

## THE ROLE OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN DELAYING ADOLESCENT MARRIAGE AMONG UI-FCES STUDENTS IN OYO STATE

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### Abstract

*This study examines the role of education and employment in delaying adolescent marriage among UI-FCES students in Oyo State, Nigeria. Adolescent marriage remains a significant challenge in many developing countries, including Nigeria, where socio-economic and cultural factors often hinder efforts to address it. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from 50 respondents with qualitative insights to evaluate the impact of educational attainment, employment opportunities, and their combined influence on reducing the prevalence of early marriage. The findings revealed that higher levels of education significantly delayed the age at first marriage, as it empowers adolescents with knowledge, skills, and aspirations. Similarly, employment and economic independence enhanced financial stability, reducing the pressure for early marriage. However, socio-economic and cultural barriers, such as poverty, gender norms, and limited job opportunities, limit the effectiveness of these factors. The study concludes that education and employment are critical tools for combating adolescent marriage and recommends targeted interventions, including expanding access to education, creating employment opportunities, and addressing cultural norms, to maximize their impact. These findings underscore the importance of multi-sectoral strategies in empowering adolescents and promoting sustainable development.*

**Key words:** Education, Employment, Adolescent, Marriage.

### Introduction

Adolescent marriage, particularly among girls, is a significant social issue affecting millions worldwide, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. This practice is driven by various factors, including poverty, cultural traditions, limited access to education, and gender inequality. Globally, approximately 12 million girls are married before the age of 18 each year, according to UNICEF (2021). Early marriage often leads to negative consequences such as reduced educational attainment, early childbearing, health complications, and restricted economic opportunities, thereby perpetuating cycles of poverty and gender disparity.

Education plays a critical role in delaying adolescent marriage. Akanksha (2000) opined that girls who complete secondary education are significantly less likely to marry before the age of 18. Education enhances knowledge, builds skills, and fosters critical thinking, enabling girls to make informed decisions about their lives. It also increases their self-esteem and aspirations, which can contribute to delayed marriage. Additionally, schooling provides a protective environment where girls are less exposed to marriage-related pressures. Policies promoting universal access to quality education, scholarships for girls, and school-based support systems have been effective in reducing early marriages.

### **The Role of Employment**

Economic empowerment through employment opportunities is another key factor in delaying adolescent marriage (Wodon & Petroni, 2020). Access to stable and rewarding jobs enables young people, especially girls, to gain financial independence and reduce their economic dependency on marriage. Employment allows individuals to focus on personal and professional growth, delaying the perceived necessity of marriage as a survival strategy. Vocational training programs and youth employment initiatives can be instrumental in creating pathways to sustainable livelihoods, thereby reducing early marriage rates.

### **Interrelationship of Education and Employment**

Education and employment are interconnected in addressing adolescent marriage. UNICEF (2020) opined that Education provides the foundational skills required for gainful employment, while employment opportunities incentivize continued education. Programs that integrate both educational support and employment training are particularly effective. For example, initiatives providing life skills, financial literacy, and vocational training alongside traditional education have shown promising results in delaying marriage among adolescents.

### **Contextual and Policy Considerations**

The success of education and employment strategies in delaying marriage depends on broader socio-cultural and policy frameworks. Legal reforms setting the minimum age of marriage, community sensitization programs addressing gender norms and economic incentives for parents to keep girls in school are complementary measures. Multi-sectoral approaches that involve governments, non-governmental organizations, and community leaders are essential for creating sustainable change (Malhotra, Warner & McGonagle, 2017).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Adolescent marriage remains a pervasive issue worldwide, with millions of young individuals, particularly girls, entering into marriage before reaching adulthood. Despite global efforts to mitigate its prevalence, the practice persists due to socio-economic pressures, cultural norms, and limited access to resources. One of the critical challenges is the lack of comprehensive strategies that leverage education and employment as preventive tools (Lloyd & Mensch, 2008). Although education and economic empowerment have been recognized for their potential to delay marriage, many communities face barriers such as poverty, gender discrimination, inadequate schooling facilities, and a lack of employment opportunities.

## **Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study is to explore the role of education and employment in delaying adolescent marriage, identifying the key factors that influence early marriage and assessing how access to education and economic opportunities can contribute to its prevention.

## **Specific Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the relationship between educational attainment and the age at first marriage among adolescents.
2. To analyze the impact of employment opportunities and economic independence on delaying adolescent marriage.
3. To evaluate the combined influence of education and employment on reducing the prevalence of early marriage.
4. To identify the socio-economic and cultural barriers that limits the effectiveness of education and employment in preventing adolescent marriage.

