

# ACCESS TO AND DROPOUT OF GIRLS FROM SCHOOL: A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS OF MARRIAGE ARRANGEMENTS ON GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION IN BOLNI

<sup>1</sup>Matthew Gmalifo Mabefam and <sup>2</sup>Kofi Ohene-Konadu

<sup>1</sup>Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Science, University of Ghana, P.O. Box LG 419, Legon-Accra, Ghana

<sup>2</sup>Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Science, University of Ghana, P.O. Box LG 65, Legon-Accra, Ghana

Received 2013-09-23, Revised 2013-11-02; Accepted 2013-11-05

## ABSTRACT

The education of the girl-child has suffered many setbacks both in the past and at the present. As a result some girls are denied access while others are forced to drop out-of-school especially in rural Ghana. This study therefore examined the effects of marriage arrangements on girl-child education in Bolni, a rural community in the Nanumba North District of the Northern Region, Ghana. The study adopted a quantitative method of research design and employed questionnaire in collecting data. Eighty respondents were sampled for the study. The study used simple regression analysis to determine the relationship between marriage arrangements and girl-child education while t-test was used to validate the hypotheses. Exchange, Betrothal and preferred marriage arrangements all had relationships with girl-child education and the effects of such relationships were inimical to their ability to access school or remain in school. Hence the increase in the number of girls involved in a marriage arrangement led to a corresponding increase in the number of girls who were either denied access to or dropped out from school. It is recommended that, school social workers, community workers and gender activists should educate parents to do away with such marriages and invest in their girls' education.

**Keywords:** Access, Dropout, Girl-Child, Exchange, Betrothal, Preferred Marriage

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a potent tool for the development of people and nations in the world (UNICEF, 2012; PI, 2012). As a result of this popular acknowledgement, several interventions have been put in place at the global and national levels to ensure children's access to education is improved. Despite these efforts the story of children's access to education is sad in some regions of the world. This is because; some children are still deprived of their right to access education and hence are out-of-school in the midst of all the efforts (UNICEF, 2012; UNESCO, 2012; UNESCO, 2010).

UNESCO (2012) and UNESCO (2010) assert that, about 61 million children of primary school going age were out-of-school in 2010 and that, this figure (61

million) had remained stable from 2008 to 2010. This means that, the global world between the period of 2008 and 2010 might not have benefited much from the efforts aimed at increasing children's access to education. However, there might be regional or country variations to the number of children who were out-of-school and some countries may even have higher or lower averages than the global average.

UNESCO (2012) again notes that, the global world had chalked some achievements with regards to educational access especially between the period of 1990 and 2008. Within that period, out-of-school children had declined from 105 million to 61 million. This progress according to UNESCO (2012) could be associated with many factors among which, the World Education Forum held in Dakar in 2000 and other similar interventions got

**Corresponding Author:** Matthew Gmalifo Mabefam, Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Science, University of Ghana, P.O. Box LG 419, Legon-Accra, Ghana

world leaders committed to achieving 'Education For All' by 2015. These bold steps by world leaders led to individual countries designing specific interventions to improve educational access in their respective countries and this actually paid off by improving children's access to education (UNESCO, 2012).

Within the period of 2008 to 2010, the out-of-school age primary school children remained stable at 61 million (UNESCO, 2012). However, it is not clear as to what has accounted for the stagnant figure of out-of-school age primary school children at 61 million for consecutive three years without any improvement. One wonders why this stagnation? Has the commitments made by world leaders in Dakar, 2000 and other efforts lost their values? And hence governments have begun to withdraw their commitments? For that number of children to be out-of-school is so worrying especially in the case that, education is a right and all are supposed to be in school.

Recent statistics still show that even though, there has been some improvements, there is still a greater number of children who are denied access to school. In 2012, 30 million primary school-age children in Africa-one in every four-were out-of-school along with 20 million adolescents (UNESCO, 2012).

The probability that, majority of the children out-of-school have always been girls is high, because of people's perception and biases towards girls' education (PI, 2012). For instance, of the total number of out-of-primary school going age children, 58% in 2000 were girls which had reduced to 53% in 2010 (UNESCO, 2010). In both years ending, girls accounted for more than half of the total of out-of-primary school age children. This is questionable because, if the argument that females are more than males in the world is something to go by, how come there are less girls in school than boys? This reveals that, there might be specific acts which consciously or unconsciously deny girls access to school and hence their less numbers in schools as compared to boys. Osita-Oleribe (2007) found out that since Beijing Conference which committed itself to nip gender disparity at primary and secondary levels of education, "millions of children especially girls are still not making it into school, ...the gender gap is even widening and discrimination continues to permeate the educational systems" (p. 30).

