

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**



**IMPACT OF EARLY MARRIAGE ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-  
BEING OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN THE EAST MAMPRUSI  
MUNICIPALITY**



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**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**



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fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
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**Department of Counselling Psychology  
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## DECLARATION

### Student's Declaration

I, Shahadu Adam Maasu, hereby declare that this thesis is the product of my own investigation on primary and secondary resource basis and that no aspect of this has been submitted for another degree in University of Education, Winneba or any other tertiary institution for that matter.

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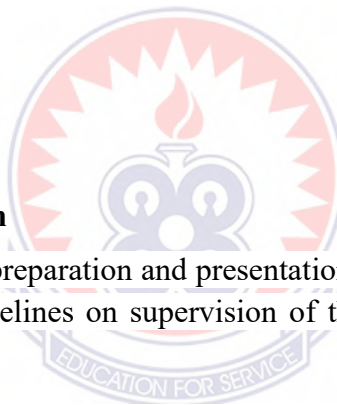
### Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by University of Education, Winneba.

Supervisor's Name: Prof. George Kankam

Signature: .....

Date: .....



## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my family, particularly my mother, Madam Mariama Dabri, and to all of my friends. Your unwavering belief in me has been my driving force, and this thesis is a testament to our shared commitment and dedication



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
DECLARATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xii
ABSTRACT	xiii
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	8
1.3 Purpose of the Study	9
1.4 Research Objectives	11
1.5 Research Questions	11
1.6 Significance of the Study	12
1.7 Scope and Delimitation	13
1.8 Definition of Terms	14
1.9 Organization of the Study	15
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>16</b>
2.0 Introduction	16
2.1 Theoretical Framework	16
2.1.1 Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory	16

2.1.2 The Resilience Theory	18
2.1.3 Attachment Theory	19
2.2 Early Marriages and Adolescents	20
2.3 Global Trends in Early Marriages	21
2.4 Early Marriages in the Ghanaian Context	22
2.5 Factors Leading to Early Marriages	23
2.5.1 Poverty	23
2.5.2 Tradition and Societal Pressure	23
2.5.3 Lack of Education and Opportunities	24
2.5.4 Insecurity and Crisis	24
2.6 Psychological Well-Being of Young Adolescent Girls in Early Marriages	24
2.6.1 Emotional Consequences of Early Marriages	25
2.6.2 Cognitive Development and its Implications	26
2.6.3 Social Consequences, Isolation, and Relationships	27
2.7 Academic Performance and Achievement	29
2.8 Gender Disparities in Educational Implications	31
2.9 Role of School Counselors in Addressing Early Marriages	33
2.9.1 Availability of Community Resources for Support	34
2.9.2 Existing Intervention Programs and its Effectiveness	35
2.9.4 Challenges in Providing Counseling and Support	36
2.10 Empirical Review	38
2.11 Chapter Summary	40
<b>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>42</b>
3.0 Introduction	42
3.1 Research Approach	42

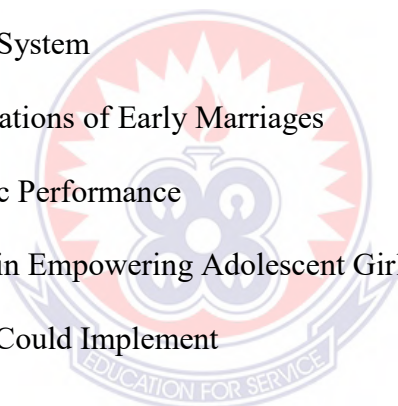
3.2	Research Design	43
3.3	Study Area	45
3.4	Population	46
3.5	Sample Size and Sampling Strategy	48
3.6	Data Collection Instrument	51
3.6.1	Questionnaire	51
3.6.2	Interview Guide	52
3.7	Validity	53
3.8	Reliability	54
3.9	Data Collection Procedure	55
3.10	Data Analysis	58
3.11	Trustworthiness and Authenticity of the Qualitative Research Process	59
3.12	Ethical Considerations	61
3.13	Chapter Summary	61
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</b>		<b>63</b>
4.0	Introduction	63
4.1	Background characteristics of Respondents	63
4.1.1	Personal Information	63
4.1.2	Family Background	64
4.2	Research Questions One	65
4.3	Research Question Two	70
4.4	Research Question Three	73
4.5	Research Question Four	85
4.6	Discussion	96
4.7	Chapter Summary	103

<b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>104</b>
5.0 Introduction	104
5.1 Summary of the study	104
5.2 Summary of Major Findings	105
5.3 Conclusion	111
5.3 Recommendations	112
5.4 Limitations	115
5.5 Suggestions for Further Study	116
REFERENCES	118
APPENDIX A: Questionnaire For Adolescent Girls In Senior High Schools In The East Mamprusi Municipality	125
APPENDIX B: Interview Schedule for Participants	132
APPENDIX C: Interview Guide for School Councillors	133



## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
1: Sampled Population	49
2: Personal Information	64
3: Family Background	65
4: Factors contributing to Increased Rate of Early Marriages	67
5: Cultural Norms and Traditions	68
6: Measures to Reduce the Rate of Early Marriages	68
7: Education and Awareness Campaigns	69
8: Psychological Well-Being of Adolescents Girls	71
9: Available Support System	72
10: Educational Implications of Early Marriages	74
11: Effect on Academic Performance	76
12: Role of Education in Empowering Adolescent Girls	77
13: Measures Schools Could Implement	78



## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure</b>	<b>Page</b>
1: Conceptual Framework for the Study	40
2: Map of East Mamprusi Municipality	46
3: Understanding of Early Marriage	66



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GES	–	Ghana Education Service
GSS	–	Ghana Statistical Service
ICRW	–	International Center for Research on Women
SHS	–	Senior High School
UNFPA	–	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	–	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	–	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	–	World Health Organization



## ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in early marriage within the East Mamprusi Municipality, Ghana, with implications for counseling practices. The objectives of this study was to explore the factors contributing to early marriage. The aim is to assess the impact of early marriage on adolescent girls psychological well-being, and suggest the effectiveness of existing support systems and strategies for improving counseling services for adolescent girls in early marriages in the East Mamprusi Municipality. A mixed-methods approach was employed by combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The sample size consists of 100 adolescent girls, including 5 counselors. Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling was used to ensure a representative sample. Questionnaires were administered to the students to collect quantitative data, while interviews were conducted with counselors to gather qualitative insights. Key findings revealed that poverty was identified as the primary factor contributing to early marriage, with 48% of respondents citing it as a major driver; the psychological well-being of early-married girls shows high levels of stress and anxiety, with respondents reporting a mean score of 4.1 for psychological distress; and counseling services are seen as beneficial, but 80% of respondents felt that existing support systems are insufficient to address the unique challenges faced by early-married adolescent girls. The study founds that early marriages have significant negative psychological impacts, hindering their emotional well-being, educational attainment, and future aspirations of the adolescent girls. The study recommended strengthening counseling services, improving access to education, and promoting legal frameworks to prevent early marriages. It also suggested that community involvement and collaborative efforts between schools, counselors, and local organizations was essential in addressing the underlying causes of early marriages. The implications of the findings suggest that interventions, including education, mental health support, and legal reform, are crucial to mitigate the negative effects of early marriages and promote the well-being and future prospects of young girls in the East Mamprusi Municipality. Further research is recommended to explore the long-term impacts of counseling interventions and to expand the scope to other regions facing similar challenges.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Chapter one provides an overview of the study on the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in early marriages in the East Mamprusi Municipality. It introduces the background, the social context and its influence on early marriages. The problem statement the purpose of the study the goal and its contribution to understanding the psychological well-being impact of early marriages among the young adolescent girls.

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Early marriages among young adolescents in the East Mamprusi Municipality have gained increasing attention in recent years the world over due to their profound implications for the psychological well-being and overall development of these individuals. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines early marriage as any marriage or union where at least one of the parties involved is below the age of 18 (WHO, 2012). They represent a significant challenge to the realization of individual rights and gender equality worldwide (UNICEF, 2018). The issue of early marriages extends beyond the boundaries of a single country or region, making it a pertinent topic of study in various contexts, including Africa (UNICEF, 2018).

The practice has been a subject of concern as it affects the lives of young adolescents who are still in the process of physical, emotional, and psychological growth. Early marriages in Senior High Schools in the East Mamprusi Municipality raise critical questions about the welfare of young adolescent girls and the broader implications for society. According to UNICEF, every year, an estimated 12 million girls marry before the age of 18, and this number is alarmingly high (UNICEF, 2020).

According to UNICEF (2018), approximately 650 million women and girls alive today were married before their 18th birthday. This staggering figure highlights the widespread nature of early marriages across the world. While progress has been made in reducing child marriages in some parts of the world, it remains deeply ingrained in other areas. For instance, sub-Saharan Africa has one of the highest rates of child marriage, with nearly 4 in 10 young women being married before they reach 18 (UNICEF, 2018). In the United States, for example, between 2000 and 2015, over 207,000 minors were married, with most of them being girls (Jankowiak & Sudakov, 2019).

Early marriages are a significant concern across Africa, with prevalence rates that vary from one country to another. Niger stands out as one of the most affected countries, with an astonishing 76% of women aged 20 to 24 being married before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2018). In Chad, the situation is similarly dire, with 68% of women in the same age group experiencing early marriages (UNICEF, 2018). While these statistics highlight the severity of the issue, it is important to note that child marriage is a widespread problem across the continent. In other African countries like Mali and South Sudan, approximately 52% and 52% of girls, respectively, are married before they turn 18 (UNICEF, 2018).

In Ghana, child marriage has been a long-standing problem. As of 2017, approximately 21% of women aged 20 to 24 in Ghana reported being married before they reached the age of 18 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2017). This figure underscores that early marriages are not just a regional but a national concern. Child marriage prevalence varies by region within Ghana. Northern regions like Upper West and Upper East have traditionally had higher rates of child marriages compared to other

regions such as the Greater Accra (Ghana Statistical Service, 2017). These regional disparities reflect the complex sociocultural and economic factors at play. Ghana's legal framework has made significant strides in addressing early marriages. The legal age for marriage in Ghana is 18 for both men and women (UNICEF, 2018). However, enforcement and awareness of these laws remain a challenge in some areas, contributing to the persistence of child marriages (UNICEF, 2018). Early marriages often result in girls dropping out of school there by limiting their educational opportunities. In Ghana, where access to education is considered a fundamental right, child marriages further hinder the attainment of this right (GSS & UNICEF, 2018).

In the context of senior high schools, these marriages can disrupt educational pathways, limit future opportunities, and perpetuate cycles of poverty and gender inequality. Hence, understanding the psychological consequences of early marriages among young adolescents in this specific setting is of utmost significance. Research indicates that early marriages can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including increased vulnerability to domestic violence, limited access to education and employment, and reproductive health challenges (UNFPA, 2012). Additionally, such marriages may hinder the personal development and mental health of young adolescents as they are confronted with adult responsibilities and expectations. The prevalence of early marriages among young adolescents in senior high schools is a concerning issue with far-reaching consequences.

In some regions in Ghana early marriages often occur due to a complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and gender-related factors. These factors include poverty, lack of educational opportunities, traditional customs, and gender inequalities. For example, in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, it is customary for

young girls to be married off at a young age, and this practice is deeply rooted in cultural traditions (Nour, 2009). Moreover, the pressure to conform to social norms and expectations often leads to early marriages, especially in communities where these norms are deeply ingrained. Early marriages can disrupt the educational trajectory of young adolescents. Many young girls find themselves leaving school to fulfill marital responsibilities, which subsequently limit their opportunities for personal growth and self-sufficiency. This interruption in education is a concerning trend as it perpetuates cycles of poverty and gender inequality, hindering their long-term prospects (UNICEF, 2018).

In recent years, there have been efforts to combat early marriages, with various international organizations, governments, and NGOs implementing programs and policies aimed at preventing this practice. For instance, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include a target to eliminate early marriage and forced marriages by 2030 (UN, 2015). These initiatives reflect the global commitment to addressing the issue of early marriages among young adolescents, particularly in senior high schools.

Early marriages among young adolescent girls can have profound implications for their psychological well-being. One significant aspect of the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in early marriages is the emotional impact. Early marriages can subject these adolescents to a range of emotions, including anxiety, depression, and stress. The pressure to fulfill adult roles and responsibilities while still being in the early stages of emotional development can lead to emotional distress (Lee-Rife, 2012). The burden of managing a household and marital expectations can cause feelings of overwhelm and, in some cases, contribute to mental health issues.

Cognitive development is another critical aspect affected by early marriages. Young adolescent girls are in the midst of developing their cognitive skills, which are essential for academic success and future opportunities. The responsibility of managing a household and the demands of married life can significantly hinder their cognitive growth (Bunting, 2005). As a result, these adolescent girls may struggle to excel academically, which limits their future potential.

The social and behavioral consequences of early marriages are equally noteworthy. Young adolescent girls in such marriages may experience social isolation due to their differing life circumstances from their peers. They may also face challenges in developing their social and interpersonal skills, as their focus is shifted towards family and spousal responsibilities (Gage et al., 2013). These social and behavioral consequences can have long-term implications for their overall well-being and ability to navigate the complexities of adult life.

Early marriages among young adolescent girls have far-reaching implications that encompass educational disruption, socio-economic impact, and health consequences. These consequences are a critical aspect of understanding the challenges faced by young adolescents in early marriages. One of the most immediate implications of early marriages is educational disruption. These marriages often lead to school dropouts, particularly among girls, who are forced to discontinue their education to fulfill marital responsibilities (Lee, 2019). This educational disruption has long-term consequences, as it limits the opportunities for these young adolescents to acquire knowledge and skills necessary for their future, perpetuating cycles of poverty and dependence.

Socio-economic impact is another significant concern. Early marriages can lead to economic hardships for young adolescent girls, as they often lack the skills and resources to secure stable employment and provide for their families. They may be ill-equipped to navigate the challenges of the job market and become financially independent (Nour, 2006). This socio-economic impact can contribute to increased vulnerability and limited life choices for individuals involved in early marriages.

Furthermore, early marriages are associated with various health consequences. Young adolescent girls in early marriages may face reproductive health challenges, including a higher risk of early pregnancies and childbirth-related complications (Raj, 2010). These health risks can not only affect the adolescents themselves but also have implications for their children's health and well-being.

School counselors play a pivotal role in providing support to young adolescents in early marriages. They are uniquely positioned to offer guidance, emotional support, and referrals to additional services. School counselors can help young adolescents understand the implications of their choices and empower them to make informed decisions about their future (Chua et al., 2017). They can also offer a safe space for these adolescents to express their concerns and navigate the emotional challenges that come with early marriages.

Available resources and interventions are essential for addressing the counseling needs of young adolescents in early marriages. In some regions, NGOs, governmental agencies, and community organizations have developed programs aimed at preventing early marriages and supporting those already involved. For instance, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has initiatives to empower young girls, provide reproductive health education, and offer legal support for those seeking to annul early

marriages (UNFPA, 2017). Such resources can provide vital assistance to these adolescents and help them overcome the challenges they face.

However, there are notable challenges in counseling young adolescent girls in early marriages. One significant challenge is related to confidentiality. Young adolescent girls in early marriages may fear judgment or reprisal, making it difficult for them to openly discuss their situations with school counselors (Chua et al., 2017). Moreover, cultural and societal norms may influence their decisions and limit their access to counseling services.

Studies on early marriages have identified several important factors contributing to the prevalence of this issue. A study by Clark et al. (2019) found that poverty, lack of access to quality education, and gender disparities are key drivers of early marriages among young adolescents. This research highlights the importance of socio-economic and educational factors in understanding the phenomenon. A study by Smith and Johnson (2018) found that young adolescents in early marriages often experience increased stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. These psychological challenges are associated with the premature assumption of adult roles and responsibilities.

Moreover, the literature underscores the significance of counseling and support services for young adolescents in early marriages. A study by Anderson and Davis (2017) emphasized the need for school counselors and community programs to provide assistance and guidance to these individuals. Such interventions can help mitigate the negative consequences of early marriages and support the well-being of young adolescents.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The rising incidence of early marriages among young adolescent girls in Senior High Schools within the East Mamprusi Municipality has become a pressing social and psychological concern. Over the past few years, reports from schools, community leaders, and district records have consistently highlighted a disturbing trend: a significant proportion of girls between the ages of 13 and 17 are being compelled into marriage before reaching adulthood. According to the District Education Service (2020), approximately 20% of females in this age group are either already married or at high risk of early marriage. Within the school system itself, the situation is even more alarming, with nearly 25% of female students reported to have experienced early marriage or facing imminent risk.

The consequences of this phenomenon are profound. Early marriage interrupts the educational trajectory of adolescent girls, leading to high dropout rates which have surged by 35% in the past three years among married students and severely limiting their future opportunities. Beyond education, the psychological toll is equally critical. Evidence shows that about 40% of girls in early marriages report heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress compared to their unmarried peers. These findings underscore the urgent need to examine the psychological well-being of adolescent girls in this context, as mental health challenges directly affect their ability to learn, adapt, and thrive.

National data further situates the problem: the 2021 Ghana Statistical Service report from the 2020 Population and Housing Census identifies the North East Region, where East Mamprusi is located, as having the highest prevalence of early marriages in Ghana. This makes the municipality a critical site for focused investigation. The

issue is not only educational but also a matter of human rights, gender equality, and community development. If left unaddressed, early marriage perpetuates cycles of poverty, disempowerment, and psychological vulnerability among adolescent girls.

Despite growing recognition of these challenges, significant gaps remain in research. Most existing studies in Ghana and Africa (e.g., Ghana Statistical Service, 2017; UNICEF, 2018) have examined early marriage broadly, often focusing on older age groups or treating it as a cultural phenomenon without exploring its specific impact on adolescent girls in school settings. Methodologically, prior studies have leaned heavily on quantitative surveys, which, while useful for prevalence data, fail to capture the lived experiences, emotional struggles, and coping mechanisms of affected girls. Theoretical gaps also persist, as there is no comprehensive framework that explains how early marriage intersects with adolescent psychological development within educational contexts.

This study therefore sought to fill these gaps by employing a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. By doing so, it aims to provide a holistic understanding of how early marriage affects the psychological well-being and academic performance of adolescent girls in East Mamprusi Municipality. The findings will not only contribute to counselling psychology by informing evidence-based interventions but also guide policymakers, educators, and community leaders in designing strategies that safeguard the rights, mental health, and educational futures of young girls.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the increasing rate of early marriages and its influence on the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in Senior High

Schools within the East Mamprusi Municipality. This focus is critical because psychological well-being represents the most profound dimension of the impact of early marriages, shaping not only the emotional health of adolescent girls but also their educational attainment and long-term development. Early marriage places young girls in adult roles prematurely, exposing them to stress, anxiety, depression, and social isolation at a stage when they should be focused on education and personal growth. Their mental health directly affects their ability to concentrate, learn, and remain in school, thereby linking psychological well-being to academic performance and future opportunities.

By investigating this issue, the study goes beyond surface indicators such as dropout rates to uncover the deeper emotional and cognitive consequences that define the lived experiences of adolescent girls. Understanding their psychological well-being provides a foundation for designing effective counseling interventions, as support services must address not only academic disruption but also emotional resilience and coping strategies.

Importantly, this study also lays the groundwork for further research. First, it highlights the contextual realities of early marriages in the East Mamprusi Municipality, which can serve as a baseline for comparative studies in other regions of Ghana and beyond. Second, it demonstrates the value of mixed-methods approaches in capturing both statistical prevalence and lived experiences, encouraging future researchers to adopt similar designs when investigating complex social issues. Third, the findings will inform the development of theoretical frameworks that integrate psychological, educational, and sociological perspectives, opening avenues for more comprehensive studies on adolescent development in contexts of

vulnerability. Finally, the study's emphasis on counseling psychology provides a platform for subsequent research into evidence-based interventions, policy reforms, and community-based strategies aimed at safeguarding the rights and well-being of adolescent girls.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

This research seeks to:

1. Investigate the factors contributing to the increased rate of early marriages among young adolescent girls in the East Mamprusi Municipality.
2. Assess the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls involved in early marriages in East Mamprusi Municipality.
3. Analyze the educational implications of early marriages on young adolescent girls in East Mamprusi Municipality.
4. Identify the support system needed for young adolescent girls in early marriages in the East Mamprusi Municipality.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

This research was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the primary socio-cultural, and economic factors contributing to the increased rate of early marriages among young adolescent girls in the East Mamprusi Municipality?
2. How does early marriage affect the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in the East Mamprusi Municipality?
3. What are the educational implications of early marriages on young adolescent girls in the East Mamprusi Municipality?

