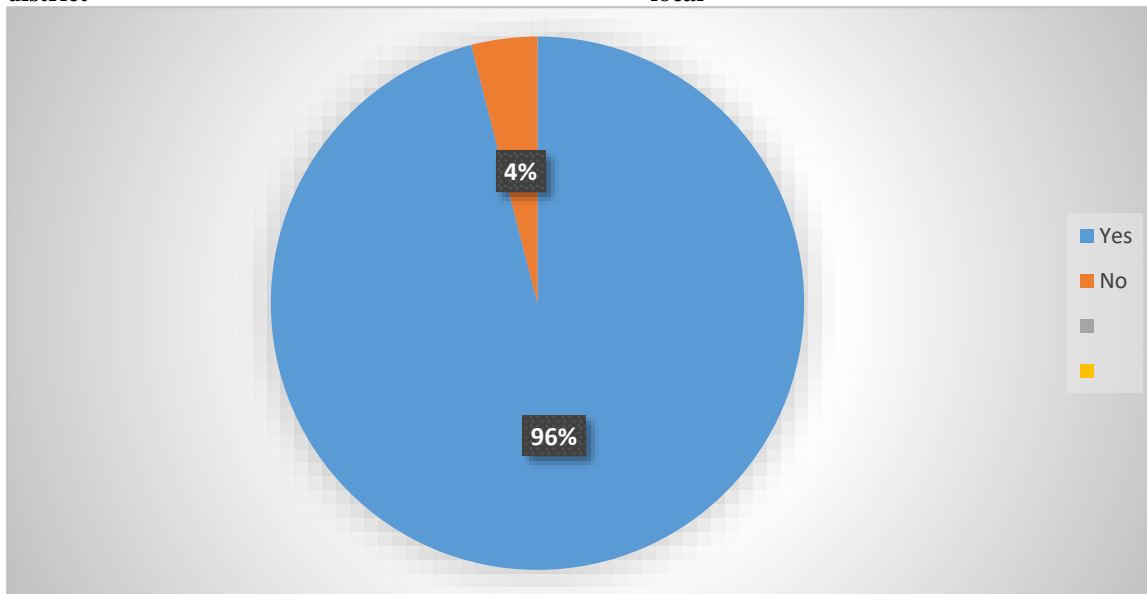
Remedies	Male	Female	Frequency	Percentage
Increased government funding for poverty eradication projects	20	20	48	40
Opening of education institutions for children to study	2	5	02	30
Change of attitude of the parents and teenagers through civic education or sensitization	4	4		10
Effective laws and policies against early marriages	4	3		10

Strong political and administrative will	**10**	**6**	**50**	**05**
Enacting laws against child neglect	**5**	**4**		**05**

Source: Primary data

According to the results in the table above, 96% of respondents agreed and recommended that the government increase the allocated resources to fight poverty in order to prevent parents from selling their daughters as marriages. Thus, 40% of the responses were indicated. The elimination of this sin depends on strong political and administrative leadership. 0.5% of the responses from various respondents indicate that it is. The results shown in table above also show that 30% of the respondents condemned their early marriages on their parents' and teenagers' unfavourable attitudes. Through civic education and sensitization on the risks of early marriages and the benefits of education, this should be avoided. 05% of the respondents advocate for strong and effective laws and policies to counteract early marriages and child neglect as well as forced early marriages. The laws existing are already effective and not enforced accordingly.

Figure 4 shows the relationship between peer pressure and early marriages among the school going children in kakumiro district   local   government.

From the table and pie chart above, the findings show that 96% of the respondents agreed that there is a close correlation between peer pressure and early marriages in Uganda and kakumiro district local government as respondents have revealed. Only 4% of the respondents were not sure and objected citing other varying reasons as shown in the tables above. This however, does not distort the fact that peer pressure is the leading cause of early marriages in the kakumiro district local government.

Conclusions

Basing on the study findings, the researcher has drawn the following conclusions as follows;

That political decentralization, which takes the form of devolution in which semi-autonomous administrative units are created and political responsibilities are transferred to them, is one of the frequent types of decentralization in Uganda and kakumiro in particular. Second, there is administrative decentralization, whereby local governments are handed responsibility over the delivery of services through delegation. Thirdly, fiscal decentralization, which grants lower entities like towns, municipalities, and smaller localities the power to collect local taxes in order to finance the program's various activities. This is due to the fact that each and every study participant who was able to provide information was able to do so. According to the research authors, all respondents are aware that peer pressure exists and that it encourages education youngsters to get married and have children. The study further concluded that local governments face a variety of difficulties, including political interference, insufficient provision that limits there own ability to carry out their mandate, unfavorable client behavior that results in tax evasion, a serious financial threat to the authority's operational processes, an undesirable legal environment that is sufficiently dissuasive, and the issue of poor intergovernmental relations. In the kakumiro district local government, the study found that 96% of respondents thought that peer pressure and early marriages are closely related, and only 4% disagreed.

Recommendations

Basing on the study findings as well as study conclusions, the researcher recommends the following;

The government should avail enough resources to enable the success of the implementation of the education programs in kakumiro district local government.

The government should facilitate fully all agencies involved in the education and hasten the fight against peer pressure as well as fighting early marriages for efficient monitoring and supervision including civil society so as to harmonize their efforts and initiatives towards the fight against the vice. Massive sensitization should be reinforced so as to enable clients change their mindset and desist from bad attitudes that promote early marriages. There should be strong political and administrative will to fight the vice of early marriages among the school going children by the district leadership. Effective and deterrent laws as well as strong enforcement should be ensured so as to deter failure of all the efforts against early marriages.

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