Evidence available (UNESCO, 2012) show that across the regions of the world, educational access for children had improved greatly but that of Sub-Saharan Africa has rather dwindled and thus, has contributed to the worsening global statistics. In the period between

2008 and 2010, where there was global stability in the number of out-of-primary school children, that of Sub-Saharan Africa increased from 29 million to 31 million (UNESCO, 2012). Based on this fact, the region hosts more than half of the world's out-of-school children. Specifically on girl-child access to education, the region had 20.3 million in 1990, 21.9 million in 2000 and 16.3 million in 2010 girls of primary school going age out of school (UNESCO, 2012).

On the issue of girl-child education in Ghana, girls do not have equal access to education as their male counterparts. This shows in the gender parity index (GPI) with regards to school enrolments. For instance, the ratio when balanced stands at 1 but in 2006/07 academic year the GPI was 0.96 and remained the same for the 2007/08 academic year whilst at the JHS level the GPI retrogressed from 0.93 in the 2005/06 academic year to 0.92 in 2007/2008 academic year (UNDP, 2013). There has been an improvement in the enrolment of the girl-child in schools in Ghana as a result of efforts being made by government. For instance enrolments of girls increased from 48.5% in 2006/07 academic year to 49% in 2008/09 academic year at the primary school level (GPEGDPG, 2012). Some of these efforts include but are not limited to school capitation grant, school feeding programme, food ration for girls among others, yet there are still regional disparities in the gender gap across Ghana. For instance, Northern Region had the least GPI of 0.81 which fell below the national average of 0.94 in the 2008 academic year (AAG, 2011). The case of Bolni, is nothing to write home about as only one girl has been able to complete senior high school in 2012.

It is asserted by (Anglaaere *et al.*, 2006) that, the level of female enrolment ratio in districts varied from 111.4% in the Berekum District of the BrongAhafo Region to 34% in Gushiega-Karaga District of the Northern Region. In an effort to find out why such a vast difference in the enrolment of girls across Ghana, (Anglaaere *et al.*, 2006) indicates that, low numbers of girls enrolled in schools in the Northern Region is due to the combination of socio-cultural, economic and religious factors that serve as barriers to girl-child education. These therefore affect the efforts of government and NGOs at improving education in the area and hence the reasons why till date there are still few girls in school as compared to other areas in Ghana.

However, the gap that remains in (Anglaaere *et al.*, 2006) analysis is that, they did not establish the effects of the specific cultural practices and how such practices contribute to denying the girl-child access to education.

A gap this study seeks to address by examining the effects of some selected practices such as marriage arrangements, gender roles, festivals and funerals and their repercussions on girl-child education in Bolni in the Nanumba North District in Northern Region Ghana.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is part of the sequential study conducted after an explorative qualitative study on girl-child education in Bolni. The qualitative findings were in-depth but lacked breadth and a subject of the study which concerns itself with marriage arrangements needed a wider view of the society and hence the researcher expanded it to cover a lot more parents by adopting a purely quantitative approach. A quantitative design as opined by Creswell *et al.* (2012) explains a phenomenon where numerical data are collected and analyzed using mathematically based methods. This covers a lot of people and the results can be generalized to the target population.

A sample size of 80 was considered for the study. The sample size was classified into the following; 40 each of household heads and relatively elderly women in each of the household sampled. The size of the sample was to capture diverse views from respondents on matters of marriage arrangements and how they affected girl-child education in Bolni. A combination of cluster, simple random and purposive sampling were adopted in selecting respondents for the study. The usage of the cluster and simple random sampling designs were based on the fact that, they gave every subject an equal opportunity of being selected and hence prevented bias on the part of the researcher (Panneerselvam, 2004). Even though purposive sampling technique was biased, Panneerselvam (2004) justified its usage based on convenience of the researcher which at the point in time was the best option to obtain the needed information.