4. What are the support systems needed for young adolescents in early marriages in the East Mamprusi Municipality?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study on the psychological well-being and counseling implications of early marriages among young adolescents in East Mamprusi Municipality is of paramount significance for several reasons. Firstly, it addresses a pressing social issue that directly impacts the lives of young individuals shedding light on the unique challenges they face within the context of early marriages. Understanding the psychological well-being of adolescents in such circumstances is crucial for developing targeted intervention strategies. This study has the potential to uncover specific stressors, coping mechanisms, and emotional consequences associated with early marriages, providing valuable insights for counselors, educators, and policymakers.

For Senior High Schools, the research findings can directly inform and enhance the school's support systems. By gaining a deeper understanding of the psychological challenges faced by adolescents experiencing early marriages, the school can develop targeted interventions and counseling programs to address these issues. This tailored approach can contribute to creating a more supportive and conducive learning environment for affected students, potentially improving their overall academic performance and well-being.

On the policy level, the study provides crucial insights for policymakers in the East Mamprusi Municipality and beyond. The findings of this study can serve as evidence to inform the development or adjustment of policies related to early marriages among young adolescents. Policymakers can use this information to design more effective

preventive measures, awareness campaigns, and support systems for at-risk individuals. The study, therefore, acts as a foundation for evidence-based policymaking, contributing to the creation of initiatives that are specifically tailored to the needs of the community and its youth.

Moreover, the findings from this research can contribute to the existing body of knowledge on adolescent psychology in the context of early marriages, serving as a foundation for future studies and allowing for a broader understanding of this complex phenomenon. The implications drawn from this research may not only benefit the immediate District but also inform and guide similar interventions in other regions facing similar challenges. In essence, the study not only addresses a pertinent local issue but also has broader implications for the field of psychology, counseling, and community development, making it a significant and timely contribution to the academic and practical understanding of early marriages among young adolescents.

### **1.7 Scope and Delimitation**

This research primarily focused on examining early marriages among young adolescents within Senior High Schools in and its immediate surrounding areas in the East Mamprusi Municipality in Ghana, limiting the generalizability of findings to this local context. The study considered the unique socio-cultural, economic, and educational factors that contributed to early marriages in this specific context, aiming to provide an in-depth understanding of the issue. The research involved young adolescent girls, teachers, and counsellors as key participants.

In addition, the study assessed the psychological well-being of young adolescents involved in early marriages. It investigated emotional, cognitive, and social aspects of their well-being, providing a detailed analysis of the psychological consequences they

faced. Furthermore, the research explored the counseling and support services available within East Mamprusi Municipality and the surrounding community, assessing the challenges and opportunities in providing assistance to young adolescents in early marriages.

### **1.8 Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, the following operational definitions have been use:

**Adolescent:** Adolescent refers to the transitional stage of development between childhood and adulthood, typically encompassing the ages of 10 to 19. It involves physical, cognitive, and emotional changes as individuals navigate the journey from puberty to maturity.

**Marriage:** Marriage” is a socially and legally recognized union between two individuals, marked by mutual rights, responsibilities, and a commitment to a shared life.

**Psychological Well-being:** Psychological well-being encompasses the overall mental health and emotional state of individuals, including aspects such as happiness, life satisfaction, and the ability to cope with stressors, as measured within the parameters of this research.

**Counseling Implications:** Counseling implications pertain to the potential psychological, emotional, and social ramifications of early marriages among young adolescents. This includes the need for counseling services, support structures, and interventions to address the challenges arising from such marital situations.

## **1.9 Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five chapters, each serving a distinct purpose in elucidating the psychological well-being and counseling implications of early marriages among young adolescents in East Mamprusi Municipality.

Chapter one introduces the research, outlining its significance, justification, and objectives. It sets the stage by posing research questions providing a concise overview of the methodology to be employed.

Moving to Chapter two, a comprehensive literature review is presented, delving into existing research on early marriages and exploring psychological dimensions and counseling implications in analogous contexts.

Chapter three focuses the research methodology, detailing participant selection, sampling methods, and data collection instruments. Ethical considerations and potential limitations are also discussed.

In Chapter four, the focus shifts to data analysis and findings, with a systematic presentation of results, addressing each research question. The chapter utilizes visuals such as tables to enhance data representation.

Finally, Chapter five concludes the study by summarizing key findings, drawing conclusions based on the findings and their implications, and offering recommendations for interventions, policies, and future research directions.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter explores the existing body of knowledge related to this study. It begins with the theoretical framework which analyzes global trends and factors leading to early marriages and the psychological well-being of young adolescents. Additionally, the chapter discusses the role of school counselors in addressing early marriages, emphasizing intervention strategies within educational settings. Drawing upon empirical evidence from various studies, the chapter provides a foundation for understanding the multifaceted nature of early marriages. Literature is organized under the following sub-themes: Theoretical framework, The Resilient Theory, Attachment Theory, Early Marriage and Adolescents, Global Trends in Early Marriages, Early Marriage in the Ghanaian Context, Factors Leading to Early Marriages, Psychological Well-Being Of Young Adolescent Girls In Early Marriage, Academic Performance and Achievement, Gender Disparities in Educational Implications, Role of School Counselors in Addressing Early Marriages and Empirical Review

#### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

##### **2.1.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding human development by examining the intricate interplay between individuals and their environment across multiple levels. At its core are five nested environmental systems, each contributing to the complexity of influences on an individual's growth and development? The Microsystem, comprising immediate and direct influences such as family and peers, forms the foundational

level. The Mesosystem explores the interconnectedness of these micro-level influences, while the Exosystem extends to external settings indirectly impacting the individual. The Macrosystem encompasses broader cultural values and societal norms, and the Chronosystem introduces the dimension of time, acknowledging the evolving nature of influences over one's lifespan.

In applying Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory to the study on early marriage and its impact on the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in the Mamprusi East Municipality, it becomes evident that various environmental factors play a crucial role. At the micro-level, familial and peer relationships significantly influence the experiences of these girls as they navigate early marriage. The interconnectedness of these micro-level influences, as highlighted in the mesosystem, underscores the importance of understanding how interactions within the family and broader social networks impact their well-being. Additionally, the exosystem dimension extends the analysis to external factors like community attitudes and support services availability, further shaping the experiences of these girls. Moreover, the macrosystem dimension delves into cultural norms and societal values surrounding marriage, providing insights into the broader context in which early marriages occur. Lastly, the chronosystem emphasizes the dynamic nature of these influences over time, acknowledging the evolving societal attitudes and support systems that may impact the well-being of young brides. This theory offers a comprehensive understanding of the complex socio-environmental dynamics affecting the psychological well-being of young girls in early marriages, informing targeted counseling interventions to address their needs effectively.

### **2.1.2 The Resilience Theory**

Resilience Theory, as articulated by Masten in 2011, is a conceptual framework that explores the capacity of individuals to adapt and thrive in the face of adversity. This theory focuses on understanding the dynamic processes that contribute to positive adaptation and resilience, emphasizing the significance of individual and environmental factors. Masten identifies key components of resilience, including personal qualities, supportive relationships, and external resources that enable individuals to navigate challenges successfully. The theory acknowledges the dynamic nature of resilience, recognizing that it evolves over time in response to various life experiences.

Applying Resilience Theory to the study, its emphasis on individual and environmental factors highlights the importance of understanding how personal qualities, supportive relationships, and external resources contribute to resilience in young brides. For instance, personal qualities such as optimism, self-efficacy, and problem-solving skills can empower these girls to navigate the challenges of early marriage. Supportive relationships, both within and outside the family, serve as crucial sources of emotional support and practical assistance, bolstering their resilience. Additionally, access to external resources such as education, economic opportunities, and counseling services can further enhance their ability to adapt and overcome obstacles. The dynamic nature of resilience, as recognized by the theory, underscores the importance of interventions that foster resilience-building processes over time, enabling these girls to develop the skills and resources necessary for positive adaptation.

### **2.1.3 Attachment Theory**

Attachment Theory, pioneered by John Bowlby in 1969, provides a foundational framework for understanding the profound impact of early relationships on human development. This theory posits that the quality of the emotional bond formed between an infant and their primary caregiver significantly influences socio-emotional and cognitive development throughout the lifespan.

Bowlby identified four attachment styles: secure, insecure-avoidant, insecure-ambivalent/resistant, and disorganized/disoriented, each representing distinct patterns of interaction between caregivers and children. The theory emphasizes the role of these attachment patterns in shaping an individual's expectations, interpersonal relationships, and overall mental health.

Applying Attachment Theory to the study on underscores the significance of the emotional bonds formed during infancy, which can serve as a template for future interpersonal relationships. For young girls entering early marriages, their attachment patterns with caregivers may influence how they navigate their new roles as spouses. Those with secure attachments may have a foundation of trust and confidence in themselves and their partners, potentially contributing to better psychological well-being. Conversely, individuals with insecure attachment styles, such as avoidant or ambivalent/resistant, may experience difficulties in forming healthy relationships and managing stress associated with early marriage.

Additionally, the disorganized/disoriented attachment style may be particularly relevant to the study, as it can indicate unresolved trauma or disrupted caregiving experiences, potentially exacerbating the challenges faced by young brides. By understanding the impact of attachment patterns on the psychological well-being of

young girls in early marriages, interventions can be tailored to address underlying attachment-related issues, promote healthy relationship dynamics, and support their overall adjustment and resilience.

## **2.2 Early Marriages and Adolescents**

Early marriages, defined as marriages occurring before the age of 18, have been a prevalent cultural practice in various parts of the world for centuries (UNICEF, 2021). While the reasons behind early marriages can be diverse, it is essential to recognize that a significant portion of such marriages involve adolescent girls, individuals in their formative years between the ages of 10 and 19. This practice has garnered significant attention from researchers, policymakers, and human rights advocates due to its profound and often detrimental effects on adolescents' physical, psychological, and social well-being.

Adolescence is a crucial stage in human development marked by physical, emotional, and cognitive transformations. These transformations lay the foundation for an individual's future life choices and opportunities. Early marriages during this period can severely disrupt these processes, as young brides and grooms often face responsibilities they are ill-prepared to handle. Girls, in particular, are disproportionately affected, as early marriage can lead to early pregnancies, posing serious health risks for both mother and child (UNICEF, 2021). A UNICEF report noted that girls aged 15-19 are twice as likely to die during childbirth as those in their 20s, highlighting the dire health consequences. Moreover, early marriages can perpetuate the cycle of poverty, limiting educational and economic opportunities for young couples. When adolescent girls are married off, they often drop out of school, hindering their access to critical knowledge and skills. Early marriages also increase

the risk of domestic violence, as these young couples may lack the emotional and financial resources to navigate the complexities of marital life (Raj & Saggurti, 2018). The psychological toll on adolescents is substantial, with studies showing higher rates of depression and anxiety among child brides (Kamal, 2019).

This issue is complex and multifaceted, influenced by cultural, social, economic, and legal factors. In some cultures, early marriages are seen as a way to protect girls from premarital sex, while in other cases, they may be driven by economic necessities or gender inequality (Santhya et al., 2019). The legal age for marriage varies widely across countries and regions, and enforcement of these laws can be inconsistent.

### **2.3 Global Trends in Early Marriages**

Early marriages, characterized by unions taking place before the age of 18, present a complex global challenge. While prevalence rates vary widely by region, early marriages continue to be a significant concern to society, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In these regions, cultural norms, economic disparities, and limited access to education contribute to high rates of early marriages, with more than one-third of girls marrying before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2021). Such marriages often lead to adverse consequences for young brides, including early pregnancies and limited opportunities for personal development. On a more optimistic note, there has been a global trend towards reducing early marriages. Between 2000 and 2019, the global prevalence of child marriages declined from 33% to 25%, signaling some progress (UNICEF, 2021). This decline is due, in part, to the concerted efforts of governments, NGOs, and international organizations to promote education for girls, gender equality, and legal reforms setting a minimum age for marriage. In countries like Ethiopia and Nepal, the implementation of such legal changes has led to

substantial reductions in child marriage rates (UNICEF, 2019). Despite these advancements, it is essential to recognize that early marriages still exist, even in regions with low prevalence rates. Some unions may not be legally registered or recognized but occur as customary or informal marriages, which can be more challenging to address through legal reforms alone. Additionally, conflicts, displacement, and humanitarian crises can exacerbate early marriage rates, as families may resort to marrying off their daughters as a coping mechanism (Save the Children, 2015).

#### **2.4 Early Marriages in the Ghanaian Context**

In Ghana, a lower-middle-income country, child marriage is prohibited under the constitution and by law. According to the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, any person under the age of 18 is a child and can therefore not marry or be married off. This is underscored by the 1998 Children's Act, which sets the legal age of marriage at 18 for both boys and girls (Republic of Ghana, 1998). Despite this legal framework, the prevalence of child marriage in Ghana remains high, and one in five girls marries before her 18th birthday (20.7%) and one in 20 girls (4.9%) marries before her 15th birthday (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). Although child marriage can occur among males as well, the prevalence is much lower: only 2.3% of men aged 20 to 24 years are married by age 18 in Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The highest prevalence of child marriage in Ghana occurs in the five Northern regions, where more than one in three girls marry before age 18. In addition, the child marriage rate is higher in rural areas, among the poorest population and among uneducated women. The aggregate rate of marriage before age 18 has been decreasing from 35% in the 1990s to 28% in 2003 and 25% in 2008, but remained stable between 2011 and 2014. However, data from the latest two nationally representative surveys shows that the

rate of child marriage increased in the five Northern regions (from 26.4% in 2011 to 33.6% in 2014) and decreased in the other regions (from 20.9 to 18.5% and from 19.2 to 18.5% in the Central and Southern regions respectively), increasing disparities between the North and the rest of the country.

## **2.5 Factors Leading to Early Marriages**

The phenomenon of early marriages remains a complex and pervasive issue, influenced by a myriad of factors that intersect at the crossroads of socio-economic, cultural, and individual dynamics. As societies evolve, the practice of marrying at a young age continues to pose significant challenges, impacting the lives of individuals, families, and communities

### **2.5.1 Poverty**

Many families marry off their daughters to reduce their economic burden or earn income. According to UNICEF, poor girls are more likely to marry young than rich girls (UNICEF, 2018). A study by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) found that poverty was one of the main drivers of child marriage in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Nepal and Niger (ICRW, 2017).

### **2.5.2 Tradition and Societal Pressure**

Some cultures and communities have norms and expectations that encourage or force girls to marry early. Marriage is often seen as a business agreement between families or a way to protect girls from premarital sex, pregnancy or violence (UNICEF, 2018). For example, in some parts of Africa and Asia, girls are married off to settle debts, disputes or alliances (UNFPA, 2012).

### **2.5.3 Lack of Education and Opportunities**

Girls who are not in school or have limited access to education and health services are more likely to marry early. Education empowers girls to make informed choices about their lives and futures (UNICEF, 2018). A report by the World Bank and ICRW estimated that ending child marriage could increase girls' educational attainment and earnings by up to 10% (World Bank and ICRW, 2017).

### **2.5.4 Insecurity and Crisis**

In times of conflict, disaster or displacement, girls may face increased risks of child marriage as a coping strategy or a survival mechanism. Families may marry off their daughters to older men for protection or to escape poverty and violence (UNICEF, 2018). For instance, in Syria and Yemen, child marriage rates have risen sharply due to the ongoing wars and humanitarian crises (Girls Not Brides, 2019).

## **2.6 Psychological Well-Being of Young Adolescent Girls in Early Marriages**

The psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in early marriages is a matter of profound concern and requires careful consideration. Early marriages, particularly for those under the age of 18, can have severe implications for the mental health of young individuals. Research indicates that child brides and grooms often experience higher rates of anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation. They are thrust into adult roles and responsibilities before they are emotionally prepared, resulting in a sense of helplessness and disempowerment (Santhya et al., 2019). The loss of educational opportunities, limited decision-making power, and potential exposure to domestic violence can further compound the psychological stress experienced by young adolescent girls in early marriages (Santhya et al., 2019). The long-term consequences on their mental well-being can be profound, affecting their self-esteem, emotional

stability, and overall quality of life. Addressing the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in early marriages is crucial, and it requires holistic support, including mental health services and interventions that empower them to make informed choices about their lives.

### **2.6.1 Emotional Consequences of Early Marriages**

Early marriage is a complex phenomenon that has various causes and consequences for the individuals and societies involved. One of the most significant impacts of early marriage is on the emotional health of the young people who are forced or coerced into it. One of the emotional consequences of early marriage is the loss of autonomy and freedom for the young spouses, especially for girls. Early marriage often deprives them of the opportunity to pursue education, employment, social activities, and personal development. They may feel trapped in a relationship that they did not choose or consent to, and that does not meet their needs and aspirations. They may also face pressure and expectations from their families and communities to conform to traditional gender roles and norms, which may limit their agency and voice. As a result, they may experience low self-esteem, isolation, loneliness, and resentment (Fan & Koski, 2022).

Early marriage often creates a power imbalance between the partners, where the younger and less experienced spouse is more vulnerable and dependent on the older and more dominant spouse. This may lead to exploitation, manipulation, coercion, and control by the spouse or the in-laws, who may use physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence to assert their authority and demand obedience. Early married girls are particularly at risk of domestic violence, as they may be seen as inferior, immature, or disobedient by their husbands or their families. They may

also lack the knowledge, skills, resources, or support to protect themselves or seek help. Violence and abuse can have devastating effects on the emotional health of the victims, such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal thoughts, and self-harm (Rukhadze, 2018).

Early marriage often leads to early and frequent childbearing, which can pose serious health risks for both the mother and the child. Early married mothers may face complications during pregnancy and childbirth, such as anemia, hemorrhage, infection, fistula, or maternal mortality. They may also lack the information, services, or autonomy to make decisions about their reproductive health, such as using contraception, spacing births, or terminating unwanted pregnancies. Early married fathers may face economic and social pressures to provide for their families, which may affect their education, employment, or well-being. Early parenthood can also affect the emotional health of the young parents, as they may struggle to balance their own needs and interests with those of their children. They may feel overwhelmed, stressed, exhausted, or inadequate as parents, and may lack the emotional maturity, skills, or support to nurture and care for their children (Fan and Koski, 2022).

### **2.6.2 Cognitive Development and its Implications**

Early marriages can have significant implications for cognitive development, as they may disrupt the typical progression of intellectual growth during adolescence. Cognitive development encompasses processes such as reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making, all of which are crucial for navigating complex aspects of life. One notable implication is the potential interruption of educational pursuits. Early marriage, especially if accompanied by early parenthood, often leads to the discontinuation of formal education. The limited access to educational opportunities

can hinder cognitive development by restricting exposure to diverse ideas, critical thinking skills, and the acquisition of knowledge.

Research by Mensch, Singh, and Casterline (2005) highlights the negative association between early marriage and educational attainment, emphasizing that early marriages can curtail cognitive development by limiting educational experiences. This constraint may have lasting consequences on individuals' ability to adapt to an evolving world that increasingly demands advanced cognitive skills. Furthermore, the responsibilities associated with early marriages may hinder the development of decision-making and problem-solving abilities. Adolescents entering into marriage may not have had the opportunity to fully explore their own identities or learn from a range of experiences. This lack of experiential learning can impact their cognitive flexibility and adaptability in dealing with challenges. The stressors associated with early marriages, such as financial strain and family responsibilities, can also affect cognitive functioning. Chronic stress has been linked to cognitive impairment, particularly in tasks involving memory and attention (Lupien, McEwen, Gunnar, & Heim, 2009). Therefore, the challenges arising from early marriages may contribute to cognitive difficulties, potentially hindering an individual's overall cognitive development.

### **2.6.3 Social Consequences, Isolation, and Relationships**

Early marriage has various social consequences, such as limiting the opportunities for education, personal development, and social interaction of the young spouses. It also affects their relationships with their partners, families, and communities, often in negative ways. One of the main social consequences of early marriage is the disruption of education. Many girls and boys who marry early drop out of school or face difficulties in continuing their studies. This reduces their chances of acquiring the

skills, knowledge, and qualifications that could help them find better jobs and improve their living conditions. Education is also a key factor for empowering women and promoting gender equality, which are often undermined by early marriage (UNICEF, 2005).

Another social consequence of early marriage is the isolation of the young spouses from their peers, friends, and relatives. Early marriage often entails moving to a new household, sometimes in a different location, where the young spouses have to adapt to a new environment and new roles. They may have limited mobility and freedom, especially for girls, who are expected to perform domestic chores and care for children. They may also face restrictions on their participation in social activities and community events. This can affect their mental health and well-being, as well as their social networks and support systems (Fan & Koski, 2020).

