FAMILY BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS AND FIRST NUPTIAL OUTCOMES IN HOMA BAY COUNTY, KENYA: A PATH ANALYSIS APPROACH

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Abstract: Early marriage is increasingly recognized both as a violation of human rights and as an impediment to the development, wellbeing and life options of affected individuals and their children. Despite intervention programs in Kenya by the state and international communities, and presently the county government, early marriage prevalence rates in Homa Bay County have persistently remained high over the years. This has led to early childbearing, with significantly higher maternal mortality and morbidity rates, as well as, higher infant mortality rates. It also virtually puts an end to young people's education in addition to being constrained in their ability to overcome poverty. Hence, the study was set to investigate the relationship between family background characteristics and early marriages. The study employed a cross sectional survey research design to collect data. Primary data was directly collected using structured questionnaires, Focus Group Discussion guides and in-depth interview guides. A total of 420 respondents were selected using a systematic sampling technique. The quantitative data was analyzed using Kaplan Meier Survival Analysis and path analysis. The findings showed that 34% of the total variance (R^2) in the dependent variable was accounted for by the indirect and direct combination of the family background characteristics. Key variables in order of largest contribution to first nuptial age were, number of media exposure (-2.6), family wealth (-2.4), household structure (1.7) and natal parity size (1.4). The study recommended that adolescents should be imparted with life skills, opportunities, sensitization, sexual and health education to prevent the risk of early marriages.

Keywords: family background characteristics, age at first marriage, parents' socio-economic status, disrupted family structure, exposure to mass media

1. INTRODUCTION

The right to exercise marriage choice was recognized as a principle of law even in Roman times and has long been established in international human rights instruments (Brewer, 2005; Idris, 2019). Yet many girls, and a smaller proportion of boys, enter marriage without any chance of exercising their right to choose (UNICEF, 2019). Marriage is defined as a legally recognized social union between a man and a woman in which they are united sexually; cooperate economically, and may have children through birth or adoption (Idris, 2019). For this reason, marriage is regarded as a moment of celebration and a milestone in adult life.

Sadly, the practice of early marriage gives no such reason for celebration when it is not done properly. According to UNFPA (2006), early marriage refers to a union between people, of whom one or both spouses is below the age of 18. The Kenya's marriage act (No. 4 of 2014) Sec. 4 requires that both parties getting

married be 18 years and above. Sec. 14 and Sec 11(1)(a), (b) and (c) expressly forbids early marriage and states that no person shall get engaged or betrothed to a person under the age of 18 years. Based on these considerations, in this study, early marriage is defined as a marriage carried out by a man or woman under 18 years old.

The lack of sound evidence concerning how socio-demographic dynamics interact to shape young people's marital timing is particularly acute in Homa Bay county. A number of studies on age at first marriage in Kenya abound in the 1980s and are mostly linked to marital stability, first birth and total fertility (Ahawo, 1981; Ayiemba, 1983; Angawa, 1988; Ocholla-Ayayo, 2000). These studies may therefore only have a partial reflection of the reality of men and women living in Homa Bay County today. For example, applying the Coale-Tussel P/F ration method to the Kenya Fertility Survey (KFS) data, Angawa (1988) found that total fertility rate decreases with increase in age at first marriage among women.

The development of programs to prevent early marriage in Kenya took place over two decades ago (Koski *et al.,* 2017). The first program in 2000, known as School-based HIV/AIDS program focused on improving the school curriculum and training teachers to deliver content on topics such as life skills, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and gender sensitivity (ICRW, 2011). For many years, such interventions have yet to gain scale or be fully integrated into the educational system (ICRW, 2011). The Kenya Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC) was started in 2007, implemented by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development, and covered approximately 240,000 households nationwide as of 2014 (Handa, 2015). This provided a monthly unconditional cash transfer to eligible households. An evaluation of this program found that it reduced the likelihood of teenage pregnancy by 5.5%, but there was no significant impact on likelihood of early marriage (Handa, 2015). This highlighted the need for context-specific interventions, and for multiple component programs, which combine different approaches to prevent and reduce the effect of early marriages.

