"THE INFLUENCE OF EARLY MARRIAGES ON SCHOOL DROPOUT RATES AMONG ST ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES"

A CASE STUDY OF KYELIMA VILLAGE, BULO SUBCOUNTY, BUTAMBALA DISTRICT.

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UVT352-MPI/U/25/A/DSWK/0126

A RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMITTED AS A PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF A DIPLOMA IN SOCIAL WORK OF NGAMIZI TRAINING INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

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May the Almighty God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob bless you abundantly and cover you all with His precious blood.

Dedication

I, Nabatanzi Madrine, do kindly dedicate this research proposal to my beloved parents Mr. Kinene Stanley and Nnansubuga Annet for their endless love, care and sacrifice that they offered to me since my childhood until t his present time in life.

Furthermore, I also appreciate my guardians Aunty Najuma Magret and Nabukko Agnes, and my uncles Serunj oji John and Sempala John, for their positive impact that they rendered to my life, especially during both positiv e and negative times during my academic journeys, and also my beloved brothers Ddamulira Nicolas and Kine ne Jude Mark, and my sisters Mbatudde Asha and Namala Jarida, for their various efforts given to me.

Declaration

I, Nabatanzi Madrine, UVT352-MPI/U/25/A/DSWK/0126, do declare that this research proposal has been written under the guidance of my supervisor Mr. Ssabavuma Kereti, and that it has never been submitted to any institution of higher learning within and outside Uganda with similar features. Therefore, whatever mistake, I am responsible for all mistakes found in this proposal. All sources of information used have been duly acknowledged.

NAME: NABATANZI MADRINE

SIGNATURE: .....

DATE: 19th July, 2026.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter one of my proposal has got a summary of the background of the study, problem statement, objec tives, research questions, variables, significance of the study, scope of the study, and operational definition of key terms and concepts.

1.1 Background of the Study

Early marriage is a global issue that continues to affect millions of adolescent girls, particularly in low- and mi ddle-income countries. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), an estimated 12 million girls are married before the age of 18 years. Despite international treaties and conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), early marriage prevails as a barrier to girls' education, health and socio-economic empower ment.

Globally, early marriage is strongly linked to poverty, gender inequality, harmful traditional practices, and lack of access to education. Girls who marry early are more likely to drop out of school, experience early pregnancies, suffer from maternal health complications, and be subjected to domestic violence. International efforts like th e Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), specifically aim to eliminate child, early, and forced marriage. However, progress remains uneven, e specially in rural and conflict-prone areas where traditional norms are deeply rooted.

Additionally, school environments in some cases are not gender-friendly, with issues like sexual harassment, l ack of sanitary facilities, and stigma against pregnant girls further pushing them out of the education system.

Governments and civil society organizations across the region have implemented community sensitization ca mpaigns, cash-transfer programs and girl empowerment initiatives, but their success varies by location and co ntext. Localized data and community-specific responses remain critical.

Furthermore, in Uganda, early marriage is both a cultural and socio-economic issue that continues to undermin e efforts to achieve universal education and gender equality. According to the Uganda Demographic and Healt h Survey (UDHS 2022), about 34% of women aged 20-24 were married before 18 years. Early marriage is partic ularly prevalent in rural districts, where girls are often viewed as a source of wealth through bride price.

Although Uganda has legal frameworks such as the Children's Act and the Marriage Act that set the legal age of marriage at 18 years, enforcement remains weak, especially in rural communities where traditional leaders and elders hold significant influence. School dropout rates among adolescent girls in Uganda remain high, and early marriage is one of the leading causes.

The Ugandan government, in partnership with NGOs and international development agencies, has implemente d crucial initiatives such as the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancies (2022-202 6). These programs aim at enhancing girls' access to education, promoting life skills, and engaging communiti es in changing harmful social norms. Despite these efforts, many rural areas continue to experience high drop out rates due to deeply entrenched cultural practices.

Specifically in Butambala District, located in Central Uganda, so predominantly rural with agriculture being the main source of livelihood. The district faces multiple education challenges especially among adolescent girls. Cultural beliefs, poverty and limited access to secondary schools have contributed to high dropout rates.

