

Why do Early Marriages cause problems in Leikor Archdeaconry (ECSS&S) and how should the Church deal with this issue?

[Abridged for the College website by Rev. Jacob Haasnoot]

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Requirement for Diploma in Theology

Date of Submission: 18 September 2014

Acknowledgement

The success of this research was in the effort and guidance of my supervisor Rev. Jacob Haasnoot who worked tirelessly with me throughout the course of data collection and compilation.

I thank the College Administration especially the Academic Dean Rev. Fred Taban for tirelessly encouraging us and provided the format for the draft proposal, and the College Principal for encouraging us throughout the course of our three years study to uplift the standard in the County, State and the Country at large-the Republic of South Sudan.

Special thanks also goes to all those I have contacted and helped me in one way or another during my endeavour to gather and compile this research paper. All pastors who directed me to my respondents and beneficiaries in their Parish areas, all my family members especially my brother Mr John Lo'boka Lu'bajo and mother Monica Poni Lu'bajo for encouraging and supporting me during my initial education.

Finally, my regards go to all the respondents and beneficiaries for giving me their time by attending to my call for their materials and enabled me compile the data collected from various areas of parishes in Leikor Archdeaconry.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my wife Mrs. Cecilia Pita Loguli and my children who supported me materially and spiritually during the course of this study making it a success.

Abstract

This study was carried out to investigate the effect of early marriage on people of Leikor Archdeaconry, Diocese of Kajo-Keji County in the Republic of South Sudan.

The Archdeaconry suffered during the seventeen years civil war (1983-2005) between Northern and

Southern Sudan when its people were scattered in the bushes others in exile which ended in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Kenya, and the study dwells to achieve the following four objectives:

1. To find out why children take to early marriage in Leikor Archdeaconry.
2. To find out the rate of early marriage and its effects.
3. To find out the current solutions on use by different bodies.
4. To try find some preventive measures and possible solutions.

I used a descriptive research design with a total population of thirty two (32) persons; respondents comprising of local leaders, Church leaders, civil servants from government and local community based organizations (CBOs) and beneficiaries who are child couples. The data was collected by use of questionnaires in personal interviews with individuals and one group discussion.

The major results indicated the existence of early marriage in Leikor Archdeaconry within the 15 to 17 years old age group due to generational change influenced by peer group pressure and alcoholism. It resulted in early pregnancies (especially in primary schools), sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and separations. Many suggestions are recommended to reduce the rate of early marriage and the most effective is the involvement of parents and the government coherently. The study recommended the government to lead the struggle to reduce the rate of early marriage otherwise, the rate of sexually transmitted infections like HIV/AIDS would increase in the whole County and affect the development of Kajo-Keji County in general as the future of our country depends on the current teenagers who are mostly the victims of early marriage.

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This paper outlines the purpose of this research on why do Early Marriages cause problems in Leikor Archdeaconry (ECSS&S) and how should the Church deal with this issue.

1.1 Background to the Study

I do this research on Early Marriage because many children are marrying from unanticipated young age of 15 years old in Leikor Archdeaconry and are becoming a problem unless serious measures for intervention are taken to rescue the situation. Some preventive solutions in place are ineffective and I want to trace more facts on the ground and discover amicable solutions.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Marriage of children especially between the ages of 15 to 17 years is becoming a disaster as few marry from the adult age of 18 to 25 and the smallest number from 26 years and above. This is due to the civil war that many children were born and grew up in displaced camps or bushes within the country and in refugee camps without proper upbringing culturally as well as the changing generational world order. I strive to discover reasons motivating them to marry before the required age and how the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan could deal with this issue in finding effective holistic solutions such

as mass educational awareness on early marriage to address the ignorance on effects and impact of Early Marriage in Leikor Archdeaconry.

1.3 Significance

This study would be significant to the following people. The community uses the information for educating their children. The Government creates awareness on how rampant the practice of early marriage is in the community and benefits all children and parents where they have gone wrong and what they are supposed to do. Youth would become knowledgeable on effects and work out ways to reduce early marriage. Community Leaders create positive activities in which children would engage. Teachers become drivers of information delivery to youth and children in general. Religious Leaders preach against the practice of early marriage. Other researchers use these findings for further exploration.

1.4 Scope

This study was carried out on people of Leikor Archdeaconry Diocese of Kajo-Keji County bordered by Kiri, Logu and Lire Archdeaconries. The County borders other counties namely: Morobo and Yei in the West, Lainya and Juba in the North in Central Equatoria State, Magwi of Eastern Equatoria State in the East and, Moyo and Yumbe Districts of Uganda in the South.

Leikor Archdeaconry is characterised by lowland in the West and hilly ranges to the East. It is inhabited by the Kuku tribe with many clans who are mainly subsistence farmers with life stock rearing majorly cattle, goats and sheep. They grow maize, cassava, beans and groundnuts as main crops with annual crops like sweet potatoes and sorghum. Youth take part in recreational activities such as football games, spiritual seminars and conferences.

This study covers the period between 1983 and 2013 because this was the period when the problem of early marriage became crucial. This has involved research on data of marriages between 15 to 17 years, 18 to 25 years and from 26 years and above in establishing the percentages I have chosen this Archdeaconry among others and limit my conclusions to it because I think it is the area most affected by the problem of early marriage.

1.5 Methodology

Research design involved a questionnaire (see Appendix) with face to face contact in interviewing thirty two (32) individual elders, Church leaders, child couples and one group of child couples in vernacular and civil servants in English at their homes, Churches and other locations respectively.

Some of the data was gathered from internet and books on Early Marriage and marriage in general (See References).