The prevalence rate of early marriages in Homa Bay County stands at 40.7% which is higher than the national prevalence of 22.9%, and typically far above a threshold of 25% used to define a high burden of early marriage (UNICEF, 2014). Consequently, a number of state agencies, development partners such as the International Child Support, World Bank, Partnership for Child development, USAID, or NGOs and CBOs working in Homa Bay County have attempted to initiate intervention measures to curb early marriages but the problem has perpetuated over the years (KDHS, 2014; County Government of Homa Bay, 2017). These suggest a lack of better policies or that the policy interventions are not in sync with socio-demographic dynamics over time. This has left policy makers, development partners and the scientific community thinking about their implication on first nuptial age (Othuon *et al.,* 2006; Ochieng, 2016; KDHS, 2022). It is important that these dynamics are comprehensively addressed when designing and improving early marriage intervention programs rather than piecemeal approach with only certain targeted measures.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Children have in history been born into a family where they have been socialized, supervised and raised by parents, in that way getting their basic beliefs and attitudes to family life from them (Willoughby & Jones, 2012). However, some of these attitudes that affect first nuptial age are weakening as a result of modernity. Consequently, prior studies from developed nations shows substantial influences of these family changes on their children (Axinn & Yabiku, 2001). There has been relatively scanty research about intergenerational

changes in sub Saharan Africa, where these effects are likely to be even stronger, and Kenya is not an exception (Ajwang, 2019).

Findings of previous research linking family socio-economic background and marital timing are mixed. For instance, according to Janson (2006), children whose mothers were not educated were more likely to delay marriage. Similar studies by Wolfinger (1999) found that respondents whose parents had not completed high school were less likely to marry. In Europe, the results more consistently show an increased risk of early marriage among respondents whose parents have higher socio-economic status (Dubow, Boxer & Huesmann, 2009). A family study in Netherlands found a strong positive association between parent's socio-economic status, encompassing mothers and fathers' education and fathers and mothers' occupation and early marriage (De Graaf & Kalmijn, 2006). In Britain, the socio-economic status of parents was found to be significant in determining marital timing (Lyngstad, 2006). The study found that young people with highly educated parents normally have higher career and education aspirations which tend to delay their timing of first marriage.

Belpatra (2017) conducted a cross-sectional end-line study among 155 married respondents on factors associated with early marriage in Rural Mid-Western Nepal. The study established that the major source of respondents' family economic status could not show association with early marriage though the respondents parents with foreign employment, agriculture and daily wage as major income sources had a higher prevalence of early marriage than public service, industry, business and self-employment. Studies by Wijayati *et al.* (2017) that analyzed the socioeconomic and cultural determinants of early marriage in Ngawi, East Java however found that family economic factors were responsible to cause most of the early marriages. Similar findings are also found by Agtikasari *et al.* (2019) in their contextual study on the effect of social norm on early marriage among young women in Indonesian province of Lampung.

Some studies posit that divorce and death of parents encourages women to marry early as a means of getting away from the parental home (McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988). However, other studies established that childhood disrupted family structure such as orphanhood in childhood to have little impact on early marriage (Thornton, 1991; Trent & South, 1992). On the contrast, Mangeli *et al.* (2017) explored qualitative perspectives of adolescent mothers in Kerman, Iran, with regards to factors that encouraged them to get married at an early age. Disruption within the family, in particular, family breakdown and divorce or death of parents, were cited as causes of early marriage. Participants viewed that marrying and getting away from family would lead to a better situation. However, lack of quantitative data analysis renders the conclusions for this study non-generalizable.

