

https://dspace.org/

The influence of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics on age at first marriage among females in Mozambique

Mabetha, Khuthala

2016

http://hdl.handle.net/10539/21809

Mabetha, Khuthala (2016) The influence of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics on age at first marriage among females in Mozambique, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/21809>

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

ABSTRACT

Context: Various reforms that are approved by the law and are intended to foster gender equality have been established by eleven nations in the Southern African Development Community Region (SADC). However, irrespective of the efforts exercised to eliminate practices that inhibit females from being able to attain their human rights, early marriage remains to be one of the discriminatory traditional practices which occur under harmful customary laws and societal norms in a number of SADC nations. The practice of early marriage violates international human rights laws that are aimed at fostering gender equality, in particular, those of females. In addition, early marriage poses a serious threat to the health and social standing of females which often results in females being politically and financially subordinated in relation to their male counterparts as well as being subjected to sexual abuse and control by males. Despite several strategies that have been established by the Mozambican government that intend to improve education and employment as well as decrease the levels of impoverishment, gender inequality is still a predominant phenomenon that leaves females being the most marginalised in relation to males, in all sociocultural, political and financial domains. This research study sought to explore whether demographic and socioeconomic characteristics including region of residence, current age of the respondent, educational level, religious affiliation, type of place of residence, and wealth status are influential on age at first marriage.

Methods: This study utilised secondary statistics acquired from the 2011 Mozambique Demographic and Health Survey. The 2011 Mozambique Demographic and Health Survey is a survey that includes a sample of 13 745 females who are between the ages 15-49 years old. The sample of respondents consisted of females who have been or are in a marital union of childbearing ages 15-49. Due to the event of interest being marriage, only 10893 females were or had been in a marital union while the remaining 2852 had never been in a union. Thus the analytic sample size utilised in this study was 10893 and the remaining 2852 cases were simply right censored.

The outcome variable was age at first marriage and the predictors were the respondent's current age, region of residence, educational level, religious affiliation, type of place of residence and wealth status. A Cox Proportional Hazard Regression model was employed in order to analyse the time of first entry into a marital union, systematically. The data analysis was done in three phases. The first phase included descriptive analyses of the variables utilised in the study through a series of frequency tables and discussions. The second stage included Kaplan-Meier graphs which were used to estimate levels of age at first marriage. The third stage included an unadjusted (bivariate) and adjusted (multivariate) Cox Regression model which was employed to determine characteristics that had an influence on age of first marriage.

Results: Hazard ratios shown in the multivariate Cox Proportional Hazard Regression model showed that the respondent's age, level of education and region of residence are significant predictors of age at first marriage among females in Mozambique. These associations indicated that early marriage is highest in Mozambique's northern regions with females residing in Manica exhibiting a 19% increased hazard ratio of exposure to early marriage, followed by females residing in Cabo Delgado who exhibit an 11% increased hazard ratio of exposure to early marriage. The lowest rates of early marriage were found in Mozambique's southern regions with females residing in Maputo exhibiting a 20% lower risk of exposure to early marriage, followed by females residing in Gaza who exhibit a 14% lower risk of exposure to early marriage and this can be attributed to cultural and societal differences. Early age of marriage is highest among females in the 15-19 year age groups and early age of marriage starts to decrease with an in increase in the female's age. This is evident from the presented hazard ratios which indicated that females aged 45-49 exhibited a 73% lower risk of exposure to early marriage, followed by females aged 40-44 who exhibited a 71% lower risk of exposure to early marriage and females aged 35-39 who exhibited a 70% lower risk, in relation to the younger-aged females. Furthermore, the more education a female attains, the more her age of marriage increases. This is evident from the results as they show that females with a primary education have a 5% higher hazard ratio of exposure to early marriage while females with a secondary education have a 21% reduced

hazard ratio of exposure, followed by females with a tertiary education who have a 46% reduced hazard ratio of exposure to early marriage.

Conclusion: The overall inference drawn from this study was that early marriage is a pervasive phenomenon that is still carried out in the northern regions of Mozambique and is particularly prevalent among young females aged 15-19 who have a primary or no education. Results demonstrated that a number of inequalities exist in the country and these inequalities are not only exclusive between males and females but also exist among young females themselves, particularly those who reside in the rural regions of Mozambique and this is due to the different lifestyles led in the rural and urban areas. Furthermore, the results showed that customary laws of marriage that have been imposed by traditional authorities specifically among citizens living in the rural areas of Mozambique are not aligned with the main civil laws that have been implemented by the Mozambican government and made rigid in order to foster gender equality and improve the situation of women. This thus suggests that there are inconsistencies in the laws and thus they do not sufficiently protect young females from entry into early marriages. Thus, the Mozambican government needs to scale up strategies that will be beneficial in eradicating the practice of early marriage**.**

Keywords: Age at first marriage, Early Marriage, Marital union, Mozambique