The study sample as representative population for data collection included respondents both adult males and females who are Church leaders comprising of clergy and laity, community elders, civil servants selected from government institutions and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and, beneficiaries

who are victims of early marriage both couples who separated and those still a family selected from six parishes within the Archdeaconry.

Clear explanation of the ethical issues was taken care of in the introduction. Their permission was sought and obtained clearance and consent from the respondents and beneficiaries for better bilateral understanding and smooth discussion which went without hindrance.

1.6 Definition of key concepts

Marriage is the formal union of a man and a woman by which they become husband and wife whereas early is before usual or expected time (Soanes 2001 p 533).

Early Marriage, also known as child marriage, is defined as “any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, physiologically and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and child bearing”. It involves one or both spouses being children and may take place with or without formal registration or customary laws (Bayisenge, UNICEF 2001:2).

African tradition in this context means the African way of passing on of customs or beliefs from one generation to another generation.

Child Couples here means children both males and females who are married and became parents before the age of 18 years.

Rampant in this context means the large numbers of child marriages taking place extensively in the Archdeaconry.

Respondents in this context are those elders from whom some facts were collected on marriage in general and early marriages in particular meeting them individually in their respective locations.

Beneficiaries are those child couples met individually and as a group and got facts about their marriages and other children who might fall into the snare of early marriage and benefit from the suggestions as preventive measures and solutions acquired in this research.

Cultural in this context means relating to the culture of a particular society/community in a given location, in which beliefs are different and activities performed differently.

Understanding in this context refers to private discussions on love affairs between a boy and a girl which may lead to sexual activity and pregnancy or marriage without involving anybody.

CHAPTER TWO: Present situation

2.0 Introduction

Chapter two analyzes what is currently happening throughout the world looking at some researchers who have pointed fingers at early marriage in the internet and books.

It as well hints on performance of early marriage in Leikor Archdeaconry summarizing the current mode of dating children call “understanding” resulting to pregnancy without consent of parents from both sides. It continues to elaborate on types of marriages, advantages and disadvantages, factors and causes of early marriage, early marriage itself, rate, effects and their impacts, coping strategies and relational marriage.

2.1 Review of the Literature

2.1.1 Early Marriage in African Traditional Religion

Bayisenge states that in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the most comprehensive International bill of rights for women, that any marriage of a child should not have any legal status. The committee monitoring this convention states that the minimum age of marriage for both males and females should be 18 years, the age when they have fully matured and capable of acting in their own capacity. (Bayisenge, UNICEF 2001:4 Rwanda).

Early marriage also known as child marriage is linked with other child rights such as the right to express their views freely, the right to protection from all forms of abuse, and the right to protection from harmful traditional practices which the committee on the rights of a child frequently addresses (Bayisenge 2001 p1).

In the African context early marriages according to Demographic Health Survey (DHS) data of some Sahelian countries, African women marry much earlier compared to their Non-African counterparts leading to earlier pregnancies and motherhood. The 1992 survey indicated 47% of women aged between 20 and 24 were married in Niger before the age of 15 and 87% before the age of 18. Thus, Niger ranks the first with 77%, Ethiopia in the middle with 49% and South Africa the least with 8%.

Bayisenge continues that 40% and 49% of girls under the age of 19 years in Central and West Africa respectively are married compared to 47% in East Africa and 20% in Northern and Southern Africa. Throughout the world marriage is regarded as a moment of celebration and a milestone in adult life. But sadly to say, the practice of early marriage gives no such cause for celebration. The imposition of marriage partner upon a child means that a girl or boy's childhood is shortened and their significant mental rights are compromised. Young girls are robbed of their youth and required to take on role for which they are not psychologically or physically prepared according to 2001 data (p 4).

Some factors identified which are almost similar worldwide with little variation in various societies placing girls at risk of early marriage include a search for economic survival, protection of young girls, peer group and family pressure, wars and civil conflicts, maximization of fertility where infant mortality is very high. Child marriage varies according to region and across countries. Major influencing factors in child marriage rates include the country's state of civil registration system providing prove of age for children, existence of and, adequate legislative framework with enforcement mechanism and existence of customary or religious laws that regulate the practice.

Marriages of 15-19 years old girls are in rural areas rather than in urban areas e.g. in Eritrea 10% in urban areas compared to 45% in rural areas. More girls marry young in 20% of the poorest families compared to 20% richest families; this is seen across countries and regions. Few girls who had attended primary school marry young compared to those who had not received education. Girls aged 15-19 years old with children are more likely to be married than girls without children (Bayisenge, UNICEF 2005:12).