Several studies have underscored the effects of family structure, especially parental separation, to have negative impacts on a child's future development (Axinn & Thornton, 1996; Ali, Ibrahim, Abdelgbar & Elgessim, 2014; Wodon, Male & Nayihouba, 2017; Haq, 2018; Saleheen *et al.,* 2021). It is also argued that, children whose parents have divorced are more likely to marry early than children from intact families (Ali *et al.,* 2014). Evidence from the United States and Britain suggest that the risk of early marriage is higher among those who experienced the instabilities of their parent's marriage (Amato, 1996; Kiernan, 1997; Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Studies in United States by Amato (1996), based on longitudinal data found that, early marriages were due to lack of appropriate marital role models and lack of or less parental supervision of those whose parents separate (Bumpass *et al.,* 1991; Kiernan, 1997; Berrington & Diamond, 2000).

Two opposite arguments prevail on how exposure to mass media influences age at first marriage. One line of argument is by a study by some scholars in Philippines that established that mass media programming typically

produces a dose-response effect, in which higher exposure to messaging results in increased positive behavioral change (Savitridina, 2014; Yount, Crandall & Cheong, 2018). The other argument suggests that exposure to media messages facilitate early union formation for one major reason (South, Trent, & Bose, 2016). According to the scholars, the use of modern technology like mobile phone and the internet have made the young adults feel closer to their partners therefore making them form unions at a younger age.
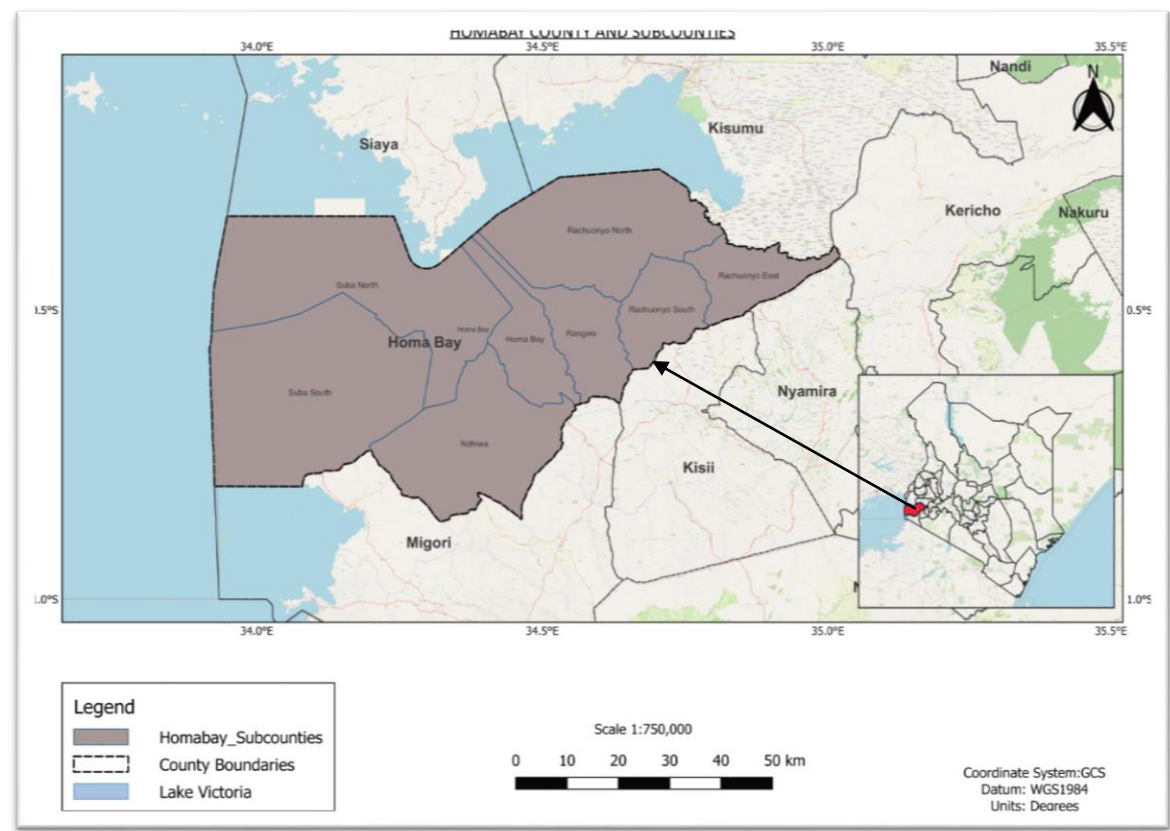
A national representative 2003 survey of young people ages 14 - 22 in Nepal indicate that 47.3 percent of unmarried girls watched television, listened to the radio, or read newspaper daily compared to only 28.3 percent of married girls. A similar analysis of data from Nyeri and Nyandarua, Kenya, Erulkar and Onoka (2003) found that 38.5 percent of girls married during adolescence read a newspaper, as compared to 44.2 percent of girls married after age 20 and 59.0 percent of unmarried girls (P<0.001). The same pattern holds for exposure to television and radio. These studies show only the association but do not show the causal effect and direct evidence about the effect of childhood exposure to mass media on the risk of early marriage.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Study Setting: The study location was in Homa Bay County, Kenya, located in the southwest part of Kenya within the Lake Victoria Basin (Figure 1). The County extends approximately from latitude $0^o15'$ South to $0^o52'$ South, and from longitudes 34° East to 35° East. Its total area is 4,267.1 Km^2 inclusive of the water surface, about which on its own covers an area of 1,227 km^2.