With these methods, Bolni was stratified into five clusters (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5). Through simple random sampling, Bolni 1, 2 and 4 were selected for this study. The numbers of the clusters were written on pieces of papers and folded to avoid seeing the numbers and put in a hat where the researcher picked three clusters out of the five randomly and one after the other. This was done to prevent bias on the part of the researcher on the cluster to select. The second level of the sampling design was the selection of households in the selected clusters to include in the study. The researcher selected 60% of the houses for the study from each of the clusters selected earlier and a quantitative study to be representative, the

researcher can select between 40%-60% of the sampling unit. With this, the researcher numbered all the households cluster by cluster and found the following. Cluster 1 had 30 households, cluster 2, 24 households and cluster 4, 13 households. In applying the 60% rule to select a representative sample of households for the study, the researcher, had the following number of households to include in the study; cluster 1 (18), cluster 2 (14) and cluster 4 (8). The individual research parts were automatically identified and interviewed, because, the researcher interviewed only household heads and relatively elderly women of each of the selected households.

Using a questionnaire, the researcher employed face-to-face interviews in the collection of data. The use of face-to-face interview was due to the fact that, the research participants were mostly illiterates and could neither read nor write. This method therefore provided the researcher the opportunity to explain the questions they would not have understood in his absence while observing their non-verbal communications for probes especially for open ended questions. The answered questionnaires were sorted, coded and entered onto the computer using the Predictive Analytic Software version 20. The following statistical tools were used to analyze the data; simple regression analysis, t-test and descriptive statistics.

### 2.1. Methods for Testing of Effects of Marriage Arrangements on Girl-Child Education

A simple linear regression was used to quantify the effects of marriage arrangements (exchange, betrothal and preferred marriages) on girl-child education (denial and survival in school). This is because, regression analysis unlike other methods, can measure the effects of independent variable (exchange marriage arrangements) on the dependent variable as well as show the direction of the relationship (Pindyck and Rubinfeld, 1991).

According to Panneerselvam (2004) regression analysis is used to determine the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. Pindyck and the colleague furthered that, for statistical testing, there is the need to utilize a sample estimate of the error of variance rather than its true value. This is to make room for other factors that also influence the outcome of the results but not known or taken care of by the study. The t-test on the other hand was used to validate the hypotheses.

To help establish the relationships between marriage arrangements and girl-child education the study

hypothesized that;  $H_0$ : exchange marriage arrangement has no effect on girl-child education in Bolni,  $H_1$ : exchange marriage arrangement has a negative effect on girl child education in Bolni,  $H_0$ : child betrothal marriage arrangement has no effect on girl-child education in Bolni,  $H_1$ : the inability of the girl-child to go to school in Bolni is a function of child betrothal,  $H_0$ : traditional boy/girlfriend relationship has no effect on girl child education in Bolni,  $H_1$ : that traditional boy/girlfriend relationship has a negative effect on girl child education in Bolni. Thus, a simple regression equation which relates the number of girls involved in a specific marriage arrangement to girl-child education is given as Equation (1):

$$Y_j = \beta_0 + \beta_i X_i + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

Where:

$Y_j$  = The number of girls involved in the  $j$ th dependent variable,  $j = 1$  and  $2$  and  $i = 1, 2$  and  $3$

$Y_1$  = The number of girls denied access to education due to specific marriage arrangement

$Y_2$  = The number of girls whodropped out from school as a result of a specific marriage arrangement

$X_1$  = The number of girls involved in exchange marriage arrangement

$X_2$  = The number of girls involved in betrothal marriage arrangement

$X_3$  = The number of girls involved in the preferred marriage arrangement

$\beta_1$  = The coefficient of  $X_1$  or the slope of the regression equation

$\beta_0$  = The constant or the intercept of the regression equation and

$\varepsilon$  = Error term which measures the effects of the factors which influence girl-child education but are not included in the model

The method used in the validation of hypotheses for regression model of this type was the t-test. Mathematically, the hypotheses to be tested are represented as:

$$H_0 : \beta_1 = 0 \text{ and } H_1 : \beta_1 < 0$$

According to Pindyck and Rubinfeld (1991), t-calculated is given as Equation (2):

$$t - \text{calculated} (n - 2) = \frac{\beta_1 - 0}{SE\beta_1} \quad (2)$$

where,  $SE_{\beta_1}$  is standard error of  $\beta_1$  and  $n$  is the number of respondents.

The decision rule for the test of hypotheses was as follows; if t-calculated at a certain confidence interval (say 90% or 95% or 100%) is greater than t-critical; reject the null hypotheses in favour of the alternate. On the other hand, if t-calculated is less than the t-critical, accept the null hypothesis. If the null hypothesis is rejected, it implies that, there is a significant relationship between the number of girls involved in a particular marriage arrangement and girl-child education in Bolni.