2.1.2 Reasons for Early Marriage in Africa

- Bayisenge says poverty ranks high in most African countries and a girl marries especially to elderly man for socio-economic reason to earn cash for food or cattle to the groom's family as bride price.
- In the traditional societies, child marriage as part of the clue to infant mortality helped to maximize the number of pregnancies and ensure enough surviving children. Girls marry to produce children to increase number of children for labour to produce its own food in the family to cater for some of the African Agricultural climatic conditions like draught, soil infertility, pests and other political factors like instability consequential from civil conflicts or national wars.
- Poor families marry off their girls at the same time to reduce burden of high marriage ceremony expenses as most African communities recompense dowry designed for their male children.
- Socio-cultural and Religious Values: The UNIFPA survey data of 2006 indicates that communities with high rate of early marriage have strong social pressure on families which forces them to submit otherwise, it results to disapproval or shame to these families. Likewise, the requirement of ideal age for marriage, desire for submissive wives, extended family patterns and other customary requirements are controlled by local customs or religious norms.
- In some societies patriarchy and other related structures legitimize child marriage and other related family structures which ensure that marriage transfers father's role to his girl child and her future spouse.
- Some parts of Africa and Asia value child marriages as a consolidating powerful factor on relationships between families, sealing deals over land or other property as well as settling disputes (UNIFPA 2006).
- An Ethiopian Orthodox Church Priest according to Barnes et al of 1998 data supports early marriage as being the best, he argued that these days with Western ideas spreading everywhere, girls stay unmarried as late as 30 which is very scientific and modern, but in their Church it is prohibited, such girls are neither clean nor blessed.
- In relation to value of virginity and protection of young girls, Early Marriage ensures that a wife is protected or placed firmly under her husband's control in the family, she is submissive to her husband and works hard for her in-laws' household and for legitimacy of children she bears. Some societies which value virginity before marriage support early marriage as a preventive measure against various sexual practices designed to protect girls from unacceptable sexual activity.
- Likewise parts of North East Africa and Middle East control practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) to restrict sexual pleasure and temptation. Some parents as well withdraw their girls from school on onset of menstruation with the fear of exposure to male pupils or teachers as a risk. All these are attempts to cover the girl from sexual attention but concerned

parents view marriage as a protective measure.

- It is a mechanism for Protection or Survival Strategy in wars and civil conflicts. Likewise parents marry off their daughters to warlords and other authorities in displaced or refugee camps to protect them from rape. Marriage is a solution to young girls, orphans and those separated from their parents or relatives (Ibid 2001:5).

2.1.3 Consequences of Early Marriage

Early Marriage encounters many consequences especially on the girl, the parents, and the community and on the nation as a whole where some of them are mentioned below:

- Early child bearing and unwanted pregnancies.
- Domestic violence and sexual abuse.
- High maternal mortality and morbidity.
- Increased risk of contracting Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV/AIDS.
- Powerlessness.

2.2 Data from Leikor Archdeaconry (based on interviews)

2.2.1 How Marriage is performed in Leikor Archdeaconry

Marriage in Leikor Archdeaconry was performed according to cultural norms which started by dating and continued through a systematic process of negotiation by parents on both sides until marriage. These united families by the marriage bond shared their positive and negative issues together such as celebrations or matters concerning sickness and death. They come together when couples have quarrels and they solve it amicably. But things have currently changed: dating and marriage are not carried out according to how it used to be in the early years.

2.2.2 Dating and Marriage

Dating being a social or romantic appointment is the major factor stabilizing marriages in Leikor Archdeaconry when well pondered or encourages Early Marriage if hurried. A lot of marriages break down today because people get married for wrong reasons. They view sexuality and dating originally from wrong corner and leads to dooming of their marriages. People have been brainwashed by humanist thoughts through sex education courses in public school system, rock music movies, novels and magazines. In all of these immorality is glorified and the Biblical moral of marriage ridiculed. We therefore need to resist the brainwashing by the world and set our minds on doing God's will (Morey 2003 p 299).

2.2.3. Types of Marriage

1. African Traditional or Cultural Marriage

African traditional marriage differs from tribe to tribe and recognized when parents of both boy and girl have agreed to marry themselves and celebration is done. In every culture and civilization marriages were arranged by the family in terms of social, economic, religious and political consideration. They

were established in tribal context without dating or courtship in these societies. No need to love or know the bride, only when time comes you experience marriage and could marry someone you hadn't seen because physical appearance or sexual appeal had nothing to do with marriage.

Marriage was well conducted at matured age above 26 years partly because it depended on parental wealth and wishes as boys had no access to socio-economic source. There was no early marriage for everything depended on customary norms and children adhered to parental wishes or punished by a taboo on breaking the norms.

2. Civil Marriage

Civil marriage is one performed by a District Secretary when couples vow and sign a marriage contract. Both couples must be with consent from their parents.

3. Christian Marriage (Religious)

Christian Marriage is monogamous of one wife to one husband who promise to be faithful until dead parts them. They should all be Christians with similar vision for their future. To get a suitable partner one should take serious consideration of backgrounds or ethnic, education or social positions. They pray for the Spirit to offer complete peace for the choice. Christian marriage was instituted and blessed by Jesus Christ in his first miracle at Cana of Galilee (Jn 2:1-11). It involves Christian morals and feasts where Paul said both husband and wife should fulfil their marital duties to each other as Christ did to his Church and gave himself up for her (1Cor 7:2,5; Eph 5:21-31) (COU Ed. Dept. 1993 p22).

2.2.4 Advantages of Marriage

There were a number of advantages on marriage:

- There was an adequate understanding between parents on both sides since children were under parental advice and directives.
- Children were guided by community and adhered to customary laws and norms of marriage though other families have a number of children due to polygamy.
- Dowry process was strongly followed by parents for their children where parents accepted marriage even with little dowry saying “lomeri toko a mere”, to mean little by little the dowry will be completed in future.
- Elders normally punished any child on misbehaviour by word or caning because they saw children generally as of one parent. Children respected any elder in the community and praised them for positive actions taken on their behalf for future betterment.
- Communities understood marriage dealings culturally and there were minimal misfortunes which were settled immediately on appearance.
- Sexual immorality was feared as immoral sin and “mönö” was punishable by death from an animal bite say a lion or even an insect sting.
- Parents on both sides rejected a village, boy or girl not of their wish as they first trace the backgrounds thoroughly before allowing marriage dealings to proceed and early marriage was

not allowed.

- There wasn't any migration to towns as of current where families move in search of economic opportunities and disasters such as hunger or war which exposes children to different cultural influences and environments.