The choice of Homa Bay County was based on the fact it is ravaged by perpetual and persistent high prevalence rates of early marriages among Counties in Kenya. According to the KDHS, (2014) the prevalence of early marriage was about 40.7% in Homa Bay County, about 28.8% in Kisumu County, approximately 15% in Nairobi County and 7.1% in Elgeyo Marakwet County. Moreover, as of 2020, Homa Bay County had the highest percentage of women (76%), of childbearing age (20 – 49 years) who were married when they were below the age of 18 years and had begun motherhood (State of Kenya Population Report, 2020). This justified the selection of the Homa Bay County.

Figure 1: Location of Homa Bay County in the Kenyan Context

Source: Homa Bay County Integrated Development Plan (2018-2022)

3.2 Research design, sample size and data collection

This study employed a cross-sectional research design which took into consideration the analysis of marital history and current state data collected using in-depth interviews, FGDs and by a sample of individuals to administer retrospective questionnaire (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008).

Optimum sample size of 440 was estimated using Taro Yamane sample size equation (Yamane, 1995; Salganik, 2006).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$ ………….…………………………………….. (1)

Where:

N= Population size of men and women in age range 20-49 years, 371,891 (KPHC, 2019); n = Sample size =?
        e = The error of sample (0.5); 1 = Constant

Cluster sampling technique was used to divide the study area into clusters using all the 24 zones that represented all the administrative sub-Counties. After selecting the zones, a random sample of 2-4 neighborhoods, consisting of 5-25 households from the zones was carried out (Asrese & Abebe, 2014). Once a neighborhood was selected, the selection of respondents was done in their de jure place of residence using systematic sampling. A simple random sampling method was applied to select the first household among the

first n^{th} in the lists. This household was used as a random start and as a basis of the selection interval by the interviewers. The remaining households were then selected into the study at the end of every fifth household (Asrese & Abebe, 2014).

3.2 Analytical approach: A life table-analysis using Kaplan-Meier (KM) method (equation 3.5) was used to compute the cumulative likelihood of marrying before legal age 18 years at 95% Confidence Interval; p <0.05.

$$\hat{S}(t) = \prod_{t(i) \leq t} \frac{n_i - d_i}{n_i} \quad \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Where:

n_i = number of people at risk for the event (early marriage) at time $t_{(i)}$; d_i = number of events (early marriages) observed at time $t_{(i)}$;

$\frac{n_i - d_i}{n_i}$ = conditional likelihood of surviving past a given time $t_{(i)}$ given survival to that time.