Early marriage also influences the relationships of the young spouses with their partners and families. Early marriage is often based on spousal age gap, power imbalance, and traditional gender norms, which can increase the risk of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and marital dissatisfaction. Many girls and boys who marry early are not ready or able to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health, which can result in early and frequent pregnancies, maternal and child mortality, and sexually transmitted infections. Early marriage can also create conflicts and tensions between the young spouses and their in-laws, who may have different expectations and demands from them (UNICEF, 2005).

## 2.7 Academic Performance and Achievement

The relationship between early marriages and academic underachievement is a subject of considerable scholarly scrutiny, revealing a nuanced interplay of factors that significantly influence individuals' educational outcomes.

Numerous studies have delved into the intricate relationship between early marriage and academic performance, seeking to unravel the potential ramifications of such unions on educational achievement. A study by Lloyd et al. (2012) found a substantial negative correlation between early marriage and academic performance, highlighting that individuals who marry early often face challenges in balancing the demands of marital responsibilities with academic commitments. Furthermore, research conducted by Angrist and Evans (1998) posited that early marriage can exacerbate educational inequalities, particularly for females, as they may encounter obstacles in pursuing higher education and career aspirations. The societal expectations and gender roles associated with early marriage can restrict women's access to educational opportunities, resulting in a compromised academic trajectory. This echoes the findings of Raj et al. (2014), who emphasized the detrimental effects of early marriage on women's education, underscoring its contribution to a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities. On the contrary, it is imperative to acknowledge the contextual nuances surrounding early marriage and academic performance. Some studies, such as that by Mensch et al. (2005), suggest that the impact of early marriage on academic achievement may vary based on socio-economic factors and cultural contexts. In certain communities, early marriage might be normative, and the consequences on academic performance might be mitigated by supportive social structures.

Nevertheless, the prevailing evidence substantiates the notion that early marriage can impede academic success. A data-analysis conducted by Singh and Samara (2020) synthesized findings from various studies and concluded that early marriage consistently correlates with lower educational attainment. The intersectionality of factors such as socio-economic status, gender, and cultural. Research conducted by Mensch et al. (2005) emphasizes the burden that early marriage places on individuals, particularly young girls, who often face increased domestic responsibilities. Juggling marital duties such as caregiving and household management alongside academic commitments can lead to overwhelming stress and fatigue. This strain on time and energy has been identified as a key contributor to academic underachievement, as highlighted in a longitudinal study by Zimmer-Gembeck et al. (2016). Furthermore, the psychosocial implications of early marriage cannot be overlooked. Adolescent girls entering marriage prematurely may experience emotional and psychological challenges that spill over into their academic performance. A study by Lloyd et al. (2012) found that early marriage is associated with higher levels of stress and lower psychological well-being, which can negatively impact concentration, motivation, and overall academic engagement.

Gender dynamics also play a pivotal role in the relationship between early marriages and academic underachievement. The traditional gender roles often associated with early marriage can limit educational opportunities, particularly for young brides. Angrist and Evans (1998) underscore the gendered impact of early marriage, highlighting that young females may face societal expectations to prioritize familial roles over educational pursuits, perpetuating a cycle of underachievement. Moreover, early marriage can contribute to a disruption in the educational trajectory. Individuals who marry early may be compelled to discontinue their education, with financial

constraints and familial obligations often cited as reasons. This discontinuity can result in lower educational attainment, limiting future career prospects. The long-term consequences of such disruptions are illuminated in a study by Raj et al. (2014), which found that early marriage can contribute to a cycle of poverty and reduced social mobility.

## **2.8 Gender Disparities in Educational Implications**

While both genders face challenges associated with early marriage, the impact tends to be differentiated based on societal expectations, cultural norms, and economic factors. One notable aspect is the traditional gender roles often reinforced through early marriages. Studies, such as those conducted by Angrist and Evans (1998), consistently highlight that early marriage can perpetuate gender inequalities, particularly for girls. Societal expectations may dictate that girls prioritize domestic responsibilities over educational pursuits, limiting their access to formal education and hindering long-term career prospects. This can contribute to a cycle of dependency and reduced autonomy. Conversely, early marriages can exert pressure on boys to assume the role of breadwinners prematurely. The societal expectation that males should provide for their families may lead to an early entry into the workforce, disrupting their educational trajectory. Research by Lloyd et al. (2012) underscores that early marriage for boys is associated with an increased likelihood of dropping out of school to fulfill familial responsibilities, impacting their educational attainment.

Psychosocial factors also come into play differentially for boys and girls in early marriages. Girls, in particular, may experience heightened vulnerability to emotional and psychological challenges due to early marital responsibilities. The power dynamics inherent in some early marriages can contribute to elevated stress levels and

lower psychological well-being for girls, as highlighted in studies such as that by Zimmer-Gembeck et al. (2016).

Economic considerations further contribute to differential impacts. In contexts where economic opportunities are limited, early marriages may be viewed as survival strategies for families. However, this often translates into divergent consequences for boys and girls. Boys may face the burden of providing for a family at a young age, whereas girls might experience economic dependence, potentially leading to increased vulnerability within the marriage. The examination of cultural and societal influences contributing to gender disparities unveils a complex web of norms, expectations, and power structures that shape differential experiences for men and women. These influences significantly impact various aspects of life, including education, career opportunities, and personal autonomy.

Cultural norms often dictate specific roles and behaviors for each gender, reinforcing traditional stereotypes that contribute to disparities. In many societies, girls may be socialized to prioritize caregiving, domestic roles, and familial responsibilities over educational and career pursuits. This is exemplified in studies like that of Angrist and Evans (1998), where cultural expectations associated with gender roles were found to contribute to disparities in educational attainment. Societal expectations further exacerbate gender disparities, particularly in the professional sphere. Workplace cultures and biases can limit women's access to leadership positions and career advancements. The "glass ceiling" phenomenon, as described by Eagly and Carli (2007), reflects societal barriers that impede women's progress in certain career paths, contributing to gender imbalances in leadership roles.

Education, a critical determinant of future opportunities, is profoundly influenced by cultural and societal norms. Gender biases may manifest in educational curricula, limiting girls' exposure to certain fields of study. UNESCO (2017) reports that cultural norms can contribute to girls being steered towards traditionally "feminine" subjects, constraining their choices and perpetuating gender disparities in STEM fields. Moreover, the persistence of harmful cultural practices, such as early marriage and female genital mutilation, further entrench gender disparities. Research by Raj et al. (2014) and UNICEF (2020) emphasizes that these practices often stem from deeply ingrained cultural beliefs, impacting the health, education, and overall well-being of girls.

Addressing these cultural and societal influences necessitates a comprehensive approach. Efforts should include challenging ingrained stereotypes through education and awareness campaigns, implementing policies that promote gender equality in the workplace, and dismantling discriminatory practices. Additionally, fostering inclusive educational environments that encourage girls to explore diverse fields of study can contribute to breaking down gender barriers in traditionally male-dominated professions.

## **2.9 Role of School Counselors in Addressing Early Marriages**

The role of school counselors in addressing early marriages is of paramount importance in the effort to prevent this harmful practice and support the well-being of adolescent girls. School counselors serve as a vital resource for students, not only in academic matters but also in their personal and social development. By providing guidance and counseling services, they can play a significant role in raising awareness about the consequences of early marriages and helping adolescents make informed

choices (Kirk, 2010). School counselors can create a safe and confidential space for students to discuss their concerns and fears regarding early marriages (American School Counselor Association, 2020). They can offer emotional support and interventions to address issues related to gender inequality, family pressures, and cultural norms that contribute to early marriages (Dabirian et al., 2014). Through one-on-one counseling or group sessions, counselors can empower students with the knowledge and skills to resist early marriages and pursue their education (Kirk, 2010). Moreover, counselors can work closely with teachers and parents to educate them about the risks and challenges associated with early marriages, fostering a supportive environment that values education and the development of adolescents. They can also collaborate with local organizations and authorities to advocate for legal reforms and community awareness programs aimed at preventing early marriages (American School Counselor Association, 2020).

### **2.9.1 Availability of Community Resources for Support**

Access to community resources plays a pivotal role in supporting individuals facing the challenges associated with early marriages. Counseling services, educational programs, and healthcare facilities can provide essential assistance. According to studies, community-based initiatives are crucial for empowering individuals and addressing the complex issues surrounding early marriages (Clark et al., 2017). In many regions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations work actively to provide support. These organizations often focus on creating awareness about reproductive health, offering guidance on family planning, and conducting programs to enhance life skills. The presence of such community resources is associated with improved outcomes for individuals in early marriages (Erulkar et al., 2016).

### **2.9.2 Existing Intervention Programs and its Effectiveness**

Several intervention programs globally have been developed to address the complex challenges associated with early marriages. One notable initiative is the “Berhane Hewan” program in Ethiopia, focusing on delaying early marriages and enhancing educational opportunities for girls. This comprehensive effort includes educational initiatives, community awareness campaigns, and support for girls’ empowerment. Evaluations of the program, conducted by Erulkar et al. (2016), revealed positive outcomes, such as an increase in the average marriage age and improved educational attainment among participants.

Another impactful program is the “Adolescent Girls Empowerment Program” in Nepal, which targets adolescent girls with the aim of empowering them through education and life skills training. Components of this initiative include mentorship and community engagement, contributing to positive effects on girls’ empowerment, including delayed marriage and increased educational attainment (Baird et al., 2010).

The “Let Girls Learn” initiative, launched globally by the United States government, seeks to enhance educational opportunities for girls worldwide. This initiative employs strategies such as scholarships, community mobilization, and advocacy for girls’ education. While facing challenges, the initiative has contributed to increased awareness and support for girls’ education on a global scale (USAID, 2017). In Bangladesh, the “TESFA” program targets rural communities to address the root causes of child marriage through community involvement. This initiative employs community dialogues, awareness campaigns, and economic empowerment initiatives. Early indications suggest a positive impact on changing community attitudes and reducing the prevalence of early marriages (ICRW, 2019).

The effectiveness of intervention programs addressing early marriages becomes evident through various key indicators. One crucial measure is the change in the average age of marriage within targeted communities. Positive shifts in this aspect indicate successful interventions that have influenced societal norms, contributing to the delayed onset of marriages (Erulkar et al., 2016). Another significant indicator is the improvement in educational attainment among program participants. By offering educational opportunities and life skills training, these programs empower individuals, fostering personal development and resilience (Baird et al., 2010).

Changes in community attitudes and awareness, assessed through surveys and qualitative methods, reflect the success of awareness campaigns and community engagement strategies (ICRW, 2019). Positive shifts in societal perceptions toward early marriages demonstrate a growing understanding of the associated challenges. Additionally, interventions promoting economic empowerment and livelihood improvements address a fundamental cause of early marriages – financial pressures (USAID, 2017). These economic initiatives not only enhance community well-being but also contribute to sustainable change by mitigating the economic vulnerabilities that often drive early marriages.

#### **2.9.4 Challenges in Providing Counseling and Support**

Providing counseling and support in various contexts faces a myriad of challenges that stem from the complexity of human experiences and the diverse nature of the issues individuals encounter. One substantial challenge is the stigma attached to seeking mental health assistance. Despite growing awareness, societal attitudes and misconceptions about mental health can deter individuals from seeking counseling (Corrigan, 2016). Moreover, the availability and accessibility of mental health

services pose significant challenges, especially in resource-constrained regions. Limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of trained professionals can impede the delivery of essential counseling services (World Health Organization, 2018). Cultural diversity further adds complexity to providing effective counseling. Cultural diversities influence perceptions of mental health, help-seeking behaviors, and the acceptability of certain therapeutic approaches (Kirmayer et al., 2017). A lack of cultural competence among counselors may hinder their ability to establish rapport and offer culturally sensitive support. Additionally, confidentiality concerns contribute to the reluctance of individuals to share personal struggles, fearing potential breaches of privacy (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2017).

In the digital age, the rise of online counseling introduces its own set of challenges. Issues related to data security, ethical standards, and the potential for miscommunication in virtual interactions create new considerations for providing effective support (Maheu et al., 2020). Furthermore, the evolving landscape of technology requires ongoing training for counselors to adapt to virtual platforms and maintain the quality of their services. Other challenge is the prevalence of comorbidities, where individuals often present with multiple interconnected mental health issues. Addressing these intertwined concerns requires a nuanced and comprehensive approach, as overlooking one aspect may impede overall progress (Kessler et al., 2011). The complexity of comorbid conditions demands a high level of expertise and coordination among mental health professionals, making it a persistent challenge in the counseling landscape. Furthermore, socio-economic disparities contribute to unequal access to counseling services. Individuals with limited financial means may face barriers in obtaining the support they need, perpetuating disparities in

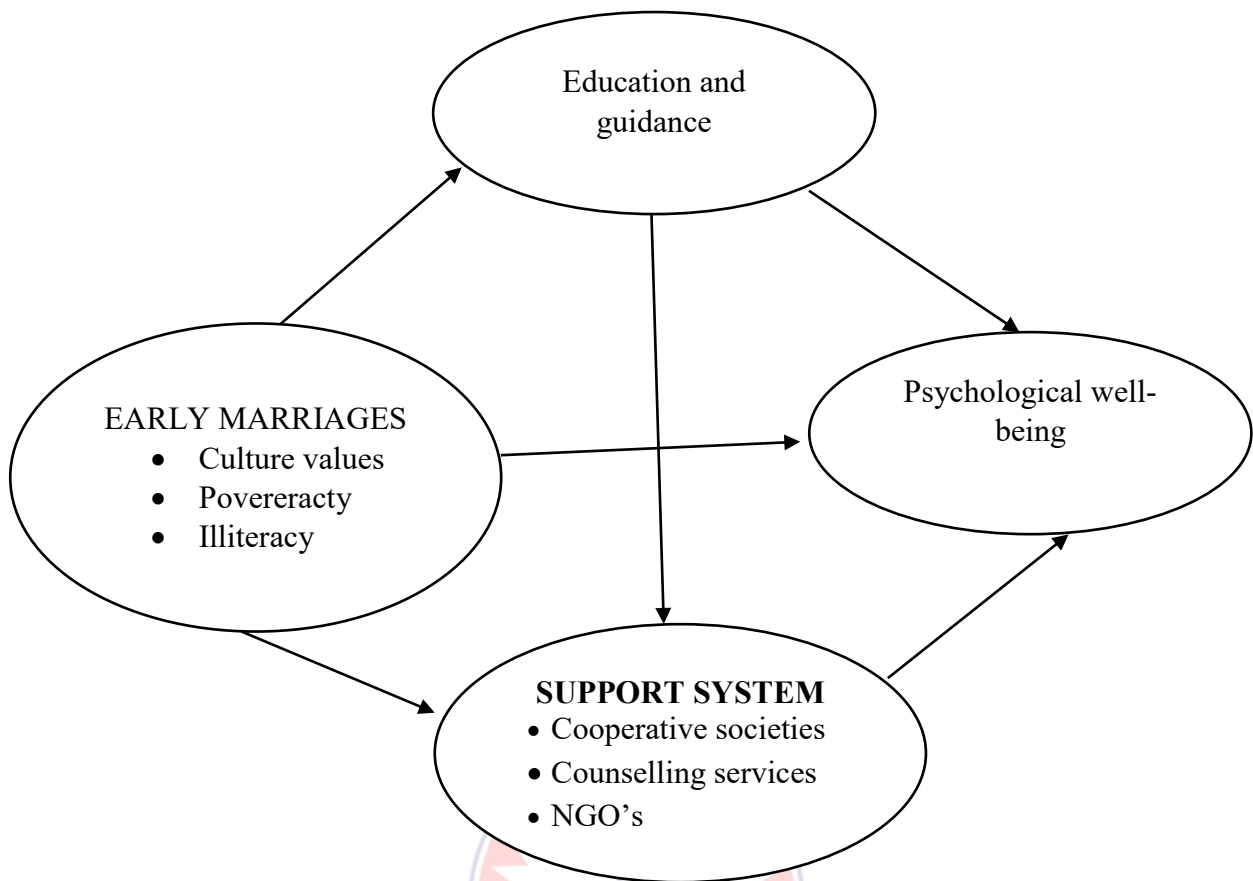
mental health outcomes (Alegría et al., 2008). The socio-economic divide underscores the importance of developing inclusive and accessible mental health programs that cater to diverse financial circumstances. Another challenge lies in the intersectionality of identities, where individuals may experience compounding discrimination based on factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. This complexity requires counselors to navigate intersecting layers of identity-related stressors and discrimination, demanding a heightened awareness and sensitivity to the unique struggles faced by each individual (Cole, 2009). Fostering inclusivity and promoting cultural competence are essential in addressing these intersectional challenges and tailoring counseling approaches to the specific needs of diverse populations.

## **2.10 Empirical Review**

Numerous studies have investigated various aspects of early marriage, shedding light on its prevalence, determinants, and consequences. Ridwan and Munir (2021) explored the role of family ties in early marriage decisions among young women in Indonesia. They conducted a qualitative study using in-depth interviews with 15 married women aged 15-24. They found that family ties influenced early marriage decisions in three ways: as a form of social pressure, as a way of strengthening kinship bonds, and as a source of support and guidance. Callaghan et al. (2015) reviewed the literature on the causes and consequences of early marriage in low and middle income countries. They identified four main factors that influenced early marriage decisions: family ties, gender inequality, poverty, and insecurity. They also discussed the reproductive, emotional, and socio-cultural consequences of early marriage, as well as the legal and policy frameworks and interventions to address early marriage.

Cloward (2014) examined the relationship between early marriage and family honor in sub-Saharan Africa. He used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from Demographic and Health Surveys and qualitative data from focus group discussions and interviews. He found that early marriage was used as a strategy to protect or restore family honor in situations where girls were exposed to sexual violence, premarital pregnancy, or elopement. He also found that early marriage had negative effects on girls' education, health, and empowerment. A seminal work by Raj et al. (2010) comprehensively examined the prevalence and associated factors of child marriage in South Asia, one of the regions most affected by this practice. Their research underscored the intricate interplay of socioeconomic factors, cultural norms, and the limited availability of educational opportunities in perpetuating the prevalence of early marriages. In another significant contribution, Mensch, Singh, and Casterline (2005) conducted an extensive investigation into the consequences of early marriage, particularly focusing on its impact on women's reproductive health. Their research illuminated the heightened vulnerability of young brides to adverse reproductive outcomes, emphasizing early childbearing and limited access to reproductive healthcare services.

Furthermore, Nour (2009) provided a global perspective by examining the broader health implications of early marriage. The study underscored the alarming association between early marriage and heightened rates of maternal mortality and morbidity, emphasizing the urgent need for a holistic approach to address the health disparities stemming from this practice. Nour's work contributed significantly to the understanding of the global health impact of early marriage, transcending regional boundaries and highlighting its relevance to broader public health discourse.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for the Study**

**Source: Author's Construct, (2025).**

### 2.11 Chapter Summary

The existing literature on early marriage provides valuable insights into its prevalence, determinants, and consequences across various contexts. Studies by Ridwan and Munir (2021), Callaghan et al. (2015), Cloward (2014), Raj et al. (2010), Mensch, Singh, and Casterline (2005), and Nour (2009) have explored different aspects of early marriage, including its drivers, outcomes, and broader health implications. However, despite these contributions, several gaps remain specifically focused on understanding the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in low-income settings. This current study aims to address this gap by examining the psychological effects of early marriage on young adolescent girls in the Mamprusi

East Municipality. By focusing on this aspect, the study aims to provide valuable insights for crafting targeted interventions and support services to improve the mental well-being of young adolescent girls thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the challenges they face and informing appropriate interventions and support services.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used for the study. It describes the research designs, the study area, population, sample and sampling procedures, data collection instrument, validity and reliability and ethical considerations employed in conducting the research on psychological well-being of early marriages among young adolescent girls in the East Mamprusi Municipality.

#### 3.1 Research Approach

The study adopted the mixed methods approach which includes both quantitative and qualitative approach to research. From an ontological perspective the mixed method perceives reality as an objective and subjective and endorses the use of multiple perspective. The mixed-methods approach combines quantitative surveys with a structured questionnaire and qualitative interviews with counselors. The use of a mixed methods approach in this study allowed for a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in early marriages. The combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methods enabled the researcher to gather. The quantitative component, which involves structured questionnaires, allows for the collection of numerical data that can provide objective insights into the prevalence of psychological distress, anxiety, and the broader effects of early marriages on adolescents (Bryman, 2016).

On the other hand, the qualitative component involving in-depth interviews with counselors allowed for a deeper exploration of the participants' personal experiences and insights into the factors contributing to early marriages. This qualitative data

helps to contextualize the quantitative findings by shedding light on the social, cultural, and emotional dimensions that numbers alone cannot reveal .