In Butambala District, early marriage is commonly practiced, especially in remote subcounties. Many girls are married off in their early teens, either due to family pressure or unintended pregnancies. Parents often justify e arly marriage as a way of maintaining family honor or reducing economic burden. While the district has receive d support from the government of Uganda and NGOs like Unbound, which has promoted education and girls' ri

ghts, the impact has not been evenly distributed.

Furthermore, Kyelima Village is located in Bulo Subcounty within Butambala District, in Kyelima Parish. It is a r ural area marked by high poverty levels, limited educational facilities, and persistent traditional practices that p romote early marriage. A baseline survey data collection exercise conducted from 19th to 21st June 2026 reve aled that 60% of adolescent girls in Kyelima Village have dropped out of school due to early marriage. This alar ming statistic underscores the urgent need for targeted research and intervention.

In Kyelima Village, early marriage is largely driven by cultural norms, peer pressure and lack of parental suppor t for girls' education. Girls often withdraw from school at their puberty stage; they are normally considered for marriage, and this further exposes them to physical and emotional abuse, early pregnancies and maternal heal th complications.

The high dropout rate amongst adolescent girls has long-term effects on the village's development. It perpetua tes a cycle of poverty, illiteracy, and gender inequality. Local leaders and schools have expressed the concern, but their efforts are hampered by limited resources.

1.2 Problem Statement

Over the years, both global and national efforts have been made to combat early marriage and promote girl-chil d education. The government of Uganda has put in place policies including the Children's Act and the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy (2022-2026), while civil society organizations continue to implement girl empowerment and school retention programs. These efforts have aimed to reduce early mar riages and keep girls in school across the country.

Despite these interventions, the practice of early marriage remains alarmingly prevalent, particularly in rural co mmunities such as in Kyelima Village in Bulo Subcounty, Butambala District. According to a baseline survey co nducted between 19th-21st June, 2026, 60% of adolescent girls in the village have dropped out of school due t o early marriage. This indicates that existing national and district-level strategies have not been fully effective or adequately localized to address the deeply rooted cultural and socio-economic factors influencing early mar riage in rural settings.

What has gone wrong is the continued disconnect between policy and community-level implementation. Cultur al norms, poverty, gender discrimination and weak law enforcement continue to fuel early marriage in rural are as. In communities like Kyelima, education is often undervalued for girls, and marriage is seen as a more viabl e path. As a result, adolescent girls are denied their right to education, leading to long-term consequences of p overty, dependency, and poor maternal health.

Despite all these facts, desired situations are one that the adolescent girls remain in school, complete their ed ucation and are empowered to make informed decisions about their future. This would require not only enforci ng legal protections but also transforming harmful social norms and strengthening the capacity of schools, fa milies and communities to support girls' education.

This study therefore seeks to explore the influence of early marriage on school dropout among adolescent girl s in rural communities, with specific reference to Kyelima Village. It aims to identify the drivers of early marria ge, assess its impact on girls' education, and generate insights that can inform more targeted, culturally appro priate interventions to reduce dropout rates and promote educational retention among adolescent girls.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

The study will intend to examine the influence of early marriage on school dropout rates amongst adolescent girls in rural communities in Uganda, Butambala District, Bulo Subcounty, Kyelima Parish, Kyelima Village.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