## 2.2. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by its quantitative approach. One defect of a quantitative study is its inability to elicit in-depth information from the study population (Creswell *et al.*, 2012). The details are therefore inference descriptions of the researcher and not that of the study population. These results were limited as they provided numerical descriptions rather than detailed narratives and provided less elaborate accounts of respondents experience about access and drop out girls from school in Bolni. Despite, this limitation, the researcher used it because, it captured large sample size which elicited the views of people of Bolni on the effects of marriage arrangements on girl child education. Again, even though it covered a large sample size, the generalization of these findings are also limited as the study focused on a single community in rural Northern Region of Ghana which had a case history of few girls being sent to school and withdrawn for marriage purposes. Thus, these findings can only be extrapolated on communities which engage their girls in similar marriage arrangements.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. Socio-Cultural Determinants of Girl-Child Education in Bolni

Taking into cognizance of the fact that, some girls were out-of-school, the researcher explored the socio-cultural factors that determined girls' inability to be in school. The responses of this section were based on parents who asserted they did not have all their girls in school. Again, the researcher used frequency of responses and percentages and not the frequency of respondents due to the fact that, the question that solicited these responses was open-ended and in some instances the respondents gave multiple reasons. **Table 1** presents the reasons for which some girls were out-of-school in Bolni.

From **Table 1** above, marriage arrangements were the main cultural determinants of girl-child education in Bolni (92.72%). Bolni has different marriage arrangements and each of these arrangements has effects on girl-child education. **Table 1** above showed that, exchange marriage arrangement alone accounted for more than half of the percentage responses (54.55%) while betrothal had 30.90% with traditional boy/girlfriend relationship or preferred marriage with the least of 7.27% of responses.

### 3.2. Effects of Marriage Arrangements on Girl-Child Education

This section of the study seeks to determine the relationship and effects of marriage arrangements on girl-child education in Bolni using descriptive and inferential statistics. The researcher used simple regression analysis and t-test to validate the hypotheses. The analyses of the data and t-test validation rejected all the null hypotheses in favour of the alternate. The t-test validation accepted the apriori expectation that there are relationships between the number of girls involved in exchange, betrothal and traditional boy/girlfriend relationship or preferred marriage arrangements and the number of girls denied access to or dropped out from school in Bolni.

The findings show that, the consequences of the relationships between marriage arrangements and girl-child education are negative. Each of the stated alternate hypotheses had two variables, which are girls denied access to school and girls dropped out from school depending on a specific marriage arrangement serving as independent variable. In this regard, all the t-calculated were greater than the t-critical at 78 degrees of freedom and at 99% confidence level.

Exchange marriage arrangement was the first marriage arrangement the study considered. The researcher hypothesized that, exchange marriage arrangement has no effect on girl-child education in Bolni. After running the regression and validating of the hypothesis, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternate. The t-calculated for the denial of girls access to school and dropped out of girls from school as a result of exchange marriage arrangement are 8.256 and 10.184 (**Table 2**). The t-calculated were both greater than the t-critical of 1.658 at 78 degrees of freedom at 99% confidence level. The  $\beta_1$  values (co-efficient) for girls denied access to school and girls dropped out-of-school as a result of their involvement in exchange marriage arrangement are 0.448 and 0.552 (**Table 2**).

**Table 1.** Reasons for which some Girls were Out-of -School in Bolni

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Exchange marriage arrangement	30.0	54.55
Betrothal Marriage Arrangement	17.0	30.90
Traditional Boy/ Girl Friend Relationship	4.0	7.27
Poverty	4.0	7.27
Total	55.0	100.00

**Table 2.** Regression and t-test validation of hypotheses: Relationships and Effects of Marriage Arrangements on Girl-Child Education

Variable	Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	T-calculated	p. values
<b>Exchange Marriage Arrangement</b>			
Model 1: No. of girls denied access to school			
Constant	-0.207	-1.575	0.119
Girls Involved	0.448	8.257	0.000***
Model 2: No. of girls dropped out from school			
Constant	0.207	1.575	0.119
Girls Involved	0.552	10.184	0.000***
<b>Betrothal Marriage Arrangement</b>			
Model 1: No. of girls denied access to school			
Constant	0.507	3.878	0.000
Girls involved	0.503	7.723	0.000***
Model 2: No. of girls dropped-out-from school			
Constant	-0.350	-2.762	0.007
Girls Involved	0.387	6.124	0.000***
<b>Traditional Boy/Girl Friend Relationship</b>			
Model 1: No. of girls dropped out from school			
Constant	0.238	1.207	0.231
Girls Involved	0.307	4.476	0.000***