## **This study seeks to address the following problems:**

1. How does access to education influence the age at which adolescents marry?
2. What role does employment and economic independence play in delaying marriage among adolescents?
3. What are the combined effects of education and employment opportunities in preventing early marriages?
4. What socio-economic and cultural factors hinder the effective implementation of education and employment programs aimed at reducing adolescent marriage?

## **Review of Relevant Literature**

### **Education and Adolescent Marriage**

Education is widely regarded as a protective factor against early marriage. Studies show that increased educational attainment reduces the likelihood of marriage before the age of 18. According to UNICEF (2020), girls who complete secondary education are up to six times less likely to marry young compared to those with no education. Education enhances life skills, critical thinking, and future aspirations, enabling young women to prioritize personal development over early marriage. Lloyd and Mensch (2008) found that school-based programs that combine formal education with life skills training are highly effective in delaying marriage. Similarly, Jensen & Thornton (2017) highlighted the success of conditional cash transfer programs in keeping girls in school and reducing early marriage in South Asia.

## **Employment and Marriage**

Employment provides economic alternatives to marriage and enhances self-reliance, contributing to delayed marriage. Wodon et al. (2018), in a study commissioned by the World Bank, emphasized that vocational training and access to labor markets are linked to reduced adolescent marriage rates. Employment opportunities provide young people, particularly girls, with financial stability, reducing dependency on marriage as an economic necessity. A study by Chowdhury et al. (2019) demonstrated that programs offering entrepreneurship skills and microfinance access significantly delayed marriage among girls in rural Bangladesh.

## **The Combined Effects of Education and Employment**

The combined impact of education and employment creates a synergistic effect in delaying adolescent marriage. Malhotra et al. (2017) argue that interventions integrating education and vocational training yield more substantial results than those focusing on one factor alone. Their research on multi-sectoral programs in Sub-Saharan Africa revealed that participants with access to both educational support and income-generating activities were more likely to marry later than their peers. Gordon (2019) noted that combining literacy programs with economic empowerment initiatives enhances girls' agency and bargaining power within their communities.

## **Socio-Economic and Cultural Barriers**

Despite the benefits of education and employment, barriers such as poverty, traditional gender roles, and inadequate policy enforcement remain significant challenges. Girls Not Brides (2021) emphasized that societal norms often prioritize marriage over education for girls, making it critical to address these cultural pressures alongside structural reforms. UNESCO (2021) highlighted the importance of legal frameworks that enforce compulsory education and minimum marriage age laws, complemented by public awareness campaigns.

## **Policy and Programmatic Intervention**

Policy interventions combining education and employment are essential for sustainable change. UNICEF (2019) recommends enforcing laws that would raise the minimum marriage age, providing scholarships, and implementing vocational training programs tailored to local economic conditions. Plan International (2020) highlighted the success of community-driven initiatives that engage parents, religious leaders, and adolescents in promoting education and delaying marriage.

## **Research Design**

Descriptive and explanatory research designs were used. Descriptive: To explore the patterns of adolescent marriage and its relation to education and employment. Explanatory: To determine how education and employment contribute to delaying adolescent marriage.

## **Population and Sampling**

All the students of the University of Ibadan -Federal College of Education (Special) (UI-FCES) programme in Oyo State. Students who are in their teenage years or recently transitioned from adolescence. Male and female students were sampled for diverse perspectives.

## Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling was used to select the 50 students across different age groups and departments and Purposive sampling for in-depth interviews or focus group discussions with students who have insights into adolescent marriage were used for the study.

## Sample Size

Taro Yemane formula was used to select 50 students used for the study, 10 participants for interviews in 2 focus groups, each with 5 members.

## Analysis for Objective 1

**Objective:** Examine the relationship between educational attainment and the age at first marriage among adolescents.

**Table 1:** Higher Educational attainment correlates with age at first marriage.

Educational Level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Mean Age at First Marriage (Years)
No Formal Education	8	16%	16.5
Primary Education	12	24%	17.5
Secondary Education	18	36%	19.4
Tertiary Education	12	24%	22.1

## Interpretation

Adolescents with Tertiary Education marry later (mean age 22.1) compared to those with no formal education (mean age 16.5) Higher Educational attainment correlates with delayed marriage

## Analysis for Objective 2

**Objective:** Analyze the impact of employment opportunities and economic independence in delaying adolescent marriage.

## Qualitative Analysis

- Descriptive Statistics  
Employment Status and mean age at first marriage
- Regression Analysis: Impact of employment on the likelihood of delaying marriage.