2.2.5 Disadvantages of Marriage

There were some disadvantages on marriage as pointed below:

- Children had no voice and choice as they depended on their parents.
- Children had nowhere to search for private source of income for dowry.
- Parents chose and dated for their children and paid dowry not in consent of their children.
- Younger brothers or sisters were not allowed to marry or get married before their elders.

2.2.6 Early Marriage

Having defined the term early marriage previously and discussed on dating which if hurried to sex and marriage may lead to disaster in the family, including discussion on types of marriage used in Africa and most parts of the world for livelihood. We now turn our attention to our topic of interest: the early marriage.

Early Marriage in this context becomes the marriage entered into before maturity age of 18 years. Many children in Leikor Archdeaconry are marrying and being married at early puberty period especially girls between the ages of 15 to 18 years old. They go crazy as they befriend themselves meeting one to one wherever they may arrange mostly without mediators which they called "understanding" resulting to pregnancies and marriages. They meet in market places, dancing halls, on the ways and any gathering they could have a chance for discussion. Some of them use phone calls at their own time and location where some school authorities even fail to trace for those in education only discover with pregnancies. Such mode of dating makes most primary pupils difficult to excel in education including some of those in secondary level. It makes many children mostly girls have poor performances in their lessons or examination results, as well as in other outdoor activities because their thoughts are centred on or disturbed by their private talks with friends. Some boys and girls leave school for such relationship pressure, even if they wanted to continue but are pushed back. This results in many school dropouts from both primary and secondary levels.

"Understanding" is more effective with children in puberty or foolish age which starts early in the current generation and so are unable to persevere through leading to failure and positively yield to snare of sex as they wished. Although some children may want to persevere, the peers who have their sex friends and fallen into the trap become play mates, push a friend to accept the close relationship which may end up with negative results.

2.2.7 Causes of Early Marriage in Leikor

Currently, right from 1980s especially during the 21 years civil war between North and Southern Sudan which ended in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) Kenya in 2005, marriages in Leikor

Archdeaconry are not performed like was done before. There are national and international factors evoking the following different causes of Early Marriage in the current generation:

1. Generational development encourages active sexual activity where children befriend themselves without informing parents and at times arrange home visits to boyfriends leading to raping of the girls. Parents are surprised to see boys impregnate girls as young as 14 or 15 years old and are then escorted to them for marriage settlement.
2. Displacement by the civil war destroyed cultural norms in South Sudan and forced children to learn new foreign life styles and behaviours including alcohol consumption. Children take less consideration for ample time to study age, family background or behaviour of each other, traditional or customary laws are rendered valueless and no longer adhered to as many are immediately ineffective than before.
3. Introduction of Western cultures in video screens and instruments such as movies like dancing styles encourage awareness on sexual relations.
4. Availability of socio-economic sources like trading and employment enable children to have liberty and can travel to wherever they wished searching for their own income for dowry payment and have their own voice and choice.
5. Inadequate enforcement of civil laws by some government authorities for punishment of culprits disables enforcement of cultural laws by parents although other parents and schools do raise dust.
6. Child abuse due to inadequate provision of girls' scholastic requirements and children in general as others are orphans, used as chief labour and babysitters at homes, source of family economy.
7. Lack of guidance and counselling by parents and aunts on cultural norms and sexual relations leading even to relational marriage whereby currently, children have no time to sit by parents in the evenings due to studies including misbehaviour and, distant places of employment and inadequate plans on part of other parents.
8. Family size due to polygamy puts children born at risk of adequate care where some fathers leave responsibility to mothers and others select children to educate in standard schools encouraging others to abandon education and seek for marriage early.
9. Rural-urban migration exposes siblings to different cultural and environmental influences not experienced earlier which encourage increased rate of early marriage.

2.2.8 Rate of Early Marriage

The following tables indicate the ages, gender and educational levels of respondents and beneficiaries:

Table 1: Shows that most of the beneficiaries were young and provided information independently without external influence on reliability of the results. It proves the certainty for existence of early marriage in Leikor Archdeaconry.

Table 1: Ages of beneficiaries and respondents

Response	No. of beneficiaries and respondents	Percentage (%)
14 to 17 years	14	44
18 to 25 years	08	25
42 to 90 years	10	31
Total	32	100

(Source: Primary data, 2014)

The results of table 1 above shows (44%) of the beneficiaries are mostly wives aged between 14 and 17 years compared to (25%) who are their husbands aged between 18 and 25 years and, (31%) are respondents or elders aged between 42 and 90 years asserting the presence of early marriage. Another biographic characteristic of respondents and beneficiaries is the gender and the results obtained are tabulated in tables 2a) and b) below:

Table 2a: Gender of respondents

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Males	08	80
Females	02	20
Total	10	100

Table 2b: Gender of beneficiaries

Response	No. of beneficiaries	Percentage (%)
Males	11	50
Females	11	50
Total	20	100

(Source: Primary data, 2014)

Results in table 2a indicate that (80%) of respondents met were males and (20%) were females aged between 42 and 90 years and both strongly backed the presence of early marriage in Leikor Archdeaconry. Table 2b indicates that (50%) were males aged between 17 and 25 years and (50%) were females under 17 years who are victims of early marriage. The information was gathered from both sexes of respondents and beneficiaries which confirmed the reliability. Education levels of the beneficiaries were also enquired to affirm the reliability and quality of information. The results got indicated the following in table 3 below.

Table 3: Educational level of respondents and beneficiaries

Response	No. of respondents and beneficiaries	Percentage (%)
Never went to school	02	06
Primary	23	72
Secondary	06	19
Tertiary	01	03
Total	32	100

(Source: Primary data, 2014)

Results in table 3 shows that (6%) of respondents never went to school, (72%) of respondents and beneficiaries attended primary education, (19%) of both respondents and beneficiaries progressed to secondary school and (3%) of respondents attended tertiary education.