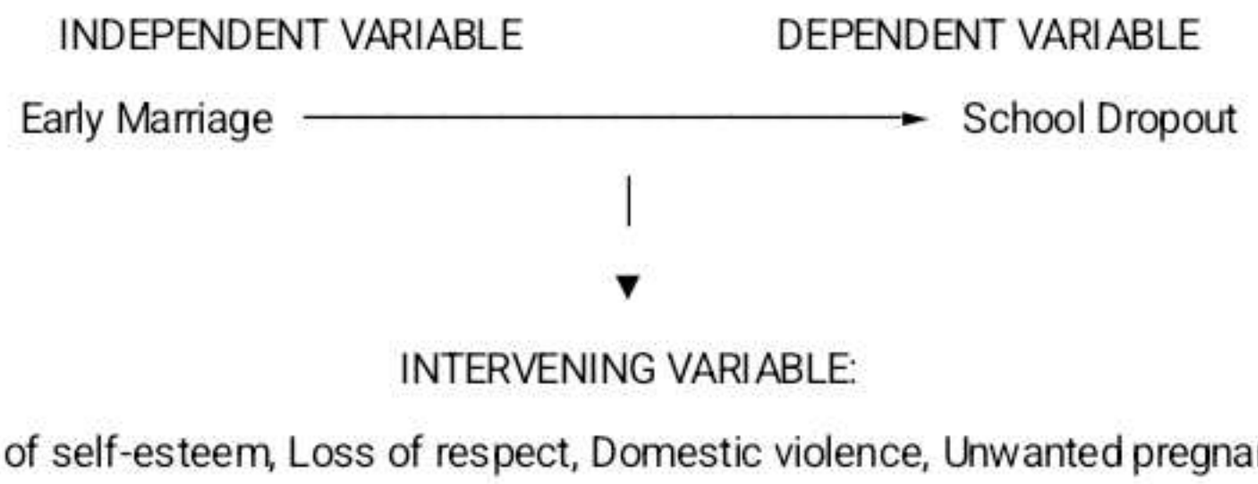
- To find out if lack of self-esteem as a result of early marriage leads to school dropout in Kyelima Villa ge.
- To find out if poverty as a result of early marriage leads to school dropout in Kyelima Village.
- To determine whether early marriage reduces respect in Kyelima Village.
- To determine whether unwanted pregnancies as a result of early marriage leads to school dropout in Kyelima Village.

1.4 Research Questions

- Does long distance as a result of school dropout lead to early marriages?
- To what extent does lack of self-esteem as a result of school dropout contribute to early marriages?
- How does death of parents result into school dropout, influencing early marriages?
- Does loss of self-esteem result into early marriages, influencing school dropout amongst adolescent girls?

1.5 Conceptual Framework (Variables)

Early Marriage and School Dropout:



According to the above illustration, it is suggested that early marriage influences school dropout negatively thr ough loss of self-esteem, loss of respect, domestic violence, as well as unwanted pregnancies.

1.6 Significance of the Study

For future researchers and scholars, basically in case they want to conduct similar studies or develop evidenc e-based interventions in rural contexts.

The study mainly also helps as a guiding tool for policy makers regarding the impact of early marriages on sch ool dropout rates among adolescent girls.

The study also helps teachers and education officers to better understand the challenges girls face in continu ing school.

The study aims to empower adolescent girls by advocating for their rights to education and protection from ea rly marriage.

1.7 Scope of the Study

1.7.1 Content Scope

The study focuses on examining the influence of early marriages on school dropout among adolescent girls. It

specifically investigates the causes of early marriage, the rate and patterns of school dropout amongst adoles cent girls, the effects of early marriage on girls' education and future opportunities, and community perception s surrounding early marriage and education. The study does not address other causes of school dropout like e arly teenage pregnancies and poverty as standalone factors.

1.7.2 Geographical Scope

The study will be carried out in Kyelima Parish, Bulo Subcounty, Butambala District, Uganda.

Kyelima Parish is located several kilometers from Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, along the Masaka Roa d, within Bulo Subcounty of Butambala District.

1.7.3 Time Scope

The study will look for a period of 6 months, from 16th June to 13th September 2026. This is because the rese archer will be translating theories into practicals, and it is the right time for the entire research process that ba sically includes the literature review, data collection, and reporting, which is expected to be completed within t he time frame. The study will also provide historical context and background of the situation that is current.

1.8 Operational Definition of Key Terms and Concepts

Early Marriage: According to the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), early marriage refers to a child marriage, a formal marriage or informal union before age 18. It is a violation of human rights and often l eads to a lifetime of disadvantage and deprivation. According to UNFPA (2012), early marriage is both a violatio n of human rights and a harmful practice that basically affects girls.

School Dropout: According to Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006), school dropout describes students who l eave high school before earning a diploma due to reasons such as academic failure, lack of engagement, or o utside responsibilities like work or family. According to Amin, Sedgh and Hassa (2010), they specifically link s chool dropout among girls to socio-cultural factors, particularly early marriage and pregnancy.