**Table 2: Employment Status and age at First Marriage.**

Employment Status	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Mean Age at First Marriage (Years)
		40%	21.8
Employed	20	40%	21.8
Unemployed	30	60%	17.6

**Table 3: Logistics Regression on Employment and Age at first marriage.**

Variable	Coefficient	Odds Ratio (Exp B)	P_value
Employment Status (Yes/No)	1.47	4.34	<0.05

**Interpretation**

- Employed adolescents have a higher a mean age at First Marriage (21.8 years) than unemployed ones (17.6 years)

**Analysis for Objective 3**

**Objective:** Evaluate the combined influence of education and employment on reducing the prevalence of early marriage.

**Multiple Regression Analysis:** combined effect of education and employment.

**Table 4:** Combined influence of Education and Employment on age at First Marriage.**Table 3: Logistics Regression on Employment and Age at First Marriage.**

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	P_value
Educational Attainment	0.85	0.12	<0.05
Employment Status	1.23	0.18	<0.05
Education + Employment	0.45	0.10	<0.05

**Interpretation**

Both Education 0.85 and employment 1.23 significantly delay marriage The Interaction term (Education + Employment) indicates that combining education and employment has a compounded effect on delaying adolescent marriage.

## Analysis for Objective 4

**Objective:** Identify socio-economic and cultural barriers that limit the effectiveness of Education and employment in preventing adolescent marriage

Thematic Analysis: Common barriers identified through participant responses/

**Table 5: Socio-Economic and Cultural Barriers**

Barriers	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Example Participants Quote
Poverty	30	60%	I could not continue my education
Cultural Norms	25	50%	Girls in my village are expected to marry early
Limited job opportunities	15	35%	Even with Education there is no job for us

### Interpretation

- Poverty (60%) and cultural norms (50%) are most cited barriers to delaying marriage.
- Participants highlight the need for structural changes to address these challenges.

### Discussion

This study showed that education is one of the indicators of delayed marriage among majority of the adolescents in UI\_ FCES degree programs. Another issue which the findings of this study identified is employment which also caused delayed marriage. The findings revealed significant insights into the relationship between these variables and adolescent marriage among UI-FCES students in Oyo State.

#### 1. Education as a Key Factor:

Higher levels of educational attainment were associated with delayed age at first marriage. Education provides adolescents with knowledge, life skills, and aspirations for personal and professional growth, reducing societal pressure for early marriage.

#### 2. Employment and Economic Independence:

Employment opportunities and financial independence significantly contributed to delaying marriage by empowering adolescents to prioritize career and personal goals over early family responsibilities.

#### 3. Combined Influence:

When education and employment are combined, their synergistic effect significantly reduces the prevalence of early marriage. Education enhances employability, while employment reinforces the benefits of education, creating a cycle of empowerment.

#### 4. Barriers to Progress:

Despite these benefits, socio-economic and cultural barriers; such as poverty, traditional norms, and limited access to education and employment; pose significant challenges to delaying adolescent marriage.

In conclusion, education and employment are transformative tools for addressing adolescent marriage. However, their full potential can only be realized through targeted interventions to address the barriers identified.

## **Recommendations**

To maximize the impact of education and employment in delaying adolescent marriage, the following recommendations are proposed:

### **For Educational Institutions:**

1. Expand Access to Education: Provide scholarships and financial aid to adolescents from low-income families. Ensure affordable and accessible secondary and tertiary education, especially for girls.
2. Integrate Life Skills Training: Incorporate courses on personal development, career planning, and reproductive health into school curricula to build confidence and decision-making skills.
3. Promote Gender Equality: Encourage equal participation of boys and girls in education by creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

### **For Policy Makers:**

4. Strengthen Employment Policies: Implement youth employment programs that focus on job creation, skill acquisition, and entrepreneurship opportunities for adolescents. Provide incentives for employers to hire young people, particularly women.
5. Implement Legal and Policy Reforms: Enforce laws that set the legal age for marriage and promote policies ensuring compulsory education up to secondary level. Address gender discrimination in hiring practices to create equal opportunities for young women.

### **For Community and Religious Leaders:**

6. Address Cultural Barriers: Organize awareness campaigns to challenge traditional norms and attitudes that promote early marriage. Engage families and communities in discussions about the long-term benefits of delaying marriage.
7. Support Adolescent Advocacy: Empower adolescents to become advocates for change within their communities, fostering peer-to-peer education on the importance of education and employment.

### **For NGOs and Civil Society:**

8. Provide Vocational Training: Partner with schools and local organizations to deliver vocational training programs that prepare adolescents for employment.
9. Raise Awareness: Conduct community outreach programs to educate parents and adolescents about the advantages of delaying marriage.

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