According to the data obtained from the ground, most respondents in the parishes visited put the average percentage of girls married between 14 to 17 years as 60% to 70%, those from 18 to 25 years as 40% to 50% and 26 years and above as 20% to 30%.

Most beneficiaries or child couples met individually and as a group are with children others with two to four each, they were married or forced to marriage three or four years earlier with different reasons. Some were raped by boyfriends in a planned visit to their homes and ended there while others were discovered with pregnancy from within or other places according to their “understanding”, few through babysitting and child abuse.

These groups of beneficiaries expressed different views on their relationships in the individual marriages. Some say they are married and live together as husband and wife, others say they separated each stays at their own home with uncertainty of marriage while still others say they quarrelled due to false accusations and their differences resolved systematically from home to Boma and finally at county court level as divorce. Some of these child couples have both parents; others have mothers alone while few have fathers only. Many of these cases were due to peer group pressure.

Many of these peer group have done a lot of havoc on many friends of which some were not even ready to get married. Some were deceived to be a marriage but ended up with a bastard child. The father having abandoned her, later finds a wife of his interest. Many are still being deceived by peers. Some socio-economically well off men and boys lure young poor girls into sexual activity with positive promises which, girls having immature mind and reasoning positively yield to their demand ending up in pregnancy and marriage or abandoned or, without pregnancy and abandoned that leads to shame and dropout if in school.

The current generation though having progressive viewpoint with its technology and education resultant to world as global community and simple life with easy communication and transport from hard work, has many negative effects from this developmental scale such as pornography, sex education courses from humanist public school systems, movies, music and many others arouse sexual lust and motivate children into the activity with high moral. This resulted in children undermining current generation nicknaming as expired or worthless generation. They feel much is currently known in regard to marriage that forces them into minimizing cultural norms that leads to cursed life with lots of hazards.

Moving out of the good cultural norms in respect to marriage, curses came forth with a lot of diseases like high fever, persistent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and others like HIV/AIDS which were earlier prophesied (Leviticus 26:14-17) and being fulfilled in this generation as a result, people minimize especially HIV/AIDS though assortments of educative materials are being dumped into the communities worldwide. This generation continues to undermine and the rate of infection continues to rise without curative treatment.

We need to change our attitudes if we are to survive for long otherwise the lifespan will diminish to the lowest level due to this early unplanned marriage commanded by sexual ego during puberty. Young people must wake up and lead if they are to run away from early marriage and HIV/AIDS.

Such behaviour leading to early marriage through discovery of close relationship or pregnancy especially in primary schools usually results in a lot of challenges. Those willing end up a family of child couples and those with high libidos end up in court and divorce while others accept in policy but run away to Juba city and other towns in South Sudan as their hiding places after the rumours or girl being escorted to them mostly with pregnancy. They leave the poor girls as single parents to toil in nursing their kids in dire situations while other girls return to their parents and this encourages poor relationship on both sides. Her parents strive for dowry from the other while having double responsibility of caring for their own family including daughter with her kid(s) as well which is a burden. The boy and his parents relax hoping only to bring their child home paying unreasonably small amount after the opposite grandparents had laboured in bringing up the child. Many boys have the motive of getting a child without marriage.

2.2.9 Effects of Early Marriage

- Children are stubborn not listening to their parents' advice as they impregnate girlfriends and run to towns.
- Some are sued to court ending in divorce and turn to alcoholism as coping strategy while others go for imprisonment.
- They acquire sexually transmitted diseases (STDS) or even HIV/AIDS and other complication
- Parents are traumatised and live uneasy social lives without cooperation in families and community because they are forced to bear the risk from children's misbehaviour.
- Economically results to inadequacy of cash or material needs in the family.
- Child parents have difficulty in waking up early for duty leading to quarrels and poor living

condition.

- The family has two groups of children: their own and grand children.
- There is poor understanding between parents and government as civil and communal laws/norms are minimized and are ineffective.

2.2.10 Impact of Early Marriage

Early Marriage ends up in the following impact on children, parents and the community:

1. There is rampant rate of early marriage in the Archdeaconry due to unplanned marriages resulting in unwanted or abandoned children with their mothers and family breakdown.
2. Generally a lot of Misfortunes, suicides and suicide attempts in the community.
3. Girls suffer from steel births due to immaturity.
4. Community suffers from diseases like the STIs/STDs and HIV/AIDS.
5. Parents are suspicious on seeing children of opposite sex standing in any location.
6. Families experience early expiry of love.
7. There is risk of Vesico-Vaginal Fistula (VVF/RVI) according to KADEP.
8. Others experience rapture of uterus.
9. Poor child spacing and family planning are common.
10. These families suffer from low family economy.

2.2.11 Coping Strategies

Few child mothers persevere with their in-laws in husband's absence and suffer brewing alcohol as their only socio-economic coping strategy with or without minimal assistance from in-laws or husbands. The willing few who ended up a family and stay in town send assistance to their child mothers and or parents, while some endure together at home but others as well care less of their young family for what they wanted was a woman and to be called a father likewise, others are pressured by peer group without any personal marriage plan. There are currently many families with such children. An elderly family or woman having passed their nursing age is forced to take double responsibility retarding their elderly happy life span. There are many complaints from families on these cases all over the Archdeaconry known or heard at gatherings of funerals and other meeting places where sharing of information easily spreads different news.

The fleeing of these boys to towns like Juba City for hiding after realising sin (Gen. 3) is the escape of shame from peers, parents and community as well as from family responsibility. This needs an intervention to curb the situation before reaching a disaster level because running away is a short term solution.