Panday et al. (2009) describes unwanted pregnancies as a consequence of low self-esteem, lack of future as pirations, and absence of youth-friendly reproductive health services. According to Mpanza and Nzima (2010), school pregnancies are viewed as mostly unintended and linked to peer pressure, sexual violence, and poor se xual health education.

Low self-esteem: According to Mruk (2006), low self-esteem is explained as a psychological condition where i ndividuals experience a decline in their sense of personal value due to failure, rejection or negative life experie nces.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Early Marriages and Loss of Self-Esteem

Early marriage often results in emotional and psychological harm. According to Branden (1994), self-esteem is defined as the experience of being competent to cope with life and worthy of happiness. When girls and espe cially adolescents are forced into early marriage, they lose control over their lives and decisions, which leads t o low self-esteem. Mruk (2006) supports this view, noting that individuals in disempowering environments exp erience a decline in self-worth and confidence. UNICEF (2020) highlights that child brides frequently suffer fro m feelings of shame, abandonment, and helplessness, all of which damage their self-image.

2.2 Poverty and Early Marriages

Poverty is both a cause and a consequence of early marriage. UNFPA (2013) reports that in many low-income households, marrying off daughters early is seen as a coping strategy to reduce economic burden. Families be lieve early marriage secures the girl's future and relieves them of financial responsibility. Noor (2006) emphasi zes that girls who marry early are more likely to remain in poverty due to limited education, low job prospects, a nd dependency on their husbands.

2.3 Early Marriage and Loss of Respect

Early marriage often leads to loss of respect for young girls, both within the family and in their wider communit y. According to Khigona and Chetty (2008), girls who marry early may be viewed as having failed in education o r morality, resulting in social stigma and marginalization. Efevbera et al. (2017) found that early marriage is freq uently associated with reduced status within the household. Married adolescent girls often face gender-based violence and lack of decision-making power.

2.4 Early Marriage and Unwanted Pregnancies

Early marriages are strongly linked to early and often unwanted pregnancies. UNFPA (2017) states that adoles cent girls in early marriages often lack the knowledge or power to negotiate safe sex, making them highly vuln erable to unplanned pregnancies. Mpanza and Nzima (2010) observe that many girls in early marriages experie nce pregnancies before they are emotionally or physically prepared, leading to trauma and school dropout. Bha na et al. (2008) argue that these pregnancies are not only unwanted but also a major source of stress, shame and social exclusion.

According to Panday et al. (2009), the absence of reproductive health education (RHE) and support systems m akes young brides particularly vulnerable to multiple and poorly spaced pregnancies that further compromise t heir health and future prospects.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter three will consist of all methods needed for data collection, and it includes the research design, study population, sample size, sampling technique, data processing and analysis, ethical considerations, expe cted challenges and solutions (limitations and delimitations).

3.1 Research Design

The researcher will use a descriptive design mainly because it systematically presents the existing situation r egarding early marriages and how they contribute to school dropout among adolescent girls. This design is ap propriate for this study because it enables the researcher to gather factual, observational, and measurable inf ormation without manipulating any variables. It allows for the identification and the analysis of patterns, chara cteristics and relationships between early marriages and other related issues like poverty, unwanted pregnanc ies and lack of respect.

Purposive sampling will also be used by the researcher because it selects participants who are knowledgeabl e and directly affected by the problem under investigation. They include parents of affected girls, local leader s, and the adolescent girls, mainly in giving proper feedback to the relevant information needed.

3.2 Study Population

According to the baseline findings 2026, Kyelima Village has a total of 60 youths, whereby the females take a l arger percentage of 75% and they are 45, and males are 15 people and they take 25% of the total population of youth in Kyelima Village.

3.3 Sample Size

A sample of respondents will be selected from the above study population; therefore, 20 respondents will be c ommunity members, one (1) local leader, 1 Community Development Officer, 1 parish chief, 5 teenage mother s, and two religious leaders from different religions, the Muslim and Catholic leader.