Specifically, the mixed-methods was the most appropriate strategy for addressing the stated objectives. To investigate the factors contributing to the increased rate of early marriages, quantitative questionnaires provided statistical evidence on prevalence and socio-demographic patterns while also capturing cultural, familial, and economic influences. To assess the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls involved in early marriages, standardized questionnaire items measured levels of anxiety, depression, and stress. To analyze the educational implications of early marriages, survey data revealed dropout rates and academic performance trends, while qualitative accounts highlighted classroom challenges, peer relationships, and the disruption of learning trajectories, insights into the effectiveness of current interventions and recommendations for improvement with selected adolescent girls provided. Finally, to identify the support systems needed for young adolescent girls in early marriages, the interviews enabled identified gaps in existing support structures with counselors. By collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, the mixed-methods ensured that each objective was addressed comprehensively, with statistical breadth complemented by narrative depth, thereby enhancing the validity, reliability, and practical relevance of the findings.

### **3.2 Research Design**

Research design refers to the structured plan or blueprint that guides the collection and analysis of data in a research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It encompasses the overall strategy and framework used to address the research questions or objectives, providing a systematic approach to gather relevant information.

In this study, a convergent parallel design was utilized to investigate the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in early marriages in the East Mamprusi Municipality, with implications for counseling. The use of a convergent parallel design for this study is justified based on its suitability for addressing the research objectives and answering the research questions regarding the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in early marriages in the East Mamprusi Municipality.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), the convergent parallel design is particularly advantageous when a researcher seeks to collect both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the research topic. In this study, the combination of quantitative and qualitative data allows for the investigation of the psychological well-being of adolescent girls in early marriages from multiple perspectives. The quantitative component provides statistical insight into the prevalence of psychological distress, anxiety, and other factors related to early marriages, while the qualitative component offers deeper insights into the personal experiences, cultural norms, and emotional challenges faced by the participants.

This approach enables the triangulation of data, where the results from one type of data (quantitative or qualitative) can be compared and corroborated with the other, enhancing the reliability and depth of the findings (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). By using a convergent parallel design, the study ensures that both the breadth (through quantitative measures) and the depth (through qualitative interviews) of the subject matter are addressed. This is critical in understanding the multi-dimensional nature of early marriages, which involves not only measurable psychological outcomes but also

personal, cultural, and social factors that affect young girls' lives. As Creswell (2015) argues, the simultaneous collection of both types of data allows for a more robust and comprehensive understanding of complex research problems, such as those related to adolescent girls in early marriages.

### **3.3 Study Area**

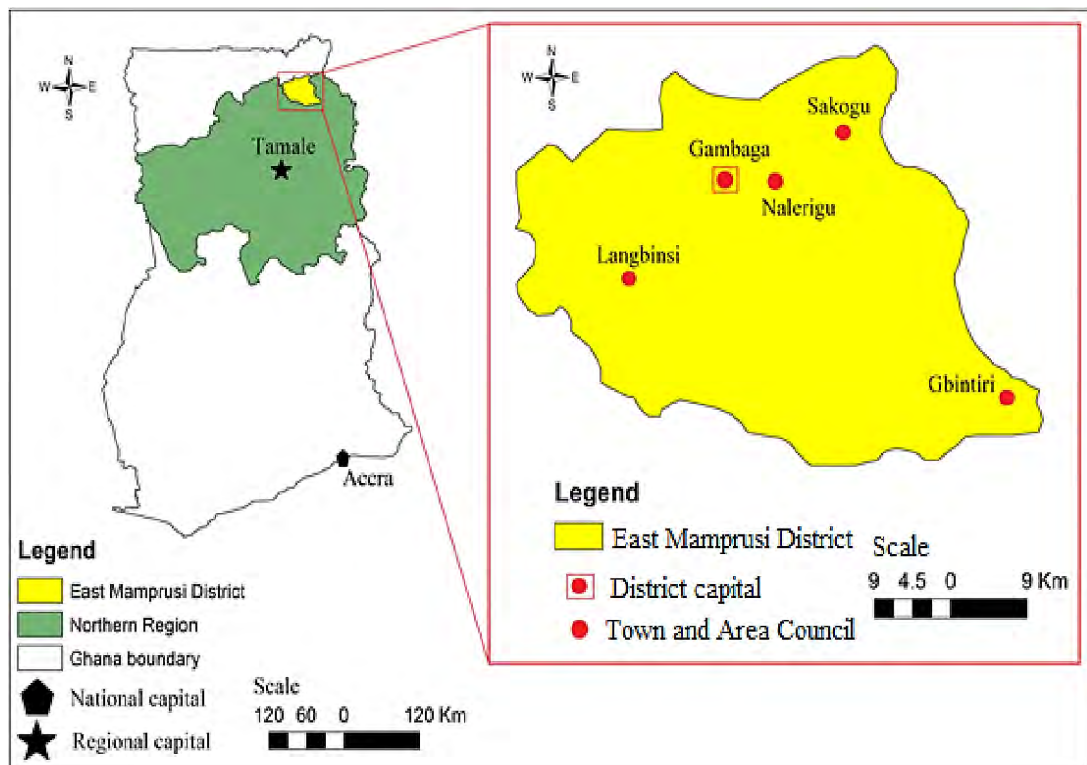
The East Mamprusi Municipality is one of the administrative districts in the North East Region of Ghana. It covers a land area of 10,659 square kilometers and has a population of 230,543, according to the 2021 Population and Housing Census (GSS, 2021). The population is composed of 60 percent females and 40 percent males, with a growth rate of 4 percent per annum. The municipality is predominantly rural, with 67.6 percent of the population living in rural areas.

The municipality has five senior high schools, namely Nalerigu Senior High School, Gambaga Girls Senior High School, Langbinsi Senior High School, Nalerigu Technical/Vocational School and Sakogu Secondary/Technical School. The total enrollment of these schools as of 2020 was 3,410 students, with 1,050 in SHS1, 1,176 in SHS2, and 1,184 in SHS3 (East Mamprusi Municipality, 2020). The municipality also benefits from the Free Senior High School Policy, which aims to increase access and quality of secondary education in Ghana.

The municipality faces some social challenges, such as teenage pregnancy and early marriage, which affect the health and education of young girls. A study conducted in 2020 found that the socio-cultural factors influencing teenage pregnancy in the municipality include poverty, peer pressure, lack of parental guidance, and traditional beliefs (East Mamprusi Municipality, 2020). The study also revealed that the prevalence of teenage pregnancy in the municipality was 18.9 percent, higher than the

national average of 14 percent. Another study conducted in 2023 found that the individual and community-level factors associated with early marriage in Ghana include low education, low wealth, rural residence, and high fertility. The study also found that the provincial prevalence of child marriage in 2018 ranged from 32 percent on the Copperbelt to 57 percent in Eastern province.

The East Mamprusi Municipality is a diverse and dynamic district that has a lot of potential for development. However, it also faces some challenges that need to be addressed to improve the well-being and opportunities of its people.



**Figure 2: Map of East Mamprusi Municipality**

### 3.4 Population

Population refers to the entire group sharing common characteristics that the study aims to investigate (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this research, a total of 100 adolescent girls were drawn from five Senior High Schools within the East Mamprusi

Municipality: Nalerigu SHS (443), Nalerigu Technical/Vocational School (650), Gambaga Girls SHS (1,199), Langbinsi SHS (68), , and Sakogo SHS (90). The choice of these schools was deliberate, as they reflect the socio-cultural diversity of the municipality and provide access to students who are directly affected by or at risk of early marriage. In addition to the students, five (5) professional counselors from the selected schools were purposively included because of their expertise in addressing the psychological challenges associated with early marriages.

The study focused on Form Two students specifically because this group represented a stable academic group, unlike Form one students, who were still transitioning, or Form three students, who were preoccupied with examination preparations. Additionally, Form Two students were most likely to fall within the age range associated with early marriages, making them a highly relevant group for the study.

The decision to focus solely on adolescent girls is that early marriages predominantly affected girls in the East Mamprusi Municipality, and their psychological well-being formed the core focus of the research. The exclusion of boys from this study is deliberate and necessary to preserve the integrity and focus of the research. Empirical evidence consistently shows that early marriages overwhelmingly affect girls, both in terms of prevalence and severity of consequences. In the East Mamprusi Municipality, adolescent girls are disproportionately subjected to early marriages due to entrenched cultural norms, gendered expectations, and socio-economic pressures that rarely target boys with the same intensity. While boys may occasionally be involved in early marriages, their experiences do not carry the same psychological, educational, and health burdens. Girls face unique vulnerabilities such as school dropout, early pregnancy, domestic responsibilities, and heightened risks of anxiety,

depression, and social isolation. Including boys would dilute the analysis, obscure the gendered nature of the problem, and weaken the study's ability to generate targeted, evidence-based interventions. By focusing solely on adolescent girls, the research ensures methodological clarity, highlights the most affected population, and provides actionable insights for policies and counseling strategies designed to address the urgent and disproportionate challenges faced by girls in early marriages.

Counselors were also included in the population to provide professional perspectives on the psychological and counseling needs of young adolescent girls in early marriages, further enhancing the study's holistic approach to understanding these challenges.

Participants who were married or had previously been in an early marriage and were currently enrolled in one of the five selected schools were included in the study. Exclusion criteria included students who were not in Form Two, male students, girls without any experience of early marriage, and counselors without relevant experience or training in early marriage counseling. These criteria ensured that the study targeted individuals who could provide meaningful and relevant insights into the psychological well-being challenges associated with early marriages.

### **3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Strategy**

For this study, a sample size of 105 including 100 students and 5 counsellors was drawn from five Senior High Schools within the East Mamprusi Municipality. According to Creswell & Creswell (2017), a sample size of 100 is typically adequate for achieving statistical power in social science research, especially when the population is relatively homogeneous. This ensures that the results are reliable and precise, with a reasonable margin of error, which is essential for a study examining

the psychological well-being of adolescent girls in early marriages. In addition, Bryman (2016) notes that the sample size should consider practical constraints such as time and resources. A sample of 100 is manageable, allowing for thorough data collection and analysis within the scope of the study. This was achieved by Slovin's formula (1960):

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2}$$

$n$  = Sampling size;  $e$  = Margin error (0.05);  $N$  = Population size (133)

$$n = \frac{133}{1+133(0.05)^2} = 99.8 \approx 100$$

Therefore, the sample size for this study was determined to be 100 as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Sampled Population**

Schools	Population Size	$[\frac{PS}{PT} \times n]$	Sample Size
Nalerigu SHS	27	$\frac{27}{133} \times 100$	20
Nalerigu Technical/Vocational	22	$\frac{22}{133} \times 100$	17
Gambaga Girls SHS	30	$\frac{30}{133} \times 100$	22
Langbinsi SHS,	26	$\frac{26}{133} \times 100$	20
Sakogu SHS.	28	$\frac{28}{133} \times 100$	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>		<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Data, (2024)**

The sampling strategy for this study utilized stratified random sampling, simple random sampling, and expert purposive sampling to ensure the selection of appropriate participants for both the quantitative and qualitative components of the research.

The first step involved the use of stratified random sampling to ensure that a diverse and representative sample of adolescent girls was selected from various schools within the East Mamprusi Municipality. The schools (Nalerigu SHS, Nalerigu Technical/Vocational School, Gambaga Girls SHS, Langbinsi SHS, and Sakogo SHS) were grouped into different strata based on specific characteristics relevant to the study. These strata included factors such as the type of school (e.g., general or technical/vocational), location, and size of the student body. Once the schools were grouped into strata, simple random sampling was applied within each stratum. For this, a paper toss method was employed, where each student in the stratum had an equal chance to select a “Yes” or “No” paper. Only those who selected “Yes” were included as participants in the study, ensuring randomness and reducing bias in participant selection.

For the qualitative component of the study, expert purposive sampling was used to select experienced counselors working in the East Mamprusi Municipality. Expert purposive sampling allows researchers to deliberately choose participants with specialized knowledge and experience relevant to the study’s objectives (Etikan, 2016). Counselors were selected based on their expertise, years of experience, and familiarity with the counseling needs of young adolescent girls, particularly in relation to early marriages. Specific criteria for selection included involvement in counseling programs for young girls, specialized training in addressing early marriage-related psychological issues, and extensive professional experience in adolescent counseling within the municipality. In addition, 6 adolescent girls who had experienced early marriage were purposively selected from a larger pool of 100 identified adolescent girls who had gone through early marriage. The selection process was conducted with the assistance of school authorities, who helped identify

girls willing to participate in the study. The primary criteria for selection included their ability to articulate their experiences, their psychological readiness to discuss their past, and their willingness to provide informed consent. Care was taken to ensure diversity in age, marital duration, and personal experiences to capture a broad range of perspectives on the psychological effects of early marriage. This approach ensured that the study included voices that could offer rich, in-depth narratives about the psychological impact of early marriage and the coping mechanisms employed (Palinkas et al., 2015).

### **3.6 Data Collection Instrument**

In this research, two principal instruments were employed to gather data to give insights into the psychological well-being and counseling implications of early marriages among Senior High School (SHS) students in the East Mamprusi Municipality: there were questionnaires and interview guide.

#### **3.6.1 Questionnaire**

A questionnaire is a structured research instrument used to gather data from participants by presenting them with a series of predetermined questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The questionnaire for SHS students was designed with consideration of the research objectives. It commenced with demographic inquiries to establish a baseline understanding of the participants. Following this, questions were tailored to gauge the students' exposure to early marriages, incorporating closed-ended questions for quantitative data. The self-rated psychological well-being section utilized a Likert scale to quantify students' perceptions. Additionally, the questionnaire explored students' awareness of counseling services within their schools, acknowledging the potential influence of support structures on psychological well-being.

### 3.6.2 Interview Guide

An interview is a qualitative research method involving a structured conversation between a researcher and a participant to gather in-depth insights into their experiences, perspectives, and attitudes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The interview guide was designed for professional counselors and the 6 selected adolescent girls who had direct experiences with early marriage, providing valuable insights into the age at which they entered into marriage and the impact it had on their lives. Beginning with an exploration of counselors' professional backgrounds, the guide established context and highlighted their expertise in dealing with adolescent issues. For the adolescent girls, the guide included questions that focused on their personal experiences, emotional well-being, and coping mechanisms following early marriage.

The core questions in the interview guide were intentionally open-ended, allowing both counselors and adolescent participants to share detailed observations and experiences related to the psychological challenges arising from early marriages. The guide also probed into the effectiveness of counseling interventions, seeking to measure their impact on the well-being of adolescent girls. Additionally, it explored counselors' perspectives on the availability and efficacy of institutional support systems within the educational context. The qualitative nature of the interview guide facilitated a deeper exploration of both counselors' and adolescent girls' experiences, enriching the study with nuanced perspectives on the psychological effects of early marriage and the support structures available.

### **3.7 Validity**

Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument or methodology measures what it intends to measure (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). In this study, rigorous measures were implemented to ensure the validity of the research findings. Content validity was upheld by designing research instruments, including surveys and interview protocols, to encompass all relevant aspects of the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in early marriages and the counseling practices of experienced counselors. This involved a thorough review of existing literature, consultation with subject matter experts, and pilot testing of the instruments to confirm their adequacy in addressing the research objectives. Criterion validity was maintained through the utilization of standardized psychological assessment tools in the quantitative component. These tools, validated in previous research, were chosen for their ability to measure constructs such as depression, anxiety, stress, and marital satisfaction accurately.

Moreover, the qualitative interviews conducted with counselors provided a criterion against which the quantitative findings could be benchmarked, further bolstering the validity of the results. Construct validity was ensured by employing multiple methods of data collection, including surveys, interviews, to capture diverse facets of the psychological well-being of young girls in early marriages. Triangulating findings from these various sources enhanced the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the research outcomes. External validity was strengthened by the sampling strategy, which aimed to obtain a representative sample of young girls in early marriages in the East Mamprusi Municipality, thus increasing the generalizability of the findings to similar populations and contexts. Lastly, internal validity was safeguarded by minimizing threats such as confounding variables and bias through random sampling techniques, standardized interview protocols, and statistical analyses to control for

potential confounders. By adhering to these principles of validity, the study produced robust and meaningful findings that could inform counseling practice and policy development concerning early marriages among young adolescent girls in the region.

A total of 20 participants were purposively selected for the pilot study to ensure that the research instruments were tested in a context similar to the main study population. The pilot study involved 20 respondents from Yagaba Senior High School similar to the study area. The selection was guided by the need to include adolescent girls who shared the same socio-cultural background, age range, and educational experiences as those targeted in the full study. These participants were chosen because of its accessibility and willingness of school authorities to support the research process. The purposive sampling technique was used to deliberately select students who could provide relevant feedback on the clarity, sensitivity, and appropriateness of the questionnaire and interview guide. Limiting the pilot sample to 20 ensured that the process was manageable, minimized disruption to school activities, and still provided sufficient insights to refine the instruments for reliability and validity before the main data collection. This process helped identify ambiguities in the questionnaire. In a similar vein 3 counsellors were also selected from the school for the pilot test and assess the clarity of the interview guide. Feedback from the pilot test was used to refine the instruments, ensuring that the questions were clear, unambiguous, and effectively captured the required data for the study.

### **3.8 Reliability**

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of measurements or results obtained through a particular instrument or methodology (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). Ensuring the consistency and stability of research findings was a paramount

consideration in this study to maintain the trustworthiness of the results. Internal consistency reliability was upheld through the careful selection and utilization of validated research instruments. For the quantitative component, standardized psychological assessment tools were chosen for their established reliability in measuring constructs such as depression, anxiety, stress, and marital satisfaction. These instruments had demonstrated high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients typically exceeding 0.80, confirming their reliability in consistently capturing the intended constructs across different respondents.

Additionally, the qualitative interviews were conducted using well-defined protocols and guidelines to maintain consistency in data collection procedures. Adherence to standardized procedures and coding schemes minimized discrepancies in interpretation and coding, thereby enhancing the reliability of qualitative findings. Test-retest reliability was also assessed where applicable, particularly in longitudinal studies or when repeated measurements were necessary. This involved administering research instruments to a subset of participants at two different time points and analyzing the degree of consistency in responses over time.

### **3.9 Data Collection Procedure**

Before initiating data collection, clear consent protocols were established for both students participating in the questionnaire and counselors involved in interviews. The researcher also underwent training to ensure uniformity in administering instruments and conducting interviews. The questionnaire was distributed to all Senior High School students across five selected schools in the East Mamprusi Municipality, namely Nalerigu SHS, Nalerigu Technical/Vocational School, Gambaga Girls SHS, Langbinsi SHS, and Sakogo SHS.

Prior to distribution of the questionnaire, formal permission was obtained from school authorities, and ethical clearance was secured to ensure compliance with research standards. The researcher worked closely with teachers in each school, who assisted in assembling the selected students in designated venues such as school halls, classrooms, and guidance offices. At each venue, teachers explained the objectives of the study, provided clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, and emphasized confidentiality and voluntariness. To ensure full coverage, the questionnaires were handed directly to each student present in the session, and students were given adequate time to respond. The completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion under the supervision of the teachers and the researcher, which eliminated the risk of non-return. This systematic approach ensured that every student selected received and completed the questionnaire, resulting in a 100% retrieval rate. This high rate was achieved because the distribution was carefully coordinated through teachers, the exercise was conducted in controlled venues where all students were present, and the structured nature of the questionnaire made it easy to complete within the allotted time. Also students were motivated by the presence of their teachers and the researcher, which reinforced the importance of the exercise.

For professional counselors, the interview guide was utilized to conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The inclusion of interviews was intentional to complement the quantitative data gathered through questionnaires and to provide deeper insights into the phenomenon of early marriages. While questionnaires offered broad statistical patterns, they could not fully capture the lived experiences, emotions, and nuanced perspectives of those directly affected. Interviews with **professional counselors** were conducted to draw on their expertise in psychological support,

counseling practices, and intervention strategies. Counselors provided professional reflections on the challenges faced by adolescent girls, the adequacy of existing support systems, and the effectiveness of counseling interventions. Their input was essential for linking the findings to practical counseling approaches and policy recommendations.

Prior to the interviews, the researcher formally contacted each counselor and explained the objectives of the study, the themes to be explored, and the ethical considerations, including confidentiality and voluntary participation. Counselors were provided with a copy of the interview guide in advance to allow them to familiarize themselves with the questions and prepare their thoughts. This preparation ensured that discussions were focused, reflective, and aligned with the research objectives.

The interviews were scheduled at venues convenient to the counselors, typically within their offices or designated counseling spaces, to create a comfortable and professional environment. Each session was conducted face-to-face, allowing the researcher to observe non-verbal cues and build rapport. The semi-structured format provided flexibility, enabling counselors to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring consistency across interviews. Open-ended questions encouraged them to share detailed perspectives on the psychological challenges faced by adolescent girls in early marriages and the effectiveness of existing counseling support systems.