2.2.12 Relational Marriage

In addition there is a second disastrous problem within early marriage where boys and girls befriend themselves while being relatives. When made aware of their close relationship may tend to refuse

separation and threaten to commit suicide or run away to towns while others separate when something bad happens say death of a child. There were cases of relational marriage discovered during the cause of this research.

One such case was a marriage between an uncle and an aunt who bore a child and was separated by both parents. Instead another uncle befriended her, was discovered and ran to Juba. She got married illegally; the child died and was brought for burial to Kajo-Keji on 30th/07/2013. The husband was traditionally fined with a heifer and a bull for not performing cultural requirement for marrying a woman with children.

Another 16th year old school girl was also impregnated and escorted, they were questioned having accepted marriage and left at boy's home with no demand for any payment. Her mother angrily accepted with hussy words that "if daughter followed her she would kill her" but later may be after advice and proper satisfaction, came with some women and silently returned her daughter home. Since many children in this generation don't heed to advices of their elders or having minimized some cultural norms, there are many such cases in the Archdeaconry and the County at large. My director (Church leader) was happy to have me talk of this kind of problem and wished if it could be researched further. Culturally if a relational marriage is allowed to continue some options need to be performed, if not, it would lead to death of one of the couples or the child. In other cases these couples would always suffer from scarcity of food for the rest of their life. In this respect there is still no room for allowing a close relational marriage though others tend to allow their children to marry arguing their relationship is somehow distant but not missing misfortunes or consequences.

For some families who experience consequences, the husband marries another or other wives and abandons the relative (as with one case) who married and stays in town with the new wife. Such wives experience a rough life as she perseveres alone or separates to marry another husband. Their children are doomed who would either live with the father or mother as single parents in rough lives. Some may in long term be street children and have enmity with parents as a result of not having acquired parental love. In other cases they share these children and may at times experience the same consequences. Such consequences evoke fear on breaking traditional norms on relational marriage since it has been delivered down from generation to generation. There are some of the cultural beliefs which could be minimized or abandoned while others can not be abandoned.

CHAPTER THREE: Preferred situation

3.0 Introduction

This chapter entails how marriage is supposed to be without early marriage which hampers the developmental aspect of children especially girls. It reviews what other researchers have written about early marriage with details of their suggestions and continues to quote some current facts on how children were supposed to behave towards marriage in Leikor Archdeaconry and throughout the world.

3.1 Review of the Literature on Marriage Marriage

Being the formal union of a man and a woman for becoming husband and wife, marriage in Christian perspective was ordained by God and blessed by Jesus Christ in his first miracle. Marriage was God's plan not man's idea. It was the first social institution planned by God to meet the human need for companionship, love, mutual encouragement, practical help, and sexual satisfaction, including bearing and raising of children in security and love created by one man and one woman for a lifetime (O'Donovan 1996 p277).

Culturally, it is performed according to customary norms of a particular community and, in civil society district secretary does it according to couples' signatures on marriage contract with consent from their parents. All these are performed for the propagation of human family line. Early marriage never existed formerly in the Diocese of Kajo-Keji particularly in Leikor Archdeaconry because girls used to say "jongi nan ling" (take me wholly) if a boy had sexual contact with her but has currently become an issue of attention in our community.

Marriage Relationship

In engagement, Brian and Barbara (1994) stressed about the relationship in marriage of the two couples that must not be allowed to depend upon their present circumstances, but on their certainty to cleave to in better situations of abundance or difficult conditions of need like poverty and sickness (p13).

They pointed out the motives of marriage as: To escape from home as the pressure of unhappiness, to find a companion as the pressure of loneliness, to find a companion the pressure of loneliness, to enjoy sex the pressure of lust to appear normal the pressure of society. To be loved the pressure of insecurity and, to love as the best motive of all.

They said all these motives are not wrong and sinful as they will be present in our marriage motives to some degree. What matters much is if any of them other than the last one comes first in your mind you need to rethink, otherwise you have unreliable base for your marriage. You have to concentrate on what you will give rather than what to get out of it (p18).

Communication

They said in marriage communication simply is successfully imparting your opinions, hopes and fears to your partner, as well as hearing and understanding theirs. It is the key to success in our marriage and has three possibilities whenever you speak: 1. What you meant to say, 2. What you actually said and, 3. What your partner heard you say.

Brian and Barbara supported that marriage was God's plan, a covenant of compatible companionship, for God made a woman as a helper, a companion and a lover for man because God knew that two people would be stronger to cope with crises than one. It was a covenant of cleaving companionship which Genesis says "a man must leave his mother and father and cleave or stick to his wife and no one should separate them".

Therefore in Christian perspective, marriage was a covenant of continuing companionship as God joined man and woman to be husband and wife until death (Matt.19:6). God never planned for divorce though

is currently happening when marriage is no longer suitable for the couples who take it as the most successful strategy for problem solving which is against God's intention. This warns that young children should take time to grow in their friendship and age to cope with problems in married life so as not to end up in divorce or running away (p26).

The marriage covenant defines that children are to be born and cared for by parents in the family but we today find many children born are cared by single parents especially mothers while others end up as street children but, marriages are breaking apart especially those of early marriages. God the creator exercised His divine power known to both men and women the way to relate to each other. The Church therefore needs to teach communities especially families to adhere to God's word as one of the solutions for early marriage.

Early marriages don't fit here because lovers do not take time to reach maturity age and study themselves in planning together for what to do and how their family should be when married. Unpreparedness then would lead to unhappy short life marriage of quarrels and divorce. Some psychologists said if marriages were to last with minimal upheavals, they should be given some contemporary pressures and priorities to improve on the quality of relationship throughout their married life.