\*\*\*P-value less than 1%, t-critical at 78 degree of freedom =1.658

Another marriage arrangement that was hypothesized to have negative effects on girl-child education in Bolni is betrothal marriage arrangement. The regression analysis and t-test validation of hypothesis also rejected the null hypothesis that there is no relationship betrothal marriage arrangement and girl-child education in Bolni. The apriori expectation of the researcher is accepted and that, betrothal marriage arrangement has a relationship with the number of girls denied access to school and dropped out-of-school in Bolni. Thus the alternate which states that; the inability of the girl-child to go to school in Bolni is a function of

child betrothal is accepted. The t-calculated at each of the depending variables-girls denied access to school and girls dropped out from school are 7.723 and 6.124 at 78 degrees of freedom and at 99% confidence level (**Table 2**). The  $\beta_1$  values of both variables, girls denied access to school and girls dropped out from school are 0.503 and 0.387 (**Table 2**).

Finally, preferred marriage arrangement was hypothesized to have negative effects on girl-child education in Bolni. The null hypothesis that, there is no relationship between preferred marriage arrangement and girl-child education was rejected in favour of the alternate. The t-calculated for drop out of girls from school is 4.476 which is greater than t-critical 1.658 at 78 degrees of freedom at 99% confidence level (**Table 2**).

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The study hypothesized that, all the marriage arrangements (exchange, betrothal and preferred) had negative effects on girl-child education in Bolni. As a result, the denial of girls' access to school or their dropout of school are mainly due to marriage arrangements in Bolni.

The alternate hypothesis which states that, exchange marriage arrangement has negative effects on girl-child education is accepted. This shows that, exchange marriage arrangement has negative effects on girl-child education in Bolni. The t-calculated for the denial of girls access to school and dropped out of girls from school as a result of exchange marriage arrangement as shown in **Table 2** were both greater t-critical. The effect of this on girl-child education is that, as more girls are involved in exchange marriage arrangement, more girls are either denied access to school or dropped out of school.

The  $\beta_1$  values (co-efficient) for girls denied access to school and girls dropped out-of-school as a result of their involvement in exchange marriage arrangement are 0.448 and 0.552 (**Table 2**). This implies that, if 100% of girls are involved in the exchange marriage arrangement, 44.8% will be denied access to school while 55.2% will drop out-of-school. Evidence from the above shows that, exchange marriage arrangement causes more girls to drop out from school than denial of access to school as shown in **Table 2**. The reason why more girls are affected in terms of dropout with regards to exchange marriage arrangement than denial of girls access to school could be due to the fact that, the marriage arrangement is conducted at the time girls are grown and are withdrawn from school for marriage purposes.

On the other hand, those who are denied access to school as a result of exchange marriage might be due to previous experiences parents or guardians had or witnessed when others tried exchanging their girls and the challenges they faced. These challenges could be posed by the girls themselves through resistance and other stake holders such as NGOs, Bolni Student Union members who fight against the withdrawal of girls from school for exchange marriage purposes. As a result such parents may prefer to deny the girls access to school so that, they do not face any challenges when it is time for them to be exchanged. This supports the findings of Lambert *et al.* (2012) which states that, people will engage or not engage in a particular practice depending on what they will benefit directly or someone who had practiced it benefited

Parents who therefore know that, if they enroll their girl-children, they may not have the opportunity to withdraw them from school for marriage purpose may not send them to school at all. Such parents may prefer to deny their girls access to education if they have in mind to exchange them one day. In this sense they may not face similar challenges when the time is due for the girls to be exchanged. This is because; the girls will be ignorant of their rights and may accept to go on exchange marriage without any resistance or people fighting for them. This is in line with Kaag (2011) findings when he asserted that, the girls that are denied access to school may be ignorant of their rights and may not resist status quo. It also means that, the girls may not have internalized schooling as part of their personal value, because, the society has not previewed them to the importance of education but rather had transferred marriage as against education as a cultural value (Lambert *et al.*, 2012).