Number	Category of Respondents	Frequency	Total
1.	Community Members	10	50
2.	Local Leader	1	5
3.	C.D.O.	1	5
4.	Parish Chief	1	5
5.	Teenage Mothers	5	25
6.	Religious Leaders	2	10
	TOTAL	20	100

3.4 Sampling Techniques

The researcher will use simple random sampling — basically a sample from a larger population in such a way t hat each individual has an equal chance of being chosen. This technique ensures that the sample is unbiased and represents the entire population fully and fairly. This enables equal representation from each group before applying random selections. This is a lottery method where each number on a piece of paper is picked, though some don't. Finally, those having numbers on the paper are taken; for instance, if 10 pick a paper out of 20, the y will be used as a sample.

Purposive Sampling

The researcher will use purposive sampling to select the participants who are believed to have relevant knowl edge or experience about the research topic. Participants can be teachers, community leaders and local gover nment officials. These individuals are chosen because they have direct experience or insights into the issue. This method has advantages like saving time, relevant data, and focuses on information needed, though its m erits are many. It also has disadvantages: being biased, results not generalized to everyone, and not represent ative of the whole population.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

3.5.1 Interview Method

The researcher will use the interview method by directly asking questions to selected participants in a face-to-face or sometimes audio-recorded conversation, because it allows detailed responses especially on sensitive topics of early marriages. In this, the researcher has to identify who is to be interviewed, prepare the interview guide, conduct the interview, and organize data — mainly since it allows in-depth understanding of personal ex periences.

3.5.2 Observation Method

The researcher will use the observation method to also mainly record behaviours by using the naked eyes to al so watch certain situations or events in their natural setting, without necessarily asking direct questions, sinc e it helps in understanding what people do, not just what they say. The researcher can even observe the living conditions of people, school attendance and absenteeism, and cultural norms and cultural practices. This met hod has a positive impact, like reducing the risk of dishonest responses and helping in complementing other methods used.

3.5.3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The researcher will also use focus group discussions to mainly gather a small group of people (usually 6-12) t o discuss a specific topic in detail. The discussion is guided by a moderator (researcher), who asks prepared questions and encourages participants to share their various views, experiences and opinions freely. The grou ps organized may include the parents, teachers, health workers and community leaders to also give correct de tails concerning the agreed topic of discussion. This also encourages interactions with one another, and respo nding to each other's ideas and giving examples from their own experiences.

3.6 Data Collection Tools

3.6.1 Interview Guide

The researcher will use the interview guide to basically prepare the questions that he/she will use during the i nterview process, like by designing the structured or semi-structured interview guide with open-ended and spe cific questions aligned with the study objectives. Some questions will cover key areas like reasons for early m arriages, support systems available for girls, selection of respondents, and collection of the recordings after t he recordings take place. Through using this guide, it enables the respondents to easily participate in the topic of discussion.

3.6.2 Observation Guide

The researcher will use the observation guide by preparing the observation guide, listing the specific behaviour s, events, conditions, and interactions to observe. Some key areas like signs of domestic rules, visible signs o f poverty like poor housing conditions, conducting the observation. The advantage of the observation guide is t hat it captures real-life situations and non-verbal behaviours, reveals the community attitudes and practices th at may not be expressed in interviews.

3.6.3 Focus Group Discussion

The researcher will mainly have to develop an FGD guide on a piece of paper to make the people focused on t he topic of discussion, like causes of early marriages, community attitudes, and the effects, through identifyin g the participants (parents, local leaders and elders). The advantage of this is basically that it gathers rich, det ailed group insights on sensitive topics and allows clarification. The FGD guide should have the topic area and examples of the questions, basically "Why do many girls in this village get married early?" and solutions to the prevailing problem of early marriages.

3.7 Data Processing and Analysis

3.7.1 Data Organizing

The researcher will use data organizing as the first step in data processing and analysis. It involves arranging collected data in a systematic and orderly manner to interpret and analyze the data easily. This can be done by sorting (classifying the raw data), putting the data into formats (like tables, charts or thematic grouping) and p reparing data for analysis. The basic importance of data organizing is to help the researcher clearly see patter ns and make data analysis faster and more accurate, thus reducing confusion.