In Christian perspective, marriage requires preparation with love between the two families. This relationship will affect the relation between the man and the woman, between them and their children (if they would have any) and will cover many matters of economic and social nature, including responsibility of parents for their children, responsibility of community for both married couples and their children. This is true with Africans who say, "I am because you are and we are because you are". Marriage is a mutual and official undertaking between the two and between them and the community. The important matter here is not the publicity or the wedding feast but the marriage itself with its components of legal status, legal social and ethical consequences, the promises, the witnesses and the official necessary procedures which are elements that together constitute a binding contract between the parties involved. Marriage therefore is not a recent phenomenon but has been constituted in time memorial by God to the benefit and welfare of mankind.

The Church can contribute to the understanding of marriage in the following ways:

- It is to stress the need and necessity in all countries and among peoples to hold marriage in the greatest esteem minimizing early marriage.
- The Church is to act in imparting the teaching given in the word of God to all families of normal and early marriage for expected positive change.
- To treat and value the indirect nature of Church doctrine like a precious stone which compares the relation and love between a man and a woman at its best with the love between Christ and His Church (Eph 5:28-33).

Divorce and Marriage Laws

Imberg pointed out two problems connected with worldly authorities in their handling of marriage where one is divorce. Divorce is complicated and different in a number of countries which should not be encouraged and worldly authority to solve matrimonial or social complications by arranging systems and insist on all couples and families affected with such difficulties with the aim of solving their problems amicably without a divorce. The second problem is marriage laws where in many countries a clash has appeared between the worldly authorities and the Church in which they might not have understood the duty and border limits of the other party or their own party. Marriage is a worldly institution that must be regularized in the worldly laws. The laws have to allow alternatives of both the official way and a delegation to religious bodies to perform marriage ceremonies that will be officially recognized to certify their wishes. This is where they may control the frequency of early marriage (p117).

Dreikurs (1974) says divorce is a marital problem which cannot be prevented currently as it was based only on law. People take considerations on divorce especially those with children as how they are expected to live, they avoid divorce and continue a miserable and devastating marriage because they are afraid of facing life alone, of taking on responsibility to care for themselves and their children. While others divorce because they are afraid and admire the task of submitting, contributing and accepting the pressing family situations at hand and, considerations must be taken on interest of all persons involved. The interests of children (if any), the friction and humiliation, abuse and brutality are worst than a peaceful home atmosphere with only one parent. Each solution depends on which situation requires courage or self-confidence.

In Christian perspective divorce was permitted only in case of marital unfaithfulness which Jesus said her husband caused her becoming adulteress and one remarrying committed adultery (Matt. 5:31-32). Christians of today consider counselling and education by spiritual leaders as major solutions to family problems before any normal marriage breaks apart which doesn't rhyme with those of early marriage (p28).

CHAPTER FOUR: Practical Suggestions

4.0 Introduction

The following suggestions require a practical implementation to fetch a positive change on the rampant rate of early marriage in Leikor Archdeaconry and the Diocese at large. Some researchers had tried their best and put down their suggestions and I have added to their findings what needs to be done at our situation. The under mentioned stakeholders are actively encouraged to take serious coordination in their work especially parents and the government in order to succeed and motivate participation of the other partners to cause the expected change on early marriage in the community.

4.1 Suggestions for change

1. Churches are to establish counselling departments to help young people grow spiritually, emotionally and socially. This allows doing specialization on counselling in local Churches (Tumuti 2012:36 Kenya)
2. Young people themselves are to rise up to fight this disease of early marriage if they are to escape from the danger of HIV/AIDS and other effects of early marriage.
3. There should be a massive educational awareness on early marriage in the Archdeaconry and the Diocese at large which enables young children to understand the effects on their current and future lives.
4. There should be reproductive health education generally for children and particularly girls in relation to sexual diseases and birth complications.
5. There has to be a provision of scholastic requirements to girls and vulnerable children such as orphans and disables who most of them dropped out of School to marriage due to insufficiency of such materials.
6. There has to be a supply of feminine materials to maturing girls who experience monthly difficulties at getting such materials where the insufficiency causes them shame and dropout from education.
7. More research should be done in many counties of the Republic of South Sudan and other countries to establish more facts from different areas and regions in establishing other clues according to their respective conditions.
8. The Central Government should come up with a policy to control early marriage in the Republic of South Sudan which should be adapted and implemented by all the States.
9. Our Local Government should come up with a policy of uniform fines to control parents on high and different payments for any girl married before the maturity age of 18 years on the condition of their “understanding” or rape.
10. Government in all levels of Boma, Payam, County, State and the Nation should implement the rape policy with all its fines regardless of race, religion, nationality or position of the father or parents of the child in question.
11. Parents should take serious measures on their children who happen to misbehave in not complying with their rules, where others threaten to commit suicide by allowing the government to settle the case.
12. There should be a full cooperation between the government and the parents on such matters where at times parents don't forward the case to the government or the government sits on such cases referred by parents.
13. Parents should as well cooperate with School authorities who even when the school reports a case of early marriage through pregnancy or other ways may make it a marriage at times with the fear of suicide or that if separated may encourage laziness and cause misfortune for their daughter.

14. School authorities to make their own bylaws on any parent who doesn't comply with their policy regarding a way of handling or controlling early marriage.
15. Neighbours should report any lustful teenagers behaviour in their knowledge to anybody reachable or the parents and authorities like headmen including the schools if the children or one of them is a pupil.