The second marriage arrangement that this study considered was betrothal marriage arrangement. The regression analysis and t-test validation of hypothesis rejected the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between betrothal marriage arrangement and girl-child education in Bolni. Thus the alternate which states that; the inability of the girl-child to go to school in Bolni is a function of child betrothal is accepted. The t-calculated at each of the depending variables, girls denied access to school and girls dropped out from school are both greater than t-critical at 78 degrees of freedom and at 99% confidence level (**Table 2**). The consequence of the relationship is that, as more girls are involved in betrothal marriage arrangement, more girls are either denied access to school or dropped out-of-school.

The  $\beta_1$  values of both variables, girls denied access to school and girls dropped out from school are 0.503 and 0.387 respectively (**Table 2**). This implies that, if 100% of girls are involved in betrothal marriage arrangement, 50.3 and 38.7% of girls will be denied access and dropped out-of-school. The results also show that, betrothal marriage affects the denial of girls' access to school more than drop out of girls from school. The possible reason could be that, betrothal marriage arrangement is contracted at infancy and parents who want their daughters to accept to go on such marriages may not enroll them in school. This will make them ignorant of their rights and conform to status quo (Lambert *et al.*, 2012; UNICEF, 2012). This also contends with the views of (Fant, 2008; Yando, 2011) that betrothal marriage arrangement is sometimes contracted at the time the girl-child is not even born or at infancy. In such a stance, the parents' priority for the girl may not be for school but for marriage and this contributes to denying and dropping girls' out-of-school in Bolni. Then finally, it agrees to the theoretical framework of by Vygotsky which says that, betrothal marriage arrangement is a cultural value which is transferred from the society to younger generations through interaction with the older generation and internalizing into personal values, especially the men as a result of what they stand to gain (Turuk, 2008; UNICEF, 2012; Lambert *et al.*, 2012).

The final marriage arrangement considered by the study is preferred marriage arrangement (traditional boy/girlfriend relationship which eventually lead to marriage). The null hypothesis that, there is no relationship between preferred marriage arrangement and girl-child education is also rejected and the alternative which states that, preferred marriage arrangement has negative effects on girl-child education in Bolni is accepted. Unlike exchange and betrothal marriage arrangements, the results of preferred marriage arrangement did not have any effect on the denial of girls' access to school and hence, the variable was automatically deleted. The reason might be that, preferred marriage arrangement starts at the period when the girl is matured or grown and should have been in school already, provided all factors were constant.

The t-calculated for drop out of girls from school is greater than t-critical at 78 degrees of freedom at 99% confidence level (**Table 2**). This implies that, there is a relationship between preferred marriage arrangement and the number of girls dropped out from school in Bolni. As more girls get involved in the arrangement, more girls

drop out from school. The  $\beta_1$  value for dropped out for preferred marriage is 0.3079 (**Table 2**). This shows that, if 100% of girls are involved in the arrangement, 30.7% girls will drop out of school. The reason why the girls dropped out from school may be due to the fact that, lovers are allowed to have sex which gets some of girls pregnant. The boys also sometimes elope the girls and hence their dropped out-of-school. This has also been a historical cultural practice which has been transferred from older generation to the younger ones in Bolni due to the interaction with society and internalizing it at the individual level based on the advantages they stand to gain (Turuk, 2008; Kaag, 2011; Lambert *et al.*, 2012).

## 5. CONCLUSION

The denial of access and dropout of girls from school have been a problem plaguing a lot of societies since time immemorial. The number of girls who have been denied access and/or dropped out from school has reduced in urban areas and cities. But rural communities are still battling with this issue. Most studies have tended to look at the economic and infrastructural limitations which deny girls access to school. However, this research was approached from a cultural angle and determined how some selected cultural practices such as marriage arrangements affected girls' access to and drop out from school in Bolni.

The findings showed that there were relationships between cultural practices (marriage arrangements) such as Exchange, Betrothal and preferred marriage arrangements and girl-child education in Bolni. Thus as many girls are involved in a particular marriage arrangement, more girls are either denied access to or dropout from school. This is inimical to their participation in school and as a result limits their personal development as in skills and knowledge and deprive their communities and Ghana at large of their contributions. It is therefore concluded that, for society to harness the full potential of every human being, the education of the girl-child is important.