3.7.2 Data Editing

The researcher will use data editing because it is a crucial step in data processing and analysis. It involves ch ecking and correcting errors or inconsistencies in the data collected, to ensure that the data is complete, accu rate and ready for analysis. Data editing also enables the researcher to improve the quality and accuracy of th e data, reliability and trustworthiness, and avoid misleading conclusions. This involves questionnaires, FGDs a nd interviews.

3.7.3 Data Coding

The researcher will also use data coding because it is a data process where the researcher translates raw dat a into a structured, numerical or categorized form that can be easily analyzed. It is especially useful when deal ing with qualitative data, like interview responses and open-ended questions in the survey. Data coding is imp ortant because it simplifies data entry and analysis, helps in grouping similar responses under one category, a nd allows enabling both quantitative (numeric) and qualitative (thematic) analysis. The types the researcher wi ll use are questionnaire coding, thematic coding and open-ended responses, like Y for Yes and N for No.

3.7.4 Data Tabulating

The researcher will also have to put the data collected into rows and columns for easy interpretation. This is a final stage, especially in studies that involve questionnaires, surveys, interviews or observation. Tabulation is b asically important because it makes large amounts of data easier to understand and compare, helps identify p atterns, trends and relationships in the data. The main types of tabulation include the simple and cross tabulat ion as the main types.

Example:

Age Group	Early Marriage	Pregnancies	Lack of Fees	Total
12-14	10	2	5	17
15-17	15	6	8	29
18-19	5	2	2	9
Total	30	10	15	55

Source: Primary Data, 2026.

3.8 Ethical Considerations (Do's and Don'ts)

3.8.1 Dressing Code

The researcher will dress modestly and appropriately, in accordance with the cultural expectations of the com munity, during fieldwork in Kyelima Village, Uganda. The researcher has to also dress well and be decent beca use it enables him/her to gain respect, build trust and rapport with the community members or the local leader s, promote professionalism, and reduce the risk of misinterpretation or harassment from the community since the code of dressing will be perfect.

3.8.2 Confidentiality

The researcher will also use confidentiality as one of the ethical considerations because it mainly protects per sonal information. Through this, the researcher will ensure that all personal details, like names and family bac kgrounds of the participants, are kept private and not disclosed to anyone outside the research team. Confide ntiality also enables the participation of the client in the discussion freely.

3.8.3 Appreciation / Award of Gratitude

The researcher has/will use appreciation to show respect, gratitude and value for the time and contributions o f the participants and community during the study. This can specifically be done by acknowledging participati on, non-monetary appreciations, and respect for voluntary participants, or recognizing community support by a ttending their community meetings.

3.8.4 Child Protection

The researcher will have to use child protection since the study involves adolescent girls (some under 18). Th e researcher must follow child protection laws and ethical guidelines, including obtaining guardian consent an d ensuring a safe environment for the respondent, who is going to help in the process of being protective.

3.9 Expected Challenges and Solutions

Language Barrier: One of the expected challenges the researcher faced was language. This is basically becau se the researcher only knew one language, that is the Acholi language, and the community members use the L uganda language. Hence, this problem makes communication a main challenge in the activity. To overcome th e challenge above, an interpreter or translator has to help in translating from Luganda to English for easy under standing.

Unfavourable climatical conditions like heavy rains and too much sunshine: the researcher will have to use we ather gadgets like gumboots and umbrellas so as to curb the problem of the bad climatical condition being har sh during the research process.

Limited financial resources, especially during budget constraints, may limit transport, printing of tools, or hiring of assistants; the way to overcome the challenge is by the researcher prioritizing essential expenses, seeking support from local institutions, and using cost-effective tools like mobile data collection where possible.

False information: the researcher faced the false information problem, especially because participants provid ed inaccurate responses to protect themselves or others; to overcome the challenge is by reassuring participa nts about confidentiality, avoiding judgement, and using the FGD in discussions.

Long distances: this basically made the researcher work hard because the distance from the place of residen ce to the village was far; to overcome the challenge is by persevering and going to the field a bit early in the m orning times.

Hostility from the community members: most community members said that they had no interest in the resear ch because they had negative bias towards the field; to overcome the challenge is by using the local leader in the field, since the community leaders know their people and vice versa, thus the local leaders and opinion infl uencers.