Selected adolescent girls (6) were also interviewed to complement the quantitative survey data. The rationale for including them was to capture their lived experiences, emotions, and personal narratives that could not be fully expressed through structured questionnaires. Their voices provided depth to the study, revealing the psychological, educational, and social consequences of early marriages from the perspective of those

directly affected. This dual approach, interviewing both counselors and girls ensured that the research captured both professional insights and personal realities, thereby strengthening the validity and richness of the findings.

On average, each interview lasted between 45 minutes and one hour, which provided sufficient time for in-depth exploration without causing fatigue. The researcher took detailed notes and, with consent, recorded the sessions to ensure accuracy in capturing responses. This systematic approach enhanced the credibility of the data and allowed for rich qualitative insights into the role of counseling and the lived experiences of adolescent girls in early marriages. Throughout the data collection process, regular checks were implemented to ensure data quality. This included periodic reviews of completed questionnaires for accuracy and completeness. For interviews, audio recordings were transcribed verbatim to capture counselors' responses faithfully.

Once the data collection phase concluded, a data analysis process commenced. Quantitative data from the questionnaires underwent statistical analysis to derive meaningful patterns and trends. Qualitative data from the interviews were subjected to thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of recurring themes and nuanced insights.

### **3.10 Data Analysis**

The data analysis for this research study involved several approaches. The data collected, which included both quantitative data from questionnaires and qualitative data from in-depth interviews, were initially subjected to a data cleaning process to ensure accuracy and completeness. Following this, quantitative data underwent statistical analysis using SPSS software version 24.

Descriptive statistics, such as means, frequencies, and percentages, were computed to explore the factors contributing to early marriages among young adolescent girls and their social impact. Inferential statistics such as t-test analysis was conducted to determine the level of impact of early marriage on these adolescent girls. This initial step provided a comprehensive overview of the demographic information and key variables related to early marriages and psychological well-being.

For the qualitative data, transcriptions of the recorded interviews were generated to create a text-based dataset for analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and meaningful categories within the qualitative data. This systematic process of coding and categorizing allowed for the extraction of key themes related to the psychological challenges and counseling support systems with early marriages.

### **3.11 Trustworthiness and Authenticity of the Qualitative Research Process**

This study employed several strategies to address key criteria: dependability, confirmability, credibility, transferability, and audit trails, with contemporary definitions and guidelines from current qualitative research literature.

**3.11.1 Dependability:** refers to the stability and consistency of the research process over time Connelly (2016). To achieve this, the researcher documented each step, including the development of a comprehensive interview guide to ensure uniformity during data collection. A code-recode procedure was implemented, where data were analyzed, set aside, and then reanalyzed after a period to check for consistency in the emerging themes. Additionally, peer examination was conducted by involving an external qualitative expert to review the coding process and interpretations, ensuring that the findings were not influenced by personal biases.

**3.11.2 Confirmability:** ensures that the results are shaped by the participants' responses rather than researcher bias (Shenton, 2004). In this study, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal throughout the research process, recording personal reflections, assumptions, and potential biases. This practice promoted self-awareness and helped mitigate undue influence on data interpretation. Furthermore, an audit trail was established by preserving all raw data, including interview transcripts and field notes, allowing for external audits to verify the findings' authenticity. This ensured that study results can be verified by an external reviewer, thus supporting the neutrality of the findings.

**3.11.3 Credibility:** pertains to the confidence in the truth of the data and interpretations. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), credibility refers to the extent to which the findings accurately represent the participants' perspectives and lived experiences. To enhance credibility, the researcher employed triangulation by collecting data from multiple sources, such as interviews with different stakeholders and relevant documents, to cross-verify the information. Member checking was also utilized, wherein participants were provided with summaries of the findings to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations. This collaborative approach ensured that the participants' perspectives were accurately represented.

**3.11.4 Transferability:** relates to the extent to which the findings can be applied to other contexts. The researcher provided thick descriptions of the research setting, participants' backgrounds, and the phenomena under study. By offering detailed contextual information, readers can assess the applicability of the findings to similar settings or populations. As Creswell and Poth (2018), suggest, transferability is

supported by providing detailed accounts that allow others to determine the relevance of the findings to their own contexts.

**3.11.5 Audit trails:** involve a transparent documentation process that allows others to trace the research steps. In this study, the researcher maintained organized records of all phases, including data collection methods, analysis procedures, and decision-making processes. This transparency facilitates external evaluations and reinforces the study's methodological rigor. According to Nowell et al. (2017), audit trails enhance the trustworthiness of a study by ensuring that each decision made during the research process is documented and can be reviewed by others.

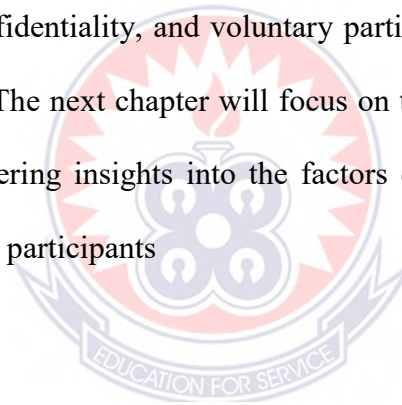
### **3.12 Ethical Considerations**

The ethical considerations in this research were of paramount importance. Firstly, informed consent was diligently sought from all participants, ensuring that they were fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential implications. Confidentiality measures were strictly adhered to, with participant anonymity safeguarded through the use of coded identifiers instead of personal details in data analysis. Additionally, participants were assured that their involvement was voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without facing repercussions. Throughout the research process, the principles of respect, beneficence, and justice were upheld, acknowledging the well-being and rights of the participants while ensuring the study's scientific integrity (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979).

### **3.13 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the methodology employed in the study, detailing the mixed-methods approach that integrated both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

The study employed a convergent parallel design, collecting both quantitative data through structured questionnaires and qualitative data through in-depth interviews with counselors. A stratified random sampling strategy was used to select participants from five Senior High Schools within the municipality, followed by simple random sampling to ensure unbiased participant selection. The purposive sampling technique was employed to select counselors, ensuring that those with relevant experience in counseling young girls in early marriages were included in the study. Data was analyzed using SPSS software for quantitative data, and thematic analysis for qualitative data. Measures of validity and reliability were implemented, including pilot testing and the use of standardized tools. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were strictly followed throughout the study. The next chapter will focus on the analysis and presentation of the data collected, offering insights into the factors contributing to early marriages and their impact on the participants



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

The chapter begins by investigating the factors contributing to the increased rate of early marriages in the East Mamprusi Municipality by offering a detailed examination of the underlying causes that drive this phenomenon. Following this issue the issues of psychological well-being of young adolescents involved in early marriages which highlight the mental and emotional challenges faced by these individuals. The chapter further delves into the educational implications of early marriages by analyzing how such marriages affect the academic pursuits and future opportunities. Finally, the chapter identifies the support systems and strategies and interventions necessary to assist young adolescents in navigating the challenges posed by early marriages.

#### 4.1 Background characteristics of Respondents

##### 4.1.1 Personal Information

The background characteristics on respondents showed in table 2 revealed that the majority of participants, 65%, were within the age range of 16-18 years. This was followed by 20% who were aged between 22-23 years, and 15% who were between 10-15 years old. In terms of ethnicity, 35% of the respondents identified as Mamprusi, making it the largest ethnic group represented in the study. Bimobas constituted 25% of the sample, while Konkombas accounted for 20%. The remaining 15% of respondents belonged to other ethnic groups. This demographic distribution suggests a diverse representation of adolescent girls from various ethnic backgrounds within the East Mamprusi Municipality.

**Table 2: Personal Information**

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age		
10-15	15	15.0
16-18	65	65.0
22-23	20	20.0
Total	100	100.0
Ethnicity		
Mamprusi	35	35.0
Bimobas	25	25.0
Konkombas	15	15.0
Other	10	10.0
Total	100	100.0

**Source: Field Data, (2024)**

#### 4.1.2 Family Background

Regarding the number of siblings, Table 3 revealed that 50% of the respondents had 1-2 siblings, which was the most common category. This was followed by 40% who reported having 3-4 siblings, and 10% who had no siblings at all. In terms of the educational level of parents, 35% of respondents had parents with primary education, making it the most frequent educational level reported. This was closely followed by 30% of respondents whose parents had no formal education. Junior high school education was reported by 20% of parents, while 15% had achieved senior high school education. Notably, none of the respondents had parents with tertiary education. Regarding family socio-economic status, 40% of the respondents came from poor families, which was the largest single category. This was followed by 30% from lower middle-class families. A smaller proportion of respondents, 15%, came from middle-class families, and only 5% were from upper middle-class families. No respondents reported coming from wealthy families. This distribution reflects a predominantly lower socio-economic background among the respondents.

**Table 3: Family Background**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
<b>Number of siblings</b>		
None	10	10.0
1-2	50	50.0
3-4	40	40.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Educational level of parents</b>		
No formal education	30	30.0
Primary education	35	35.0
Junior high school	20	20.0
Senior high school	15	15.0
Tertiary education	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Family socio-economic status</b>		
Poor	40	40.0
Lower middle class	30	30.0
Middle class	15	15.0
Upper Middle class	5	5.0
Wealthy	00	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

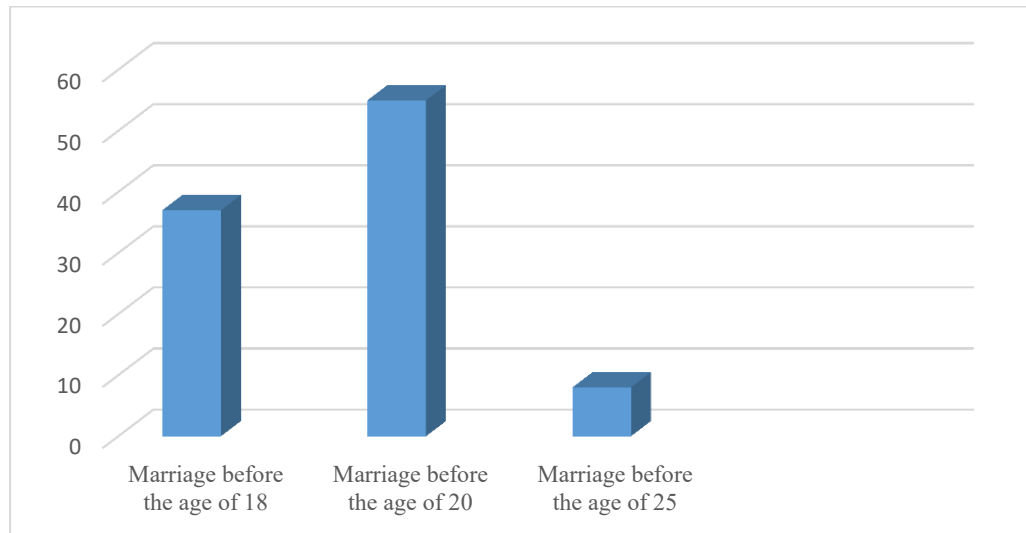
**Source: Field Data, (2024)**

#### **4.2 Research Questions One**

**What are the primary socio-cultural and economic factors contributing to the increased rate of early marriages among young adolescents in the East Mamprusi Municipality?**

The respondents' understanding of the term "early marriage" as indicated in Fig 3 showed that perceptions varied significantly. A majority, representing 55% of the respondents, understood early marriage as occurring before the age of 20 years. Meanwhile, 37% of the respondents believed that early marriage mean marriage before the age of 18 years, which aligns with common legal definitions. A smaller

group, constituting 8%, considered marriage before the age of 25 years to fall under the category of early marriage. These findings indicated that while most respondents recognized early marriage as involving those under 20 years, a substantial number also associated it with a broader age range, extending into the early twenties.



**Figure 3: Understanding of Early Marriage**

The factors contributing to the increased rate of early marriages among adolescent girls, as shown in Table 4 identified several key influences. Poverty was the most commonly cited factor, mentioned by 48% of respondents. This suggests that economic hardship is a major driver of early marriages, likely due to the need for financial relief or support within families. Cultural norms and traditions were also significant, with 34% of respondents highlighting them as a contributing factor. This reflects the strong influence of cultural expectations and practices in promoting early marriages. Additionally, lack of access to education was noted by 10% of respondents, indicating that limited educational opportunities may restrict the options available to adolescent girls, leading them to consider early marriage as a viable alternative. Peer pressure, reported by 8% of respondents, and other unspecified factors, mentioned by 2%, were less frequently identified but still acknowledged.

These factors, while less influential than poverty and cultural norms, continue to play a role in the prevalence of early marriages.

**Table 4: Factors contributing to Increased Rate of Early Marriages**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent(%)</b>
Cultural norms and traditions	34	34.0
Poverty	48	48.0
Lack of access to education	10	10.0
Peer pressure	8	8.0
Others	2	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Data, (2024)**

The analysis of how influential cultural norms and traditions are in promoting early marriages revealed in table 5 that a substantial majority of respondents perceive these factors as highly impactful. Specifically, 66% of respondents identified cultural norms and traditions as “very influential” in encouraging early marriages. This indicates a strong belief that traditional practices and societal expectations play a significant role in shaping the prevalence of early marriages.

In contrast, 14% of respondents considered cultural norms and traditions to be “somewhat influential,” suggesting that while these factors have some impact, they are not as dominant in their view. Additionally, 20% of respondents felt that cultural norms and traditions are “not influential,” indicating that these factors may have little to no effect on the occurrence of early marriages according to their perspectives.

**Table 5: Cultural Norms and Traditions**

<b>Cultural norms</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent(%)</b>
Very influential	66	66.0
Somewhat influential	14	14.0
Not influential	20	20.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Data, (2024)**

The assessment of poverty's contribution to early marriages shows a strong perception of its impact among respondents. According to Table 6, a significant 73% of respondents classified poverty as a “major contributor” to early marriages. This suggests that economic hardship is widely recognized as a leading factor driving early marriages, likely due to the financial strain it places on families and the associated pressures to find economic relief through marriage.

Additionally, 12% of respondents viewed poverty as a “moderate contributor,” indicating that while they acknowledge its role, they believe it may not be as central compared to other factors. A smaller proportion, 15%, considered poverty to be a “minor contributor,” suggesting that in their view, poverty has a relatively lesser impact on the prevalence of early marriages.

**Table 6: Measures to Reduce the Rate of Early Marriages**

<b>Measures</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent(%)</b>
Strengthening education systems	26	26.0
Implementing laws against early marriages	50	50.0
Economic empowerment programs for girls	15	15.0
Community awareness campaigns	6	6.0
Other	3	3.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Data, (2024)**

The evaluation of how education and awareness campaigns can be improved to address early marriages in table 7 highlights several key strategies favored by respondents. The most frequently cited measure was engaging community leaders, with 45% of respondents emphasizing its importance. This approach is seen as crucial because community leaders often hold significant influence and can help promote the message effectively within their communities.

Targeting specific age groups was also highlighted by 31% of respondents. This measure is considered important for tailoring interventions to those most at risk, ensuring that the education and awareness efforts are relevant and impactful for different stages of adolescence. Using local languages was noted by 11% of respondents. This strategy aims to enhance the effectiveness of communication by making information more accessible and understandable to diverse linguistic groups within the community.

Involving media outlets was suggested by 8% of respondents. Leveraging media can help spread awareness on a larger scale, reaching a broader audience through various platforms. Finally, other measures were identified by 5% of respondents, though specific suggestions were not detailed in the data.

**Table 7: Education and Awareness Campaigns**

<b>Measures</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent(%)</b>
Targeting specific age groups	31	31.0
Engaging community leaders marriages	45	45.0
Using local languages	11	11.0
Involving media outlets	8	8.0
Other	5	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Data, (2024)**

### 4.3 Research Question Two

#### **How does early marriage affect the psychological well-being of young adolescents in East Mamprusi Municipality?**

The assessment of psychological well-being among young adolescents reveals a complex picture of their emotional and psychological experiences. Overall, the respondents report showed varied levels of psychological well-being, with significant differences in their experiences across different areas as revealed in Table 8. The statement “I experience stress or anxiety due to my early marriage” received the highest mean score of 4.1, indicating that a substantial portion of adolescents feel considerable stress and anxiety as a result of their early marriages. This is further supported by the relatively high standard deviation of 1.09, which suggests a wide variation in responses and highlights the prevalent emotional strain faced by these individuals.

In contrast, statements related to control over decisions and satisfaction with marital situations received lower mean scores. For instance, “I feel satisfied with my current marital situation” and “I have control over important decisions in my marriage” both scored low (2.5 and 2.4, respectively), reflecting that a majority of adolescents are dissatisfied with their marital situations and feel they lack control. The standard deviations for these items (1.02 and 1.08) indicate moderate variability in responses, showing that while some adolescents may feel unsatisfied or powerless, others might experience these issues to a lesser extent.

The feeling of being restricted in personal goals, measured with a mean score of 3.8, points to a notable impact on the adolescents’ aspirations. This is further illustrated by a standard deviation of 1.16, suggesting significant differences in how adolescents perceive their ability to pursue personal goals. Access to resources and support scored

moderately high with a mean of 3.9. However, the standard deviation of 1.14 indicates that there are varying levels of perceived support, with some adolescents feeling more supported than others. Hopefulness about the future and feelings of respect and value from spouses also received relatively positive ratings, with means of 3.3 and 3.2, respectively. These scores suggest that while there are positive aspects to their situations, such as hope for the future and feeling valued, there is still considerable room for improvement.

**Table 8: Psychological Well-Being among Adolescents Girls**

Statement	Frequency					Mean	Std
	SD	D	N	A	SA		
I feel satisfied with my current marital situation.	11(36.7)	15(50)	1(3.3)	3(10)	2(6.7)	2.5	1.02
I experience a sense of security and stability in my marriage.	8(26.7)	13(43.3)	2(6.7)	5(16.7)	2(6.7)	2.6	1.06
I have control over important decisions in my marriage.	14(46.7)	10(33.3)	3(10)	2(6.7)	1(3.3)	2.4	1.08
I experience stress or anxiety due to my early marriage.	2(6.7)	1(3.3)	3(10)	13(43.4)	11(36.7)	4.1	1.09
I feel restricted or limited in pursuing my personal goals and aspirations.	3(10)	4(13.3)	3(10)	8(26.7)	9(30)	3.8	1.16
I have access to adequate resources and support for my well-being in my marriage.	4(13.3)	5(16.7)	2(6.7)	9(30)	10(33.3)	3.9	1.14
I feel hopeful about my future despite my early marriage.	10(33.3)	3(10)	3(10)	11(36.7)	3(10)	3.3	1.16
I experience frequent conflicts or disagreements with my spouse	12(40)	8(26.7)	5(16.7)	3(10)	2(6.7)	2.5	1.12
I feel respected and valued by my spouse/partner	7(23.3)	6(20)	4(13.3)	9(30)	4(13.3)	3.2	1.16
I have control over decisions affecting my life	9(30)	7(23.3)	5(16.7)	2(6.7)	7(23.3)	3.3	1.15
I feel supported by my family and community in my marriage.	6(20)	7(23.3)	6(20)	7(23.3)	4(13.3)	3.0	1.15

**Source: Field Data, (2024)**

Table 9 revealed the support systems available for adolescent girls to resist early marriages in the community which indicates that counseling services were the most prevalent form of support, with 45% of respondents acknowledging their availability. Education scholarships, noted by 35% of respondents, are also a significant support mechanism. These scholarships play a crucial role in keeping girls in school by alleviating financial barriers, thereby offering them an alternative path to early marriage. The availability of scholarships emphasizes the community's recognition of education as a key factor in preventing early marriages.

Mentorship programs, identified by 10% of respondents, provide another layer of support. Although less common, these programs are important in offering guidance and role models to adolescent girls, helping them to envision and work towards a future that doesn't involve early marriage. Legal assistance is recognized by only 3% of respondents, indicating that while it exists, it may not be as accessible or well-known as other support systems. Lastly, 7% of respondents mentioned other forms of support, which could include various community initiatives, cultural or religious interventions, or advocacy groups working to combat early marriage.

**Table 9: Available Support System**

<b>Support System</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent(%)</b>
Education scholarships	35	35.0
Counseling services	45	45.0
Mentorship programs	10	10.0
Legal assistance	3	3.0
Other	7	7.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Data, (2024)**

#### **4.4 Research Question Three**

##### **What are the educational implications of early marriages on young adolescent girls in the East Mamprusi Municipality?**

A t-test statistic was performed to analyze the educational implications of early marriages on young adolescents in the East Mamprusi Municipality as revealed in Table 10. The results indicate significant concerns regarding the impact of early marriage on various educational outcomes. For instance, 90% of respondents believed that early marriages negatively affected adolescent girls' ability to focus on their studies, with a mean score of 4.5. This finding was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating a strong consensus on the detrimental effect of early marriage on academic concentration.