The study makes the following recommendations for the improvement of girl-child education in Bolni. Due to the fact that, a lot of girls are still out of school in Bolni with regards to their engagement in marriage arrangements which are usually at their tender ages, it is recommended that, the government backs its laws and policies with implementation power. This will compel parents to enroll all their children in school. It is only when this is done that children everywhere can enjoy their right to education as enshrined in the 1992

constitution of Ghana, Children's Act of 1998 and other international conventions and acts such as United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children. If there is no enforcing mechanism to compel parents to enroll their children in school, all the laws and policies become white elephants. For instance, the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education of government is not effective because; the compulsory aspect is not functioning. So parents who refuse to enroll their children in school are not dealt with in any manner and as result, parents often refuse to enroll their children because, they know that they will not be penalized in any manner.

The study also noticed that, there are laws and policies on paper that seek to protect girls from forced and early marriages. Despite these, a lot of girls are forced to marry men they do not love at very early ages against their will. This is human right abuse and pragmatic measures must be taken by government to ensure that such laws are enforced to save the girl-children from such abuses. For instance, the 1992 constitution of Ghana, outlaws forced marriages; the 1998 children's Act of Ghana (Act 560), categorically states that, 'no person shall force a child-to be betrothed; to be the subject of a dowry; or to be married' and gives the minimum age of marriage of whatever kind to be 18 years. Yet girls are forced into marriage in the existence of these legislations.

Furthermore, due to the fact that, some girls are still denied access to school or drop out from school as a result of cultural practices which are perpetuated by parents, the researcher recommends that, stakeholders (NGOs and CBOs) in Bolni should deepen their sensitization programmes in Bolni. They should continue to hammer the importance of girl-child education and the advantages that stand to be accrued if parents educate their daughters. This form of education and sensitization should be done through community durbars and forums, radio programmes and if possible television programmes in the area to let the people understand that, it is illegal to deny girls access to education.

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my profound gratitude to the Carnegie Corporation of New York for funding my thesis research under its Next Generation of Academics in Africa Project of which this article is an outcome.

## 7. REFERENCES

AAG, 2011. The status of girls' education and violence: A summary report of baseline survey of gender-based patterns in the Nanumba North and South Districts of Northern Region of Ghana. Accra: ActionAid Ghana.

- Anglaaere, J., H. Yashiki and R. Van Klinken, 2006. Girls' Participation in Education: Findings from a Multi-Stakeholder Context Analysis in Northern Ghana. SNV Ghana, Tamale, pp: 11.
- Creswell, J.W., A.C. Klassen, V.L.P. Clark and K.C. Smith, 2012. Best practices for mixed methods research in the health sciences. National Institutes of Health.
- Fant, E.K., 2008. Education and the girl-child empowerment: The case of Bunkpurugu/Yunyoo District in the Northern Ghana. University of Tromso.
- GPEGDPG, 2012. Appraisal of the government of Ghana education sector plan 2010-2020. Global Partnership for Education and Ghana Development Partner Group.
- Kaag, 2011. Understanding the Underlying Causes and Impact on Development of the Denying of Girls Access to Secondary School. International Federation of University Women and International Planned Parenthood Federation.
- Lambert, M., E.S. Perrino and E.M. Barreras, 2012. Understanding the barriers to female education in Ghana. Blue Kitabu Research Institute.
- Osita-Oleribe, O.E., 2007. Neglect of girl child education: Bridging the gap. A case study of a Nigerian Agrarian Northern Community. Int. NGO J., 2: 030-035.
- Panneerselvam, R., 2004. Research Methodology. 1st Edn., PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, ISBN-10: 8120324528, pp: 656.
- PI, 2012. Because I am a girl, Africa report 2012. Progress and obstacles to girls' education in Africa. Plan International.
- Pindyck, R.S. and D.L. Rubinfeld, 1991. Econometric Models and Economic Forecasts. 3rd Edn., McGraw-Hill, New York, ISBN-10: 0070500983, pp: 596.
- Turuk, M.C., 2008. The relevance and implications of vygotsky's sociocultural theory in the second language classroom. ARECLS, 5: 244-262.
- UNDP, 2013. The millennium development goals report 2013. United Nations Development Programme.
- UNESCO, 2010. Education for all global monitoring report. UNESCO Global Monitoring Report.
- UNESCO, 2012. Reaching out-of-school children is crucial for development. UNESCO Institute of Statistics, Montreal.
- UNICEF, 2012. Finishing school. A right for children's development-a joint effort. UNICEF.
- Yando, J., 2011. Konkomba-Culture, peace and development.