Reluctance to share information: some participants, especially adolescent girls or parents, may hesitate to sp
eak openly about early marriages due to fear, shame or cultural taboos. To overcome this, the researcher will b
uild trust and rapport, guarantee confidentiality, and use female assistants when interviewing girls to create a
safe space for open communication between the two people (client and researcher).

Interview Guide

I, Nabatanzi Madrine, having the Registration Number UVT352-MPI/U/25/A/DSWK/0126, a student of Ngamizi Training Institute of Social Development, kindly seek your valued permission to humbly allow me to gather dat a for my academic research that is entitled "The Influence of Early Marriages on School Dropout Rates among st the Adolescent Girls in Rural Communities": A Case Study of Kyelima Village, Bulo Subcounty, Butambala Di strict.

Your ideas and responses are very crucial and important in helping us to understand the above pressing challe nge that is affecting the youth of Kyelima Village, and your information provided will be kept confidential and p rivate, with respect to not mentioning names. I humbly request you to respond to the questions that will be ask ed in good faith, not bad.

1. In your own opinion, kindly define the term school dropout?
2. What basically causes school dropout in the village of Kyelima?
3. In your own words, what does school dropout lead to amongst the adolescent girls in the village?
4. What have the local leaders done to curb away the problem of school dropout in the village?

Observation Guide

The table below shows the indicators of early marriages.

Social Problem	Indicators	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
	School Dropout	18	36
Early Marriage	Teenage Pregnancy	12	24
	Family Neglect	8	16
	Poverty Influence	7	14
	Peer Pressure	5	10
Total		50	100

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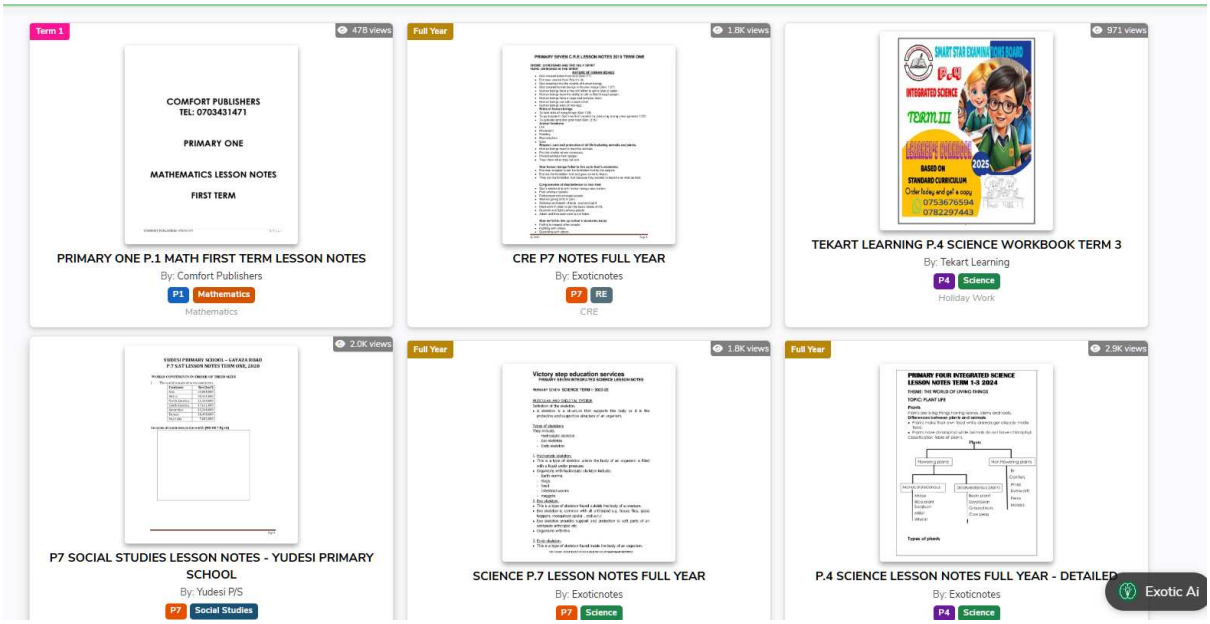
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