4.2 Stakeholders to be Involved

The following different Stakeholders should be involved in the fight against Early Marriage in their various capacities:

1. Policy makers like the government to try their best.
2. Media to announce the government policy.
3. The teenagers themselves.
4. Churches.
5. Parents.
6. Schools.
7. Neighbours.
8. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Donors and other Volunteers.
9. Academicians and Researchers.

4.3 Areas for further research

1. What is the effect of early marriage on sexual health of teenagers particularly HIV/AIDS.
2. What is the extent of school dropouts in primary schools as outcome of early marriage?
3. What is the extent of relational marriage in Leikor Archdeaconry?

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Conclusions

This paper shows that early marriage exists in most areas of Leikor Archdeaconry according to the data collected from the individuals met at selected parishes visited. It has discovered many motivating factors and reasons leading to early marriage such as the changing generation, poverty, peer group pressure and others including another disease known as "Relational Marriage" which has also intensified in the current generation.

Early Marriage has affected the physical growth and education of many girls who are already child mothers and face many challenges in regard to physical and family issues. Their education is retarded and difficult to cope up with life issues as such many have family violence with their spouses or in-laws leading to hard life or divorce.

Many writers like Bayisenge, Tumuti give the following reasons for early marriage: wars, peer group pressure, protection of girls and causes of early marriage as socio-economic or poverty, infant mortality, high marriage demands as per our situation and as a cultural requirement.

Most of the above factors and causes are the very ones that have affected our nation and the Archdeaconry including abundance of socio-economic sources. Children have become stubborn and traumatising their parents. These have affected girls or couples and the community at large socially, socio-economically negatively with health issues: diseases like sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, or domestic violence and others. The impact of early marriage is seen on the rate according to tabulated percentages of beneficiaries and those obtained from respondents. Child mothers and children have been abandoned by fleeing parents.

Some abandoned child mothers with their children including divorcees cope up by brewing alcohol for survival or return to their parents while boys run to towns and others persevere together with their wives. Relational marriage has been discovered to be another problem within early marriage in Leikor Archdeaconry needing attention and further research.

In a Christian perspective, there are major positive matters in a marriage relationship like love, leadership, esteem and submission of wives to their husbands for their security and stability of the family.

In summary, there are practical suggestions for those who should be involved in the intervention on early marriage.

- The **government** and **parents** are required to cooperate and spear head the lead in formulating policies and executing laws to control and reduce the spread of early marriage.
- **Teenagers** themselves are to rise up to fight their disease of early marriage in order to escape social and health issues such as sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.
- The **Church** is to participate in establishing counselling departments and preaching for young people to grow spiritually, emotionally and socially since they are the future leaders in the Church and government.
- There should be massive educational awareness on early marriage by the **government health sector** dealing with reproductive health, including NGOs which are concern with health care program.
- **School** authorities to cooperate with parents and government in educating pupils on the effect of early marriage and report any child found in the act or any pregnant girl to the parents and government for further disciplinary action in order to curb the frequency of early marriage.

All those cited above have to coordinate with others who are involved in the fight against early marriage.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ECSS&S Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan
 CBPC Canon Benaiah Poggo College
 CBOs Community Based Organizations
 STIs Sexually Transmitted Infections
 HIV/AIDS Human Immune-deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Diseases Syndrome
 CEDAW Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
 UNICEF United Nations International Children's Fund
 USAID United States Aid for International Development
 DHS Demographic Health Survey
 UNIFPA United Nations International Fund
 FGM Female Genital Mutilation
 WHO World Health Organization
 STDs Sexually Transmitted Diseases
 CPA Comprehensive Peace Agreement
 VVF/RVI Vesico-Vaginal Fistula/Vaginal Infection
 KADEP Kajo-Keji Adolescents Development and Empowerment Program

Appendix

Questionnaires used

Why do Early Marriages cause Problems in Leikor Archdeaconry (ECSS&S) and how should the Church deal with this issue?

A. Church Leaders, Elders and Civil Servants

1. How was marriage in your time considering dating, age, marrying and dowry?
2. What were the advantages and disadvantages of marriage?
3. What were the major objectives or aims of marriage compared to current generation?
4. Were early marriages common?
5. What are the major causes of early marriage?
6. What categories of children are more exposed to early marriage?
 - a) In school: Class.....Age.....School.....Year...Performance Good.....Poor.....
 - b) At home: Age.....When left school.....Doing what.....
7. What is being done and how is it being done to reduce early marriage?
8. Are there any results as outcome of this?
9. What percentages do you rate between marriage ages of
15 to 17=50%, 55-65%, and 70-80%?
18 to 25 years=50%, 55-65% and,
26 years and above =50%, 55-65%, or 70-80%?
10. How has it affected: (a) home life (b) community socially, culturally, spiritually and socio-economically?
11. What possible solutions can be suggested to try to prevent such situations?
12. Which person, NGO or Institution can be able to help you the respondents and how?

B. Child Couples

1. I understand you are married do you have all your parents?
2. Were you in school? Yes..... No.....Age.....sex.....Class.....School.....
3. How was your class performance? Good..... Poor.....Age.....sex.....School.....
4. If at home, when did you leave school and why? Year..... Age.....
5. What are you doing at present after leaving school?
6. How are your parents helping you?
7. What motivated you to marry early? When..... How?
8. How many of your age mates with the same problem do you know are there in the area?
9. How do you rate the percentage of your age group?
15 to 17 years=50%-65%, 70% - 80%?
18 to 25 years=50%-65%, 70%-80%?
10. How are you happy of your marrying early and if no why?
11. Which difficulties do you currently face physically, socially and socio-economically?

12. How do you cope up with these challenges?

13. How do you think these can be prevented or solved and by who?