Additionally, 87% of respondents observed that classmates who were married faced difficulties in attending school regularly, with a mean score of 4.35. The t-test results, with a p-value of 0.04, support the notion that early marriages significantly disrupt regular school attendance. However, when considering the contribution of early marriages to higher dropout rates, 56% of respondents agreed, reflected in a mean score of 2.8. While this was less universally acknowledged, the p-value of 0.07 suggests a trend that warrants attention.

The analysis also revealed that 90% of respondents noticed differences in educational aspirations and goals between married and unmarried adolescent girls, with a mean score of 4.5 and a p-value of 0.05. This suggests that early marriages likely constrain the educational ambitions of young girls. Furthermore, 95% of respondents believed that early marriages limit the educational opportunities available to adolescent girls, with a mean of 4.75. This was statistically significant at the 0.03 level, underscoring a

widespread concern about the restrictions early marriage imposes on educational advancement.

Lastly, 80% of respondents indicated that they received some form of support or resources from their school to help manage the challenges of being a married adolescent while continuing their education. However, with a mean score of 4.0 and a p-value of 0.06, the data suggests that while support exists, it may not be sufficient to fully counteract the negative effects of early marriage.

**Table 10: Educational Implications of Early Marriages**

Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)	Mean	p-value	F	Std
Do you believe that early marriages among adolescent girls have a negative impact on their ability to focus on their studies?	90(90)	10(10)	4.5	0.05	1.23	0.67
Have you observed any of your classmates experiencing difficulties in attending school regularly due to early marriages?	87(87)	13(13)	4.35	0.04	1.15	0.61
Do you think early marriages contribute to a higher dropout rate among adolescent girls in your school?	56(56)	44(44)	2.8	0.07	1.45	0.83
Have you noticed any differences in the educational aspirations and goals between married and unmarried adolescent girls in your community?	90(90)	10(10)	4.5	0.05	1.22	0.66
Do you think early marriages limit the educational opportunities available to adolescent girls?	95(95)	5(5)	4.75	0.03	1.05	0.52
Have you received any support or resources from your school to help you navigate the challenges of being a married adolescent girl while continuing your education?	80(80)	20(20)	4.0	0.06	1.35	0.74

**Source: Field Data, (2024).**

In Table 11, a significant 80% of respondents believe that early marriage leads to lower grades and academic achievement, indicating a widespread perception that early marriage severely hampers academic progress. This overwhelming response suggests that early marriage is largely viewed as a barrier to educational success, likely due to the competing demands of marital responsibilities and schoolwork.

Only 9% of respondents believe that early marriage has no significant impact on academic performance, indicating a small minority who either perceive that some girls can manage both marriage and education effectively or that the impact is negligible in certain cases. Additionally, 5% of respondents are uncertain, reflecting a level of ambiguity or lack of awareness about the effects of early marriage on academic outcomes.

Lastly, 6% of respondents cited other impacts, possibly pointing to more nuanced or indirect effects of early marriage on academic performance, such as reduced participation in extracurricular activities, social isolation, or psychological stress that could indirectly affect academic success. The data strongly suggests that early marriage is perceived to negatively influence the academic performance of adolescent girls, with the vast majority of respondents identifying it as a key factor leading to lower grades and academic achievement.

**Table 11: Effect on Academic Performance**

<b>Effect</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent(%)</b>
It leads to lower grades and academic achievement.	80	80.0
It has no significant impact on academic performance.	9	9.0
Not sure	5	5.0
Other	6	6.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Data, (2024)**

The perceptions regarding the role of education in empowering adolescent girls to avoid early marriages as revealed in Table 12 showed that, a significant majority, 79% of respondents perceive that education provides girls with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their future. In contrast, only 10% of respondents believe that education has little influence on girls' decisions regarding marriage. This minority perspective suggests that some individuals may view factors such as cultural norms, familial pressure, or economic circumstances as more dominant in influencing early marriage decisions, potentially overshadowing the role of education.

A small percentage (5%) of respondents are uncertain about the role of education in this context, indicating that there might be some ambiguity or lack of understanding regarding how education can impact marriage decisions. Additionally, 6% of respondents mentioned other roles, which could include various indirect ways in which education contributes to empowerment, such as through social networks, exposure to different life possibilities, or access to role models.

The data highlights a strong belief in the empowering role of education in helping adolescent girls avoid early marriages, with the majority recognizing its potential to provide the necessary knowledge and skills for making informed life choices.

**Table 12: Role of Education in Empowering Adolescent Girls**

<b>Roles</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent(%)</b>
Education provides girls with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their future.	79	79.0
Education has little influence on girls' decisions regarding marriage.	10	10.0
Not sure	5	5.0
Other	6	6.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Data, (2024)**

On respondents' opinions on specific measures schools could implement to better support married adolescent girls in continuing their education, Table 13 revealed that, the majority (45%) of respondents believe that counseling services are crucial, emphasizing the need for schools to address the emotional and psychological challenges these girls face. This suggests a recognition of the unique pressures and mental health issues that may arise from balancing marriage with educational pursuits.

Awareness campaigns on the importance of education and the consequences of early marriage were also seen as vital, with 35% of respondents advocating for these initiatives. This indicates that a significant portion of the respondents believes that raising awareness within the school and community is essential to encourage

continued education among married adolescent girls and to challenge the norms that lead to early marriage.

Flexible class schedules or distance learning options were supported by 15% of respondents. This shows a recognition of the practical challenges married adolescent girls might face, such as time constraints due to household responsibilities, and the need for more adaptable learning environments that accommodate their unique situations. A smaller percentage (5%) of respondents believe financial assistance for school fees and related expenses is important, indicating that while financial barriers are a concern, they are seen as less significant compared to the need for psychological support and flexible learning options. Finally, 5% of respondents cited other measures, which could include various strategies such as providing daycare facilities, offering mentorship programs, or creating peer support groups to further assist married adolescent girls in their educational journey.

**Table 13: Measures Schools Could Implement**

Measures	Frequency	Percent(%)
Flexible class schedules or distance learning options	15	15.0
Counseling services to address emotional and psychological challenges.	45	45.0
Financial assistance for school fees and related expenses	5	5.0
Awareness campaigns on the importance of education and the consequences of early marriage	35	35.0
Other	5	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Data, (2024)**

The next section presents the qualitative data

## **Qualitative Analysis**

### **4.4.1 Personal Experience**

The interviews with six adolescent girls who had direct experiences with early marriage provided valuable insights into the age at which they entered into marriage and the impact it had on their lives. The majority of these students were married between the ages of 14 and 17 years, highlighting the prevalence of early marriage in their community. Their collective experiences revealed a pattern of lost educational opportunities, psychological distress, and the overwhelming burden of adult responsibilities at a young age.

On average, these students were married around the age of 15 or 16 years. This early transition into marriage often meant that their educational pursuits were abruptly halted, with most expressing regret over the opportunities they missed. The pressure to conform to societal expectations and the demands of marital life created significant emotional and psychological challenges. Many of the students felt unprepared for the responsibilities they were forced to assume, leading to feelings of isolation, stress, and a loss of personal freedom.

For instance, Student 1, who married at 14, spoke about the overwhelming nature of her sudden shift from childhood to marital responsibilities, stating,

*“I was just 14 when I got married, and I felt completely unprepared for the responsibilities that were suddenly thrust upon me. It was stressful and made me feel like I lost a part of myself.”* S1 stated.

Student 2, who was married at 15, highlighted how marriage forced her to abandon her studies prematurely, sharing,

*“Getting married at 15 meant I had to leave school. I had dreams of becoming a teacher, but all of that was put aside because I had to focus on being a wife. The pressure was immense.”*

Similarly, Student 3, who entered marriage at 16, expressed deep regret over missing out on her teenage years, explaining,

*“I was 16 when I got married, and I still feel like I missed out on my teenage years. Those should have been years of learning and growing, but instead, I was trying to figure out how to run a household.”*

Student 4, married at 17, discussed the challenges of trying to balance her education with her new marital duties, ultimately leading to her dropping out of school and feeling disconnected from her peers. She said,

*“At 17, I thought I could manage both school and marriage, but it became too much. I had to drop out, and I felt so disconnected from my friends who were still in school.”*

Student 5, who was married at 15, echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the lack of support from her family and community, which exacerbated her struggles. She noted,

*“When I got married at 15, I felt like I was alone in it. My family and community expected me to just handle it, but I was struggling. There was no one to really help me navigate what I was going through.”*

Lastly, Student 6, who was married at 16, described the psychological toll early marriage took on her, leading to feelings of loneliness and helplessness. She reflected,

*“I was 16 when I got married, and it was a very lonely experience. I felt so isolated, and there were times when I just didn’t know how to cope with everything that was happening.”*

The individual stories add depth to this understanding, showing how each student's unique circumstances shaped their experiences and outcomes, yet they all shared common themes of regret, isolation, and the heavy burden of responsibilities thrust upon them at a young age.

#### **4.4.2 Effect of Early Marriage on Total Well-Being**

When reflecting on how early marriages affected their total well-being, the participants shared a range of experiences that highlight the profound impact of marrying at a young age. The overall sentiment expressed by the students revealed that early marriage led to significant psychological and emotional challenges, as well as a loss of personal freedom and happiness. Many of the participants described feeling overwhelmed by the responsibilities that came with marriage, which they felt were too burdensome for someone at their age.

Psychological strain was a common theme among the participants. For instance, one student noted how the pressure to mature quickly had left them with lingering anxiety and depression.

*“Early marriage has affected my well-being in so many ways. I often feel stressed and overwhelmed because I had to grow up so quickly. There was no time to enjoy my youth, and that has left me feeling anxious and sometimes depressed.”*

As S2 expressed,

In addition to the emotional toll, the participants also discussed the physical strain associated with early marriage. The demanding responsibilities of married life at a young age left them feeling constantly tired and lacking time for self-care.

*“Being married at such a young age has taken a toll on my mental and physical health. I feel constantly tired and stressed, and it's been hard to find time for myself. The responsibilities of marriage are just too much for someone my age.”* S4 echoed.

Furthermore, the loss of personal freedom and autonomy was another critical issue highlighted by the participants. Many felt that early marriage had deprived them of the opportunity to pursue their dreams and live life on their terms.

*“I feel like I’ve lost my freedom and my happiness because of early marriage. It’s hard to balance everything, and I often feel trapped. I don’t have the chance to live my life the way I wanted, and that has really affected my overall well-being.”* S5 poignantly described this experience.

In summary, the participants experiences underscore the detrimental effects of early marriage on their total well-being, touching on various aspects of mental, emotional, and physical health, as well as personal freedom.

#### **4.4.3 Factors Influencing Early Marriages**

The participants identified several key factors contributing to the prevalence of early marriages in the East Mamprusi area. Their insights highlighted the complex interplay of cultural, economic, and social influences that drive this practice. The aggregated responses indicate that cultural norms, economic hardships, and limited educational opportunities are among the primary reasons for the persistence of early marriages in the region.

Cultural norms and traditions were frequently mentioned as a significant factor. Many in the community view early marriage as a customary practice, deeply ingrained in their way of life.

*“In our community, it’s just the norm. Girls are expected to marry early, and it’s something that has been happening for generations. It’s hard to break away from these traditions.”* S1 emphasized this point.

Economic pressures also play a critical role in driving early marriages. The financial struggles faced by many families often lead them to marry off their daughters at a young age, seeing it as a way to alleviate economic burdens.

*“Poverty is a big reason why girls are married off early. Families struggle to make ends meet, and marrying off their daughters is sometimes seen as a way to reduce the financial burden.”* S6 remarked.

In addition, the lack of access to education was identified as a contributing factor. Without adequate educational opportunities, girls have fewer prospects for the future, making marriage seem like the only viable option.

*“There are not many opportunities for education here, especially for girls. Without education, marriage becomes the only option for many.”* S3 reflected on this issue.

In summary, the participants’ perspectives underscore the significance of cultural traditions, economic hardships, and educational barriers as the main reasons for the continued practice of early marriages in the East Mamprusi area.

#### **4.4.4 Suggestions for Addressing Early Marriages**

The participants provided a range of suggestions to help reduce early marriages in the East Mamprusi area. Their responses highlighted the need for a diverse approaches that include education, community engagement, and legal reforms to effectively address this issue.

A common theme among the suggestions was the importance of education and awareness campaigns. participants emphasized that educating both girls and their families about the negative consequences of early marriage and the benefits of delaying marriage could play a crucial role in reducing its prevalence.

*“Education is key. We need to teach girls and their families about the importance of education and the dangers of marrying too young. If they understand the risks, they might reconsider.”* S2 suggested.

Another suggestion focused on engaging community leaders and elders, who often hold significant influence over local customs and practices. By involving these leaders in the fight against early marriage, there is a greater chance of changing entrenched cultural norms.

*“The elders in our community have a lot of power. If they start speaking out against early marriage, more people will listen. We need to involve them in these efforts.”* S5 stated.

Legal reforms and stricter enforcement of existing laws were also proposed as necessary steps to combat early marriages.

*“There should be stricter laws against early marriage, and they need to be enforced properly. Right now, people get away with it too easily because there’s no real punishment.”* S1 mentioned.

Additionally, providing economic support to families, such as scholarships or financial incentives, was seen as a way to reduce the economic pressures that often lead to early marriages.

*“If families had more financial support, they wouldn’t feel the need to marry off their daughters so early. Programs that offer scholarships or financial help could make a big difference.”* S4 commented.

The participants collectively suggested that a combination of education, community engagement, legal reforms, and economic support is essential to reducing early marriages in the East Mamprusi area. Their insights reflect a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of the issue.

#### 4.5 Research Question Four

#### What are the support systems needed for young adolescents in early marriages in the East Mamprusi Municipality?

##### 4.5.1 Counseling

The counselors provided insights into their counseling approaches and techniques, focusing on addressing the needs of adolescent girls in early marriages. Their responses highlighted a blend of empathetic engagement, tailored interventions, and the importance of understanding each girl's unique circumstances. They emphasized the effectiveness of empathetic listening and creating a safe, non-judgmental environment for the girls to express themselves.

*“Building trust is crucial. These girls often feel misunderstood or judged, so it’s important to approach them with empathy and patience.”* C2 noted.

*“I focus on active listening, allowing the girls to share their stories at their own pace. This helps in building a connection and understanding their specific needs.”* This sentiment was echoed by C4.

The counselors also discussed the necessity of adapting their techniques to fit the individual circumstances of each girl. This adaptation could involve cultural considerations, family dynamics, and the specific challenges faced by the girl in her marriage.

*“Each girl’s situation is unique. I tailor my approach depending on factors like her family background, her level of education, and her emotional state. For some, the focus might be on building self-esteem, while for others, it’s about practical advice on managing their new responsibilities.”* C4 explained.

*“I take into account the cultural context and the specific pressures the girl is facing. This allows me to provide relevant and effective guidance.”* C5 reinforced this idea.

## 4.5.2 Support Services Available

### 4.5.2.1 Educational Services

The interviews with the counselors revealed that they have provided a range of educational services to adolescent girls in early marriages. These services primarily include academic counseling, school re-entry facilitation, scholarship and financial support, vocational training guidance, and mentorship. The counselors indicated that their interventions aim to ensure that marriage does not become a permanent barrier to education, highlighting both the successes and challenges they have encountered in delivering these services. All five counselors acknowledged that academic counseling forms a critical part of their support services. They provide individualized guidance to young married girls to help them navigate the emotional and logistical challenges of continuing their education.

*“We provide one-on-one educational counseling sessions to help young mothers understand that their education does not have to end because of marriage.”* C3 emphasized the significance of direct engagement.

Similarly, C2 highlighted the role of advocacy in ensuring that schools accept married students back into the classroom, explaining,

*“I personally speak with school authorities to facilitate the return of married girls to school, ensuring they are not stigmatized or discriminated against.”* C2 recounted.

A significant challenge noted by the counselors was the financial constraints faced by young married girls, which often prevent them from continuing their education. To mitigate this, some counselors have actively sought financial support from NGOs and government agencies.

*“Some of us collaborate with NGOs and community organizations to secure scholarships or educational materials for these girls so that they can continue their studies without*

*financial burden.*” C5 shared their efforts in securing funding for these students.

This suggests that while financial aid is available, accessibility remains a challenge, requiring the intervention of counselors to bridge the gap. Recognizing that not all married adolescents may return to formal education, some counselors have focused on alternative learning pathways such as vocational training. C4 noted that for girls unable to rejoin traditional schooling, skill-based training programs are promoted as viable options:

*“For those who find it difficult to return to mainstream schooling, we introduce them to vocational training centers where they can acquire skills in dressmaking, hairdressing, and other trades.”* C4 noted.

This highlights the importance of flexible educational solutions that cater to the diverse needs of young married girls. In addition to vocational training, some counselors reported efforts to implement flexible learning schedules to accommodate married adolescents who may have household responsibilities

*“We arrange for part-time or weekend classes for young wives who cannot attend regular school sessions due to household responsibilities.”* C1 explained how alternative education models have been adopted.

This approach aligns with broader efforts to ensure that marriage does not entirely disrupt a girl’s educational journey. Beyond educational services, the counselors underscored the need for mentorship and emotional support, which they believe plays a vital role in encouraging married adolescents to pursue their studies

*“Beyond academics, we mentor these girls, helping them develop self-confidence and resilience, so they don’t see marriage as the end of their aspirations.”* C2 emphasized this aspect.

This highlights the intersection between educational counseling and emotional well-being, reinforcing the need for a holistic support system.

#### 4.5.2.2 Health Services

The counselors provided health-related services to young adolescent girls in early marriages. A major aspect of the health services provided by the counselors is reproductive health education, aimed at equipping young married girls with knowledge about their sexual and reproductive health rights, family planning, and hygiene practices.

*“Most of these girls enter marriage without any knowledge of reproductive health, so we educate them on family planning, menstrual hygiene, and how to take care of their bodies.”* C1 explained the importance of reproductive health education.

Similarly, C2 highlighted the risks associated with the lack of reproductive health education, noting,

*“Some of these girls become pregnant without understanding the complications that come with teenage pregnancy. Our role is to help them make informed decisions about their health.”*

In addition to providing education, the counselors actively assisted young girls in accessing healthcare services, particularly in rural areas where healthcare facilities may be scarce.

*“We work with health professionals and community nurses to ensure that these young girls get regular check-ups and medical support.”* C5 emphasized their role in this process.

The counselors noted that a significant number of young married girls become pregnant shortly after marriage, making maternal healthcare an urgent need. C4 discussed their efforts in ensuring that these girls receive antenatal care, stating,

*“We encourage pregnant adolescents to attend regular antenatal clinics and link them to midwives who can provide proper care.”*  
C4 discussed

However, they also noted that some girls face resistance from their families or husbands, making access to maternal healthcare challenging. Early marriages often

come with both physical and emotional health challenges. Counselors reported that they provide psychological support to help young girls cope with the stress of early pregnancy, domestic responsibilities, and health complications.

*“Some of these girls experience high levels of stress, anxiety, or even depression due to their new roles as wives and mothers. We provide psychological counseling to help them manage their mental health.”* C5 explained.

While counselors play a significant role in providing health-related support, they also recognize the need to refer young girls to professional medical practitioners for specialized care.

*“In cases of serious medical conditions like pregnancy complications or sexual abuse, we refer them to hospitals or social welfare services for further assistance.”* C1 noted.

This indicates that counselors act as intermediaries, ensuring that young married girls receive the professional medical attention they require.

#### **4.5.2.3 Counseling Services**

The counselors emphasized that their role extends beyond offering advice; they actively create safe spaces where these girls can express themselves and receive the necessary support to cope with the challenges of early marriage. A common theme among all five counselors was the need for emotional support to help young married girls manage the psychological distress that often accompanies early marriage

*“Many of these girls feel isolated, overwhelmed, and anxious about their future. We provide a safe space where they can talk about their struggles and receive the emotional support they need.”* . C2 highlighted this.

Similarly, C4 pointed out that early marriages often lead to mental health challenges, noting,

*“Some of these girls experience depression and anxiety due to the sudden transition into marital life. Our role is to help them process their emotions and build resilience.”*

Given that many young girls enter marriages with little preparation, conflicts within their unions are common. Counselors reported that they provide conflict resolution and marital guidance to help these girls navigate their relationships.

*“Some of these girls struggle with communication and power imbalances in their marriages. We guide them on how to set boundaries, express their concerns, and seek mutual understanding with their spouses.”* C3 explained.

