Parental verbal violence and attitudes towards early marriage among unmarried adolescent girls in Niger.

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Extended abstract

Background: Early marriage can have serious damage on the wellbeing of girls, through poor reproductive health, limited education and employment opportunities, social isolation, domestic violence, etc. Based on the review of the literature, few studies investigated the relationship between parental verbal violence and adolescent girls' attitudes towards early marriage.

Objective: This paper aims to examine the relationship between parental verbal violence and attitudes towards early marriage among unmarried adolescent girls in Niger.

Data and methods: Community based cross sectional study was conducted among 519 unmarried adolescent girls aged 10-19 as part of the baseline assessment of the project *Child Marriage Prevention* (PME) - an intervention utilizing a religious based approach to prevent child marriage in the region of Zinder, Niger.

The **dependent variable** of interest in this analysis is attitudes towards early marriage. During the data collection, unmarried adolescent girls were asked the following question: In your opinion, at what age can a girl get married? Our dependent variable is coded **1** if the adolescent girl reports any age below 18 (positive attitude towards early marriage) and **0** if she reports 18 years or over (Negative attitude towards early marriage).

If P is the probability of an adolescent girl to have a positive attitude towards early marriage, this model is provided by the following mathematical formula: Logit (P) = Log (P/1-P) = B0 + B1X1 + B2X2 + B3X3 +...+ BkXk + E where Xj denotes each of the k independent variables; Bj denotes the net effect of Xj on the probability of an adolescent girl to have a positive attitude towards early marriage, E represents the prediction error.

The **key independent variable** of interest to this analysis is parental verbal violence. During the data collection, each unmarried adolescent girl was asked the following question: Has your father/tutor ever threatened, blackmailed, manipulated, stigmatized, insulted or ignored you? (coded **0**= No; **1**=Yes).

Potential predictors included in the analyses are age of respondent (10-14 years old; 15-19 years), her education level (Never attended school; no longer attends school; currently attends school) and her income generative activities status-IGA (Runs an IGA; Doesn't run an IGA), education level of father/tutor, work status of father/tutor and age of father/tutor.

Descriptive analysis and multivariate logistic regression models are performed to examine the association between parental verbal violence and attitudes towards early marriage, controlling for predictors variables.

Results: Descriptive analyses showed that attitudes towards early marriage were significantly associated to parental verbal violence. In **graph 1**, it was found that 92,3% of unmarried girls who have experienced parental verbal violence had positive attitude towards early marriage (marriage before the age of 18) vs 72,5% of those who have not experienced parental verbal violence.

The results of multivariate logistic regression model by controlling for potential confounding variables, demonstrated that unmarried girls who have experienced parental verbal violence were

almost 5 times more likely to have positive attitude towards early marriage (aOR = 4.94; 95% Cl 2.25 – 10.84; p = 0.000) than those who have not experienced parental verbal violence.

Individual characteristics of unmarried girls, particularly education, age and income generative activities are significantly found to be predictors of their attitudes towards early marriage. Unmarried girls who currently attend school (aOR = 0.48; 95% Cl 0.29 - 0.82; p = 0.007), those aged 10-14 (aOR = 0.31; 95% Cl 0.19 – 0.52; p = 0.000) and those who currently run an income generative activity (aOR = 0.55; 95% Cl 0.33 - 0.92; p = 0.023) are less likely to have positive attitude towards early marriage (**Table 1**).

Graph 1: Relationship between parental verbal violence and attitudes towards early marriage.

Table 1: Odds ratio of having positive attitude towards early marriage

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Logistic regression                          Number of obs    =        519
                                             LR chi2(10)      =      60.63
                                             Prob > chi2      =     0.0000
Log likelihood = -252.71129                  Pseudo R2        =     0.1071
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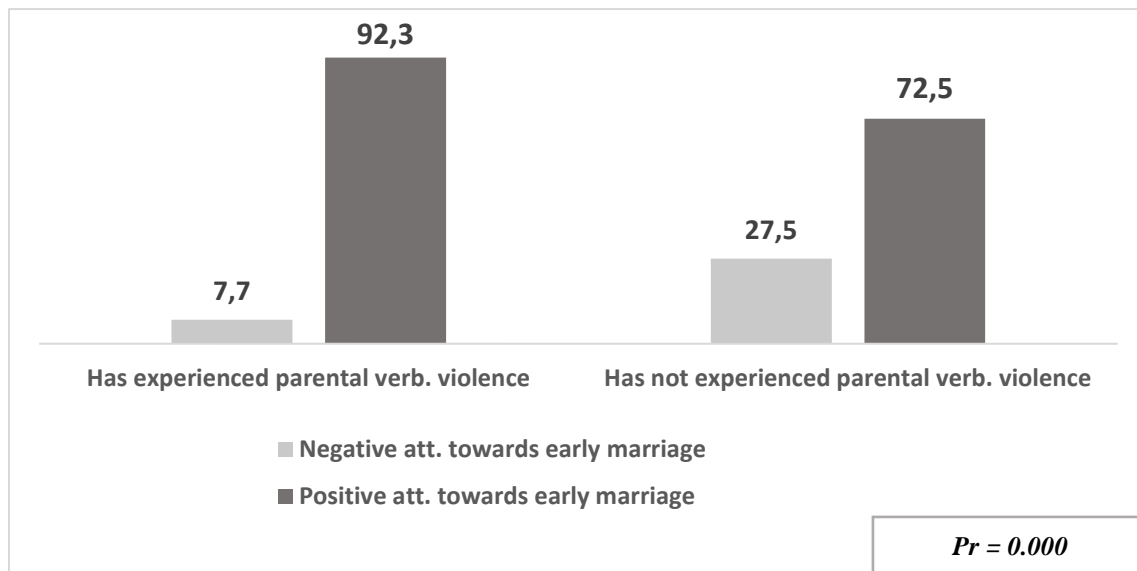
mariagee	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
violence1	4.94989	1.980271	4.00	0.000	2.259752	10.84252
school2	.773751	.2331638	-0.85	0.395	.4286455	1.396703
school3	.4873493	.1302805	-2.69	0.007	.2885978	.8229768
agee2	.314485	.0795656	-4.57	0.000	.1915329	.5163644
IGA1	.5548806	.1437629	-2.27	0.023	.3339361	.9220102
fathEduc2	.7612638	.2660444	-0.78	0.435	.3837598	1.510118
fathWork1	.9862386	.2376817	-0.06	0.954	.614956	1.581685
fathAge1	.856768	.3830168	-0.35	0.729	.3567261	2.057745
fathAge2	1.186379	.3482513	0.58	0.560	.6673606	2.109047
fathAge3	.8706273	.2684487	-0.45	0.653	.475744	1.593277
_cons	5.486683	1.508935	6.19	0.000	3.200474	9.406009

Conclusions: The results indicated that positive attitude towards early marriage was associated with parental verbal violence. Programs to prevent early marriage should fight parental violence in all its forms, promote young girl education, support parents in income generative activities and develop the culture for correcting the wrong cultural and social beliefs.