However, the counselors also acknowledged that some conflicts, particularly those involving domestic violence, require intervention from legal or social welfare authorities. Beyond their marital roles, many young girls wish to continue their education or develop career aspirations. Counselors play a crucial role in helping them explore their academic and professional options.

*“We encourage them to continue their education or enroll in vocational training programs so that they can achieve financial independence despite being married.”* C4 described this aspect,

Several counselors reported that some married adolescents experience emotional, physical, or sexual abuse within their marriages. In such cases, trauma counseling is provided to help them cope and seek support.

*“We work with victims of abuse, helping them process their trauma while also linking them to the appropriate legal and social services for protection.”* C5 explained.

Apart from individual counseling, some counselors facilitate group therapy sessions where young married girls can share experiences and support one another.

*“We organize peer support groups where these girls meet, share their stories, and learn from each other. It helps them realize they are not alone and gives them strength to cope.”* C1 described the impact of such initiatives,

These sessions provide both emotional relief and a sense of community, which is often lacking in the lives of young married adolescents.

The counselors identified several support services aimed at helping adolescent girls who are in early marriages. These services include counseling, educational support, health care, and financial assistance.

*“Counseling services are a major support for these girls, providing them with emotional and psychological help to cope with the pressures of early marriage.”* C1 mentioned.

In addition to counseling, C3 highlighted the role of educational support programs, stating,

*“There are initiatives that offer scholarships and flexible learning options to help girls continue their education despite being married.”*

*“healthcare services are also available, particularly in reproductive health, which is crucial for these young girls.”* C2 added

Despite the existence of these services, accessibility remains a significant challenge.

The counselors discussed the barriers that prevent many girls from utilizing these resources.

*“While these services exist, they are not always easy to access. Many girls in remote areas are unaware of the available help or lack the means to reach these services.”* C5 pointed out.

*“Accessibility is a big issue, especially for girls living in rural parts of the community. Even when they know about the services, the distance and lack of transportation can be major obstacles.”* C3 echoed this concern.

C2 provided an example to illustrate these challenges:

*“In one case, a girl who needed urgent medical care couldn’t get it in time because the nearest clinic was too far, and her family couldn’t afford the transportation costs.”*

This example underscores the reality that, while support services are available, their effectiveness is often limited by logistical and financial barriers.

The counselors’ responses indicate that while there are various support services available for adolescent girls in early marriages, their accessibility is hindered by factors such as lack of awareness, geographical distance, and financial constraints. This gap between availability and accessibility highlights the need for more targeted efforts to ensure that these girls can benefit from the support services designed to help them.

#### **4.5.3 Collaboration with Other Stakeholders**

The counselors highlighted the significance of working with various community stakeholders to provide comprehensive support for girls in early marriages.

*“Collaboration with local NGOs, schools, and health centers is essential in creating a support network for these girls.”* C4 noted.

This collaboration helps ensure that the girls receive a range of services, from education to healthcare, that address their specific needs.

*“We often work with religious and traditional leaders to raise awareness about the negative effects of early marriage and to promote the value of education for girls.”* C2 added.

This partnership is crucial in changing community attitudes and encouraging more supportive practices.

C5 emphasized the role of schools, stating,

*“Schools are key partners in our efforts, as they provide not only education but also a safe space for these girls to express themselves and seek help.”*

#### **4.5.4 Role of Families and Community Leaders**

Families and community leaders play a critical role in supporting adolescent girls in early marriages. The counselors agreed that these groups have a significant influence on the girls’ lives.

*“Families are the first line of support, and when they are educated and involved, the girls are more likely to continue their education and receive the care they need.”* C4 mentioned.

Community leaders also have a vital role in shaping community norms and practices.

*“Community leaders, especially traditional and religious ones, can either support or hinder our efforts, depending on their stance on early marriage. When they are on board, the whole community is more likely to support these girls.”* C2 observed.

*“In some cases, we’ve seen community leaders advocate for girls’ education and intervene when families try to marry off their daughters too early.”* C5 provided an example.

Despite these efforts, the counselors reported facing challenges in engaging the community.

*“One of the biggest challenges is overcoming deeply ingrained cultural norms that view early marriage as acceptable or even desirable.”* C1 pointed out,

These norms can be difficult to change, especially when they are tied to long-standing traditions.

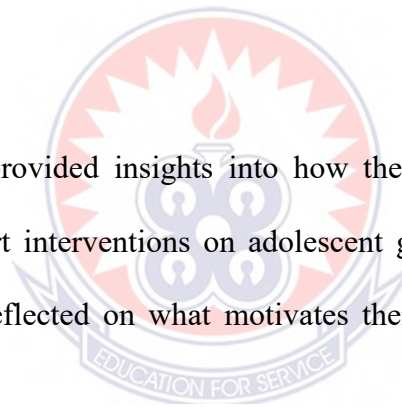
*“Resistance from some community members, especially those who see our efforts as interfering with their customs, can also be a barrier.”* C2 added

This resistance can manifest in various ways, from passive non-cooperation to active opposition.

*“In some cases, we’ve had difficulty getting parents to allow their daughters to attend counseling or educational programs, as they believe that once married, a girl’s place is in the home, not in school or counseling sessions.”* C5 shared a specific challenge.

The counselors’ responses reveal a strong emphasis on collaboration with community stakeholders, the crucial role of families and community leaders, and the significant challenges posed by cultural norms and resistance within the community. These factors highlight the complexities of providing comprehensive support to adolescent girls in early marriages and the need for continued efforts to engage and educate the community.

The five counselors provided insights into how they measure the impact of their counseling and support interventions on adolescent girls in early marriages, shared success stories, and reflected on what motivates them to continue this challenging work.



#### **4.5.5 Measuring Impact**

The counselors agreed that measuring the impact of their interventions requires both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

*“We track metrics such as school retention rates, the number of girls accessing healthcare services, and the reduction in repeated early marriages among those we’ve counseled.”* C1 explained.

These indicators provide concrete data on the progress being made.

*“We also rely heavily on feedback from the girls themselves, as well as their families. Positive changes in behavior, attitudes, and self-esteem are key indicators of success.”* C2 added.

This feedback is often gathered through regular follow-up sessions and community outreach programs

*“Long-term impact is assessed by monitoring whether the girls are able to continue their education, delay further pregnancies, and improve their overall well-being.”* . C3 emphasized.

#### **4.5.6 Success Stories**

The counselors shared several success stories that highlight the positive outcomes of their work.

*“One of our most inspiring cases was of a girl who was married off at 14 but, with our support, was able to return to school and is now pursuing a vocational course. Her confidence has grown tremendously.”* C4 recounted.

This story underscores the transformative power of education and counseling.

*“We helped a girl who had suffered severe emotional trauma due to early marriage. Through consistent counseling and community support, she regained her sense of self-worth and is now an advocate for girls’ education in her village.”* C5 shared another success.

These stories are testaments to the resilience of the girls and the effectiveness of the interventions provided.

*“One of the girls we worked with not only completed her secondary education but also became a peer counselor, helping others in similar situations.”* C2 added.

*“I worked with a girl who was initially withdrawn and unresponsive. Through consistent, gentle engagement, she began to open up. Eventually, she expressed a desire to continue her education, which we facilitated by connecting her with the necessary resources.”* C3 recounted.

*“There was a case where involving the family in the counseling process made a huge difference. By helping them understand the girl’s perspective and the value of education, we were able to create a more supportive environment for her.”* C1 shared a similar story.

Their success stories illustrate the positive outcomes that can be achieved when counseling approaches are carefully adapted to meet the unique circumstances of each girl.

#### **4.5.7 Motivation to Continue**

Despite the numerous challenges, the counselors expressed strong motivation to continue their work with adolescent girls in early marriages.

*“What keeps me going is the knowledge that even small changes can have a profound impact on a girl’s life. Seeing them thrive against the odds is incredibly rewarding.”* C3 reflected.

This sense of purpose drives their commitment. C1 added,

*“The resilience of these girls inspires me. They face so much adversity, yet they have the strength to rebuild their lives. Being part of that journey is what motivates me.”*

*“Knowing that our work can break the cycle of early marriage for even one girl makes all the challenges worthwhile. Every success story is a reminder of why we do what we do.”* C4 echoed this sentiment.

Their dedication is rooted in the belief that every small victory contributes to a larger movement toward empowering these girls and transforming their futures.

## **4.6 Discussion**

### **4.6.1 Factors contributing to the increased rate of early marriages among young adolescent girls in the East Mamprusi Municipality.**

The research findings provide valuable insights into the factors contributing to the increased rate of early marriages among young adolescents in the East Mamprusi Municipality. One of the key factors identified is poverty, which was cited by 48% of respondents as a primary driver of early marriages. This aligns with studies that suggests economic hardship can lead families to view early marriage as a means of

financial relief or support (Raj, 2010; Wodon et al., 2017). Families may see early marriage as a way to reduce the financial burden on the household, particularly in resource-constrained settings.

The research also highlights the significant role of cultural norms and traditions, with 34% of respondents citing this as a contributing factor. This is consistent with studies that underscores the influence of societal expectations and traditional practices on the prevalence of early marriages (Lemmon, 2014; UNICEF, 2020). Deeply rooted cultural beliefs and gender norms can perpetuate the perception that early marriage is an acceptable or even desirable practice.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that lack of access to education is a contributing factor, as reported by 10% of respondents. This is in line with research showing that limited educational opportunities can restrict the options available to adolescent girls, making them more vulnerable to early marriage (Bajrektarevic, 2017; ICRW, 2016). Ensuring access to quality education can empower girls and provide them with alternative pathways to pursue their aspirations.

The research also reveals the perceived effectiveness of various measures to reduce the rate of early marriages. The most frequently cited measure was implementing laws against early marriages, mentioned by 50% of respondents. This emphasizes the importance of legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms to address this issue (Parsons et al., 2015; UNFPA, 2020). Additionally, the findings highlight the significance of strengthening education systems, which was identified by 26% of respondents. This is consistent with findings that underscores the crucial role of education in preventing early marriages and empowering girls (Nguyen & Wodon, 2015; UNESCO, 2020).

#### **4.6.2 Psychological well-being of young adolescent girls involved in early marriages in East Mamprusi Municipality**

The assessment of psychological well-being reveals a complex picture, with adolescents experiencing varying levels of emotional and psychological distress. The respondents reported a high level of stress and anxiety due to their early marriages, with a mean score of 4.1 on the survey. This aligns with findings that highlights the significant mental health challenges faced by young girls who are married off prematurely (Nasrullah et al., 2014; Raj & Boehmer, 2013). The stress and anxiety experienced by these adolescents can have far-reaching consequences, including increased risk of depression, trauma, and suicidal ideation (Gage, 2013; Raj, 2010).

The findings also indicate that a majority of the adolescents feel dissatisfied with their current marital situations and lack control over important decisions in their marriages. This lack of autonomy and self-determination is well-documented in the literature as a significant contributor to the poor psychological well-being of child brides (Chandra-Mouli et al., 2013; Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021). When young girls are deprived of their agency and ability to make informed choices about their lives, it can lead to feelings of powerlessness, low self-esteem, and a sense of restricted personal goals and aspirations.

The research further reveals that while some adolescents feel supported and hopeful about their futures, others lack adequate access to resources and support systems. This variation in experiences is consistent with the existing literature, which highlights the importance of family and community support in mitigating the negative psychological impacts of early marriage (Erulkar & Muthengi, 2009; Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021).

Lack of social support can exacerbate the isolation and vulnerability experienced by young brides, further undermining their psychological well-being.

The findings on the available support systems in the community, such as counseling services, education scholarships, and mentorship programs, provide insights into the efforts being made to address the issue. These findings align with the literature that emphasizes the need for a multifaceted approach, including educational and economic interventions, as well as psychosocial support, to empower and protect adolescent girls (Bajrektarevic, 2017; Lee-Rife et al., 2012).

#### **4.6.3 Educational implications of early marriages on young adolescent girls in East Mamprusi Municipality**

The study reveals significant concerns regarding the negative impact of early marriage on various educational outcomes. The majority of respondents (90%) believed that early marriages negatively affect adolescent girls' ability to focus on their studies, which is consistent with the literature that highlights the competing demands and distractions faced by child brides, leading to impaired academic focus and performance (Glinski et al., 2015; Parsons et al., 2015).

The findings also indicate that 87% of respondents observed difficulties in regular school attendance among their classmates who were married, which aligns with the research that demonstrates the challenges young brides face in balancing their marital responsibilities with their education (Lee-Rife et al., 2012; Nguyen & Wodon, 2017). The disruption to school attendance can, in turn, contribute to higher dropout rates, although the data suggests a more nuanced understanding of this relationship, with 56% of respondents acknowledging the link between early marriage and higher dropout rates.

The research further reveals that 90% of respondents noticed differences in the educational aspirations and goals between married and unmarried adolescent girls, and 95% believed that early marriages limit the educational opportunities available to these young girls. These findings corroborate the existing literature that highlights how early marriage can constrain the educational ambitions and trajectories of adolescent girls, depriving them of the opportunity to pursue their full potential (Bajrektarevic, 2017; Lemmon, 2014).

The data also suggests that while some level of support or resources is available from schools to help married adolescent girls continue their education, the majority of respondents (80%) indicated that this support may not be sufficient to fully counteract the negative effects of early marriage. This aligns with the literature emphasizing the need for comprehensive, school-based interventions and support systems to address the unique challenges faced by married adolescent girls (Erulkar & Muthengi, 2009; Haberland et al., 2018).

The findings on the perceived effect of early marriage on academic performance further strengthen the understanding of the educational implications. The overwhelming majority (80%) of respondents believe that early marriage leads to lower grades and academic achievement, corroborating the extensive research that demonstrates the detrimental impact of child marriage on educational outcomes (Nguyen & Wodon, 2017; Parsons et al., 2015). The research highlights the strong belief in the empowering role of education in helping adolescent girls avoid early marriages, with 79% of respondents recognizing that education provides girls with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their future. This aligns with the literature that emphasizes the crucial importance of educational opportunities in

empowering girls and reducing the risk of early marriage (Bajrektarevic, 2017; Lee-Rife et al., 2012).

#### **2.6.4 Support system needed for young adolescent girls in early marriages in the East Mamprusi Municipality**

The counselors emphasized the importance of building trust and rapport with the adolescent girls through empathetic listening and a non-judgmental approach. This aligns with the research that highlights the need for counseling services to create a safe and supportive environment for child brides to share their experiences and address their unique emotional and psychological needs (Parsons et al., 2015; Raj, 2010).

The counselors also discussed the necessity of tailoring their interventions to the individual circumstances of each girl, considering factors such as cultural context, family dynamics, and the specific challenges they face. This personalized approach is consistent with the research which underscores the multifaceted nature of the issues experienced by child brides and the importance of contextual understanding in providing effective support (Bajrektarevic, 2017; Chandra-Mouli et al., 2013).

The available support services identified by the counselors, including counseling, educational support, healthcare, and financial assistance, align with the literature on the comprehensive interventions required to address the needs of adolescent girls in early marriages (Erulkar & Muthengi, 2009; Lee-Rife et al., 2012). However, the counselors highlighted the significant challenges in accessing these services, particularly for girls in remote areas, due to factors such as lack of awareness, geographical distance, and financial constraints. This aligns with the research that

emphasizes the importance of ensuring accessibility and availability of support services for this vulnerable population (Nguyen & Wodon, 2017; UNFPA, 2020).

The counselors' emphasis on collaboration with various community stakeholders, such as local NGOs, schools, and religious/traditional leaders, is consistent with the literature that underscores the need for a multi-stakeholder approach in addressing the issue of early marriage (Lemmon, 2014; UNICEF, 2020). This collaborative effort is crucial for creating a supportive environment, raising awareness, and promoting the value of education for adolescent girls.

The counselors' insights on the critical role of families and community leaders in supporting adolescent girls in early marriages align with the research that highlights the significant influence of these groups on the decisions and well-being of child brides (Erulkar & Muthengi, 2009; Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021). However, the counselors also noted the challenges in engaging the community due to deeply ingrained cultural norms and resistance to changing traditional practices, which is consistent with the literature on the sociocultural barriers to addressing early marriage (Chandra-Mouli et al., 2013; Gage, 2013).

The counselors' approaches to measuring the impact of their interventions, including both quantitative and qualitative indicators, align with the research that emphasizes the importance of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of programs and services for adolescent girls in early marriages (Lee-Rife et al., 2012; Malhotra & Elnakib, 2021). The success stories shared by the counselors demonstrate the transformative potential of their work and the resilience of the adolescent girls they support, which is consistent with the literature highlighting

the positive outcomes that can be achieved through targeted interventions (Erulkar & Muthengi, 2009; Raj, 2010).

#### **4.7 Chapter Summary**

Chapter four presented the research findings on the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in early marriages in the East Mamprusi Municipality. The chapter examined the key factors contributing to early marriages, with poverty identified as the primary driver, followed by cultural norms and limited access to education. It also highlighted the perceived effectiveness of legal frameworks and the strengthening of education systems as potential measures to reduce early marriages. The psychological challenges faced by adolescent girls, such as stress, anxiety, and dissatisfaction with their marital situations, were discussed in depth. Additionally, the impact of early marriage on academic performance, including difficulties in school attendance and lower educational aspirations, was explored. The chapter further emphasized the need for more robust support systems, including counseling services, mentorship programs, and community-based interventions. Insights from counselors revealed the importance of personalized support and collaboration with various community stakeholders to effectively address early marriage and its consequences.

In the following chapter which is Chapter 5 focuses on the conclusions drawn from these findings, highlighting their implications for policy and practice, and offer recommendations for addressing the challenges faced by young adolescent girls in early marriages.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a general overview of the study, revisiting its purpose, objectives, and research questions, while addressing any assumptions or expectations that guided the research and whether they were confirmed or refuted.

#### 5.1 Summary of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in early marriages in the East Mamprusi Municipality and to explore its counseling implications. Specifically, the study aimed to investigate the factors contributing to early marriages, assess the psychological and educational impacts on young girls, and identify the counseling and support systems necessary to address these challenges. The research was guided by four key objectives: to identify the socio-cultural and economic factors contributing to early marriages, to assess the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in early marriages, to analyze the educational implications of such marriages, and to explore the counseling and support needs of affected individuals. Correspondingly, the research questions sought to explore the root causes of early marriages, their effects on psychological and educational outcomes, and the role of counseling in mitigating these impacts. One of the underlying assumptions of the study was that poverty and cultural norms were likely to be the predominant drivers of early marriages in the municipality. This assumption was confirmed by the findings, as poverty and cultural traditions were indeed identified as the leading factors. Additionally, the study anticipated that early marriages would have significant adverse effects on both the psychological well-being and educational achievements of young girls, which was also validated through

the data. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions that address the economic, social, and cultural drivers of early marriages, while also providing robust counseling and support systems to affected individuals.

## **5.2 Summary of Major Findings**

The study revealed that respondents had varied understandings of the term “early marriage.” While most considered it as involving individuals below the age of 20, others aligned with the legal definition of marriage before 18, and a smaller group viewed it as including those marrying before 25. These differences highlighted the diverse perceptions within the community.

Poverty emerged as the predominant factor contributing to early marriages, with many respondents identifying economic hardship as a key driver. Cultural norms and traditions were also seen as playing a significant role, reflecting the influence of societal expectations. Additionally, limited access to education was recognized as a contributing factor, suggesting that the lack of educational opportunities for adolescents may push them towards early marriage. Peer pressure and other factors, though less prominent, were also acknowledged as influencing early marriage rates.

The study further showed that cultural norms and traditions were regarded as highly influential in promoting early marriages, though some respondents considered these factors to have a more moderate or limited impact. In terms of addressing early marriages, respondents recommended implementing laws against the practice and strengthening education systems. Economic empowerment programs for girls and community awareness campaigns were also proposed as effective strategies. The engagement of community leaders was particularly emphasized as a key approach to

improving education and awareness campaigns, alongside targeting specific age groups and using local languages for better communication.

The study identified significant socio-cultural and economic factors contributing to early marriage and its impact on the psychological well-being of young adolescents in the East Mamprusi Municipality. A key finding was that early marriage was primarily understood by most respondents (55%) as occurring before the age of 20 years, while 37% aligned with the legal definition of early marriage, seeing it as marriage before the age of 18.

The primary reason for the increase in early marriages was economic hardship, with 48% of respondents citing poverty as the leading cause. Cultural norms and traditions also played a major role, as highlighted by 34% of participants. Lack of access to education contributed to early marriages in 10% of cases, while peer pressure and other factors were less significant but still present. Cultural norms were perceived as highly influential in promoting early marriages, with 66% of respondents considering these traditions as “very influential.” This underscores the strong role societal expectations play in pushing adolescents toward early marriages.

Psychologically, the study revealed that adolescents involved in early marriages suffered considerable emotional strain. A notable 4.1 mean score was recorded for stress and anxiety experienced by these young girls. The analysis showed that many girls felt dissatisfied with their marital situations, with a low mean score of 2.5 reflecting this. Additionally, the lack of control over important decisions in their marriages (mean score of 2.4) further exacerbated their psychological distress. Feelings of restriction in pursuing personal goals were also high (mean score of 3.8), indicating that early marriage significantly hampers personal development.

In terms of available support systems, counseling services were the most widely recognized, with 45% of respondents acknowledging their availability. Education scholarships, mentioned by 35%, provided crucial financial support that helped keep girls in school and reduce the likelihood of early marriage. Mentorship programs (10%) and legal assistance (3%) were less frequently noted but still contributed to resisting early marriages.

The t-test statistic indicated that 90% of respondents believed early marriages negatively impacted adolescent girls' ability to focus on their studies, with a statistically significant mean score of 4.5 at the 0.05 level. This suggests a strong consensus that early marriages hinder academic concentration. Furthermore, 87% of respondents observed that classmates who were married faced difficulties in attending school regularly, reflected in a mean score of 4.35 and a p-value of 0.04, indicating that early marriages disrupt school attendance. When considering the relationship between early marriages and dropout rates, 56% of respondents agreed, though with a lower mean score of 2.8 and a p-value of 0.07, indicating a trend that, while not conclusive, is noteworthy. Additionally, 90% of respondents noticed differences in educational aspirations between married and unmarried girls, with a significant mean score of 4.5 and a p-value of 0.05, suggesting that early marriages likely limit educational goals. A significant 95% of respondents felt that early marriages restrict educational opportunities for adolescent girls, with a mean score of 4.75 and a p-value of 0.03, further emphasizing the adverse effects on educational advancement. However, 80% of respondents mentioned receiving some form of support from their school to manage the challenges of being a married adolescent, but with a mean score of 4.0 and a p-value of 0.06, indicating that while support exists, it may not be entirely adequate to address the negative consequences of early marriage.

The data also highlighted the effect of early marriage on academic performance, with 80% of respondents believing that early marriages lead to lower grades and academic achievement, suggesting a widespread view that early marriage severely impairs academic success. Only 9% felt that early marriage had no significant impact on academic performance, and 5% were unsure, indicating some level of uncertainty or lack of awareness about the extent of the impact. A small percentage (6%) mentioned other factors, possibly referring to indirect effects such as reduced participation in extracurricular activities or social isolation. Overall, the data points to a clear perception that early marriages negatively affect academic outcomes for adolescent girls.

Regarding the role of education in empowering adolescent girls to avoid early marriages, 79% of respondents believed that education equips girls with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their futures. Only 10% felt that education had little influence on girls' marriage decisions, suggesting that cultural norms, familial pressure, or economic conditions might overshadow the role of education. A small percentage (5%) were uncertain, reflecting a lack of clarity on how education impacts marriage decisions, while 6% mentioned other factors such as social networks or role models. Overall, the data underscores the empowering potential of education in helping adolescent girls make informed choices and avoid early marriages.

In terms of measures schools could implement to support married adolescent girls, the majority (45%) of respondents emphasized the importance of counseling services to address the emotional and psychological challenges faced by these girls. This reflects a recognition of the mental health struggles that come with balancing marriage and

education. Awareness campaigns on the importance of education and the consequences of early marriage were also seen as crucial, with 35% of respondents advocating for these initiatives. Additionally, 15% of respondents supported flexible class schedules or distance learning options to accommodate the time constraints faced by married girls. Only 5% felt that financial assistance for school fees was important, suggesting that while financial barriers are a concern, psychological support and flexible learning options were seen as more critical.

Qualitative interviews with students who had direct experiences with early marriage provided deeper insights into the age at which they married and the resulting impact. Most of these students married between the ages of 14 and 17, highlighting the prevalence of early marriage in the community. They shared stories of lost educational opportunities, psychological distress, and the heavy burden of adult responsibilities at a young age. Many expressed regret over the disruption to their education, with some feeling overwhelmed by the demands of marital life. For instance, Student 1, who married at 14, described feeling unprepared for the responsibilities of marriage, while Student 2, married at 15, reflected on how her marriage forced her to abandon her dream of becoming a teacher. The students shared a common sense of loss and isolation, with several highlighting the emotional and psychological challenges of balancing marriage and education.

The effect of early marriage on the total well-being of these students was profound, with many citing significant psychological strain, including anxiety and depression. Physical exhaustion and a lack of time for self-care were also common experiences, with respondents feeling that the responsibilities of marriage were too great for someone their age. The loss of personal freedom and autonomy was another critical

issue, as many felt that early marriage had deprived them of the opportunity to pursue their dreams. These experiences underscore the detrimental effects of early marriage on both mental and physical well-being, as well as personal freedom and happiness.

The respondents identified several key factors influencing early marriages in the East Mamprusi area, including cultural norms, economic pressures, and limited access to education. Cultural traditions were frequently mentioned, with many viewing early marriage as a deeply ingrained practice. Economic hardship was also seen as a significant driver, with families often marrying off their daughters to alleviate financial burdens. The lack of educational opportunities further contributed to early marriages, as girls with limited prospects for the future saw marriage as the only viable option. These factors highlight the complex interplay of cultural, economic, and social influences that sustain the practice of early marriages in the region.

The study revealed several key findings regarding the counseling and support implications for young adolescents in early marriages. It highlighted that counselors employed empathetic engagement and tailored interventions to address the unique circumstances faced by adolescent girls. Techniques such as active listening and trust-building were emphasized, along with the need to adapt approaches based on cultural and individual factors, including family dynamics and emotional states. While various support services, including counseling, educational support, healthcare, and financial assistance, existed, accessibility emerged as a significant challenge due to barriers like lack of awareness and geographical distance.

The study underscored the importance of collaboration with local NGOs, schools, and health centers in creating a comprehensive support network. Families and community leaders were found to play critical roles in supporting these girls, yet cultural

resistance to changing perceptions of early marriage posed challenges to counselors' efforts. Furthermore, counselors utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods to measure the impact of their interventions, focusing on indicators such as school retention rates and changes in self-esteem among the girls. The study also documented several success stories that showcased the transformative effects of counseling and education on the lives of adolescent girls, reinforcing the importance of tailored support. Despite the challenges encountered, counselors expressed strong motivation to continue their work, driven by the belief that small changes could lead to significant improvements in the lives of these girls. Overall, the findings illustrated the complexities of supporting adolescent girls in early marriages and emphasized the need for comprehensive, community-driven interventions.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The results revealed that poverty and cultural norms are the predominant drivers of early marriages in the municipality, as identified by 48% and 34% of respondents, respectively. These findings highlight the deep-rooted economic struggles and traditional practices that perpetuate early marriages. The limited access to education, reported by 10% of respondents, further exacerbates the issue by restricting opportunities for young girls to pursue alternative paths. These factors point to the urgent need for targeted interventions that address both financial hardships and cultural beliefs, such as community-based awareness programs and poverty alleviation initiatives.

The psychological well-being of adolescent girls in early marriages was significantly compromised. Participants reported heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress, stemming from early responsibilities, social isolation, and lack of

support systems. These findings underscore the immense mental health burden placed on young girls and emphasize the necessity for robust counseling services and psychosocial support tailored to their unique challenges. Schools, families, and communities must work collaboratively to provide safe spaces and accessible mental health resources for affected individuals.

The study further revealed that early marriages disrupt educational trajectories, with many married girls unable to continue schooling due to household responsibilities and societal expectations. This educational disruption perpetuates cycles of poverty, limits personal development, and reduces opportunities for economic independence. Policies aimed at integrating married adolescents into formal education systems and offering flexible learning options are crucial in addressing this challenge.

Also, the lack of tailored counseling and support systems emerged as a significant gap. Counselors indicated a pressing need for specialized training and resources to effectively address the needs of married adolescents. The study highlights the importance of strengthening institutional and community support frameworks, including life skills training, economic empowerment programs, and targeted counseling interventions.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the conclusions drawn from the findings. The recommendations are informed by the data, acknowledge the limitations of the study, and assign responsibility to relevant authorities.

1. The study identified poverty as the predominant factor driving early marriages. To address poverty as a key driver of early marriages, local communities should be encouraged to form cooperative groups, such as

farming associations and credit unions, to improve economic self-sufficiency. These community-led initiatives can serve as a foundation for financial stability before external interventions from local government authorities and social welfare agencies. Local government authorities and social welfare agencies should implement poverty alleviation programs, such as conditional cash transfers and economic empowerment initiatives, specifically targeting families at risk. These programs should prioritize education and skills development for adolescent girls to reduce economic pressures that lead to early marriages. However, this recommendation is limited by the study's focus on adolescent girls in schools, which may not fully capture the economic needs of out-of-school girls.

2. Cultural norms and traditions were found to be a significant factor influencing early marriages. Traditional leaders and community organizations should spearhead awareness campaigns to challenge harmful cultural practices and promote gender equality. These campaigns should involve respected community figures to ensure cultural sensitivity and effectiveness. This recommendation acknowledges the study's limitation in exploring broader regional variations in cultural practices, which may require further research for more comprehensive interventions.
3. Limited access to education was identified as a contributing factor. The Ghana Education Service and NGOs should enhance the accessibility of education by providing scholarships, flexible school schedules, and re-entry programs for married adolescents. These measures would help married girls continue their education without facing societal or institutional barriers. The study's focus on

in-school girls may limit the applicability of this recommendation to out-of-school adolescents, necessitating broader community outreach.

4. The study revealed significant psychological challenges among girls in early marriages. School-based counselors and health professionals should be trained and equipped to provide targeted mental health services for married adolescents. This includes creating safe spaces for emotional expression and offering tailored interventions to address anxiety, depression, and stress. While the study identified these needs within schools, the absence of data on community-based support systems presents a limitation that future studies could address.
5. The lack of tailored counseling and support emerged as a critical gap. The Ministry of Education and school administrations should collaborate with non-governmental organizations to establish structured counseling programs, including life skills training and economic empowerment initiatives. These programs should also involve families to create a supportive environment for married adolescents. The study's emphasis on school-based interventions may limit the applicability of this recommendation to broader community settings, which warrants additional exploration.
6. It is recommended that future studies on early marriages and their psychological impact continue to adopt a mixed-methods research design. The integration of quantitative tools such as questionnaires with qualitative approaches such as interviews proved highly effective in this study, as it allowed for the collection of both statistical evidence and rich personal narratives. This dual approach ensured that findings were not only numerically reliable but also deeply human-centered, capturing the lived experiences of

adolescent girls alongside professional insights from counselors. By combining breadth and depth, mixed methods provide a more comprehensive understanding of complex social issues, strengthen the validity of results, and generate recommendations that are both evidence-based and contextually grounded. Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners are therefore encouraged to employ mixed-methods designs in future investigations and interventions to ensure that strategies addressing early marriages are informed by both data and lived realities.

#### **5.4 Limitations**

The study, while providing valuable insights into the psychological well-being of young adolescent girls in early marriages in the East Mamprusi Municipality, was not without limitations. Firstly, the research focused exclusively on in-school adolescent girls, which limited the findings to those already enrolled in formal education, potentially excluding the perspectives of out-of-school adolescents who may experience different challenges. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data for both the quantitative and qualitative components, which could introduce biases such as social desirability or recall errors.

Another limitation was the geographic scope of the study, which concentrated on five schools within the municipality, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different cultural or socio-economic dynamics. While the study highlighted the need for community-based interventions, it primarily examined school-based systems, leaving gaps in understanding how broader community structures and support systems might address the issue of early marriages. The cross-sectional design of the study provided a snapshot of the factors and impacts

at a single point in time, making it difficult to capture long-term trends or changes. These limitations underscore the need for future research to expand the scope and depth of inquiry to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

### **5.5 Suggestions for Further Study**

Based on the limitations identified in the study, the researcher suggests the following for further research:

1. Future research should focus on understanding the psychological, educational, and socio-economic impacts of early marriages on out-of-school adolescent girls. This would provide a more comprehensive view of the issue, as their challenges and coping mechanisms might differ significantly from those of in-school girls.
2. Research should be conducted in other regions of Ghana to examine how cultural, economic, and social variations influence the prevalence and impacts of early marriages. This would enhance the generalizability of findings and identify region-specific interventions.
3. Further studies should investigate the role of community-based structures, such as religious institutions, traditional councils, and local organizations, in addressing early marriages. This would complement the current focus on school-based interventions.
4. A longitudinal study is recommended to track the long-term psychological, educational, and socio-economic outcomes for girls who marry early. This would help identify changes over time and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions aimed at mitigating these impacts.
5. Research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of existing counseling programs and interventions tailored to the needs of adolescent girls in early

marriages. This would provide evidence-based insights to improve the design and implementation of such programs.



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## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE EAST MAMPRUSI MUNICIPALITY

**Dear Respondent,**

This is a research being conducted in the East Mamprusi Municipality on: Early marriages and their influence on adolescent girls and their Psychological well-being. You have being selected as one of the favorable respondent. You are requested to respond to the Questions in the questionnaire as frank as you could. Please confidentiality and anonymity are strictly guaranteed.

Thank you.

#### SECTION 1: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE INCREASED RATE OF EARLY MARRIAGES AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN EAST MAMPRUSI MUNICIPALITY

##### SECTION 1: PERSONAL INFORMATION

**1. Age:**

- a) 10-15                      b) 16-18                      c) 19-21                      d) 22-23

**2. Form or Level**

- a) SHS 1                      b) SHS 2                      c) SHS 3

**3. Ethnicity:**

- a) Mamprusi                      b) Bimobas                      c) Konkombas                      d) Other (please specify)

## SECTION 2: FAMILY BACKGROUND

4. How many siblings do you have?

- a) None                      b) 1-2                      c) 3-4                      d) 5 or more

5. What is the educational level of your parents/ guardians?

- a) No formal education  
b) Primary education  
c) Junior high school  
d) Senior high school  
e) Tertiary education

6. How would you describe your family's socio-economic status?

- a) Poor  
b) Lower middle class  
c) Middle class  
d) Upper middle class  
e) Wealthy



### A. AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION

7. Have you heard about early marriages?

- a) Yes                      b) No

8. What do you understand by the term “early marriage”?

- a) Marriage before the age of 18  
b) Marriage before the age of 20  
c) Marriage before the age of 25

9. Do you believe early marriage is a problem in East Mamprusi Municipality?

- a) Yes                      b) No

## **B. FACTORS INFLUENCING EARLY MARRIAGES**

11. What do you think are the main reasons for the increased rate of early marriages among adolescent girls in East Mamprusi Municipality?

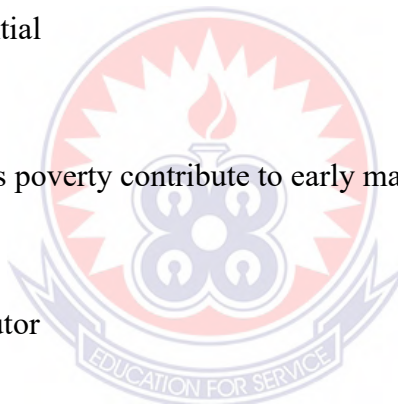
- a) Cultural norms and traditions
- b) Poverty
- c) Lack of access to education
- d) Peer pressure
- e) Other (please specify)

12. How influential are cultural norms and traditions in promoting early marriages?

- a) Very influential
- b) Somewhat influential
- c) Not influential

13. To what extent does poverty contribute to early marriages?

- a) Major contributor
- b) Moderate contributor
- c) Minor contributor



## **C. PERSONAL EXPERIENCES**

14. Have you personally experienced pressure to get married at a young age?

- a) Yes
- b) No

15. If yes, what were the main factors contributing to this pressure?

- a) Family expectations
- b) Peer pressure
- c) Economic factors
- d) Other (please specify)



**SECTION 2: PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS INVOLVED IN EARLY MARRIAGES IN EAST MAMPRUSI MUNICIPALITY**

**A. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

Statement	Frequency				
	SA	A	N	D	SD
I feel satisfied with my current marital situation.					
I experience a sense of security and stability in my marriage.					
I have control over important decisions in my marriage.					
I experience stress or anxiety due to my early marriage.					
I feel restricted or limited in pursuing my personal goals and aspirations.					
I have access to adequate resources and support for my well-being in my marriage.					
I feel hopeful about my future despite my early marriage.					
I experience frequent conflicts or disagreements with my spouse					
I feel respected and valued by my spouse/partner					
I have control over decisions affecting my life					
I feel supported by my family and community in my marriage.					

**B. COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

19. What support systems are available for adolescent girls in your community to resist early marriages?

- a) Education scholarships
- b) Counseling services
- c) Mentorship programs
- d) Legal assistance

e) Other (please specify)

20. How effective do you think these support systems are in addressing the issue?

- a) Very effective
- b) Somewhat effective
- c) Not effective

**SECTION 3: EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF EARLY MARRIAGES ON ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN EAST MAMPRUSI MUNICIPALITY**

**Please indicate whether yes or no with the following statements:**

Statement	Yes	%	No	%
Do you believe that early marriages among adolescent girls have a negative impact on their ability to focus on their studies?				
Have you observed any of your classmates experiencing difficulties in attending school regularly due to early marriages?				
Do you think early marriages contribute to a higher dropout rate among adolescent girls in your school?				
Have you noticed any differences in the educational aspirations and goals between married and unmarried adolescent girls in your community?				
Do you think early marriages limit the educational opportunities available to adolescent girls?				
Have you received any support or resources from your school to help you navigate the challenges of being a married adolescent girl while continuing your education?				

21. In your opinion, how does early marriage affect the academic performance of adolescent girls?

- a) It leads to lower grades and academic achievement.
- b) It has no significant impact on academic performance.
- c) Not sure

22. How do you perceive the role of education in empowering adolescent girls to avoid early marriages?

- a) Education provides girls with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their future.
- b) Education has little influence on girls' decisions regarding marriage.
- c) Not sure

23. In your opinion, what specific measures could schools implement to better support married adolescent girls in continuing their education?

- a) Flexible class schedules or distance learning options
- b) Counseling services to address emotional and psychological challenges
- c) Financial assistance for school fees and related expenses
- d) Awareness campaigns on the importance of education and the consequences of early marriage
- e) Other (please specify)

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARTICIPANTS**

Dear Participant,

This instrument is meant to generate discussion on a research being conducted on Early Marriages and their influence on Adolescent Girls' Well-being in the East Mamprusi Municipality.

You have been selected as one of the favourable participants.

Your anonymity is assured.

Thank you.

#### **PREVALENCE OF EARLY MARRIAGES IN EAST MAMPRUSI MUNICIPALITY.**

At what age did you get married and could you speak about your personal experiences?

How do early marriage affect your education of adolescent girls in the East Mamprusi area?

For your personal experience how do early marriages affect your total well-being?

#### **FACTORS INFLUENCING EARLY MARRIAGES.**

What do you think are the main reasons for early marriages in the East Mamprusi area?

#### **CHALLENGES POSED TO ADOLESCENT GIRLS BY EARLY MARRIAGE.**

In your view how does early marriages affect adolescent girls in the East Mamprusi area?

#### **SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDRESSING EARLY MARRIAGES**

What suggestions would you give to help reduce Early Marriages in the East Mamprusi area?

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SCHOOL COUNCILLORS

#### COUNSELING AND SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN EARLY MARRIAGES

##### 1. Understanding the Needs:

- a) Based on your experience, what are some common challenges faced by adolescent girls in early marriages?
- b) How do these challenges differ from those faced by unmarried adolescent girls?
- c) In your opinion, what are the specific counseling and support needs of adolescent girls in early marriages?

##### 2. Counseling Approaches:

- a) What counseling approaches or techniques have you found to be effective in addressing the needs of adolescent girls in early marriages?
- b) How do you adapt your counseling approach to meet the unique circumstances of each girl?
- c) Can you provide examples of successful counseling interventions you have implemented?

##### 3. Support Services:

- a) What support services are available for adolescent girls in early marriages in this community?
- b) How accessible are these support services to the girls who need them?

##### 4. Community Involvement:

- a) How do you collaborate with other stakeholders in the community to provide comprehensive support to adolescent girls in early marriages?

- b) What role do families and community leaders play in supporting these girls?
- c) Have you faced any challenges in engaging the community in these efforts?

**5. Impact and Success Stories:**

- a) How do you measure the impact of your counseling and support interventions on the lives of adolescent girls in early marriages?
- b) Can you share any success stories or positive outcomes resulting from your work?
- c) What motivates you to continue working with this population despite the challenges?