Further, the Kaplan-Meier survival curve was used to assess how the survival rate varies across an individual's age for each observed risk indicators. The log rank Chi-square test (Q), equation 3.6, was utilized to assess whether the Kaplan Meier survival curves from the different subpopulations are significantly different from each other.

$$Q = \frac{\left(\sum_{i=1}^{m} d_{1i} - \sum_{i=1}^{m} \hat{e}_{1i}\right)^2}{\sum_{i=1}^{m} \hat{V}(\hat{e}_{1i})} \quad \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots (3)$$

where:

d_{1i} = total number of women who experienced the event in both groups; $\hat{e}_{1i}$ = the expected number of women who married at time (t); $\hat{V}$ = variance of $\hat{e}_{1i}$.

Finally, path analysis, an analytical tool that uses correlational data to identify causal inferences and to disentangle direct and indirect causal processes underlying early marriages, was conducted using IBMS SPSS AMOS (Lleras 2005).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive analysis: Considering the 420 men and women interviewed in the survey, 51% were females and 49% were males depending on the willingness to take part in the study. The table shows that the distribution of the respondents increased from 13.3% in the 20-24-year age group to nearly 26.9% in the 25-29 age group. Nearly a third of the married men and women (23.8%) were aged 35-39. This was followed by approximately a fifth of the respondents (20.7%) in the age cohort 30-34. The mean age of the respondents was 32.13 years. Overall, the majority of the respondents (53.6%) initiated sexual intercourse during the secondary school going age (16-19 years). The median age at first sexual debut was 17.5 years. This finding is reflected and comparable with the KDHS (2022) which reported that the median age at first sexual debut was 17.0 years. Considering the respondents interviewed in the survey, over half of the respondents (68.1 %) had at least a secondary level of education and of these, 32.9% had tertiary level of education, nearly 29% had primary level education and the lowest proportion (3.8%) had no formal education.

The respondents in this study, belonged to different religious affiliations. The majority (91.8%) were Christians and of these 32.6% were followers of Seventh Day Adventist, 27.9% Pentecostal, 20.0% were Roman Catholic and 11.4% belonged to African Traditional Religion. Muslims constituted only 5.2%. The remaining 2.9% were not followers of any religious faith.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents, Homa Bay County 2023

Categories	Number	%	Categories	Number	%
Gender			**Parental union status**		
Female	214	51	Divorced	13	3.1
Male	206	49	Separated	25	6.0
Age			Intact	382	90.9
35-39	100	23.8	**Childhood Place of Residence**		
40-44	47	11.2	Rural	275	65.5
45-49	17	4	Urban	145	34.5
Mean		32.13	**Main Occupation**		
Sexual debut					
Below 16 Years	67	16	Peasant Farmer	76	18.1
16-19 Years	225	53.6	Trading	89	21.2
Above 19 Years	128	30.5	Public Servant	126	30.0
Religious Affiliations			Housewife	24	5.7
None	12	2.9	Politician	2	0.5
Roman Catholic	84	20	Unemployed	14	3.3
SDA	137	32.6	Self-employment	71	16.9
Pentecostal	117	27.9	Fishing	18	4.3
Muslim	22	5.2			
African Tradition	48	11.4	**Monthly Income in Ksh**		
Level of Education			< 10,000	137	32.6
No Formal	16	3.8	10,000-49,999	100	23.8
Primary	118	28.1	50,000-89,999	159	37.9
Secondary	148	35.2	>90,000	24	5.7
Tertiary	138	32.9	Mean	Ksh.12,464.31	
Early Marriage Prevalence			**Paternal level of education**		
Men	17	8.3	Less than High school	187	44.5
Women	104	48.6	High School	168	40.0
Maternal level of education			More than High school	65	15.5
Less than High school	281	66.9			
High School	118	28.1			
More than High school	21	5.0			
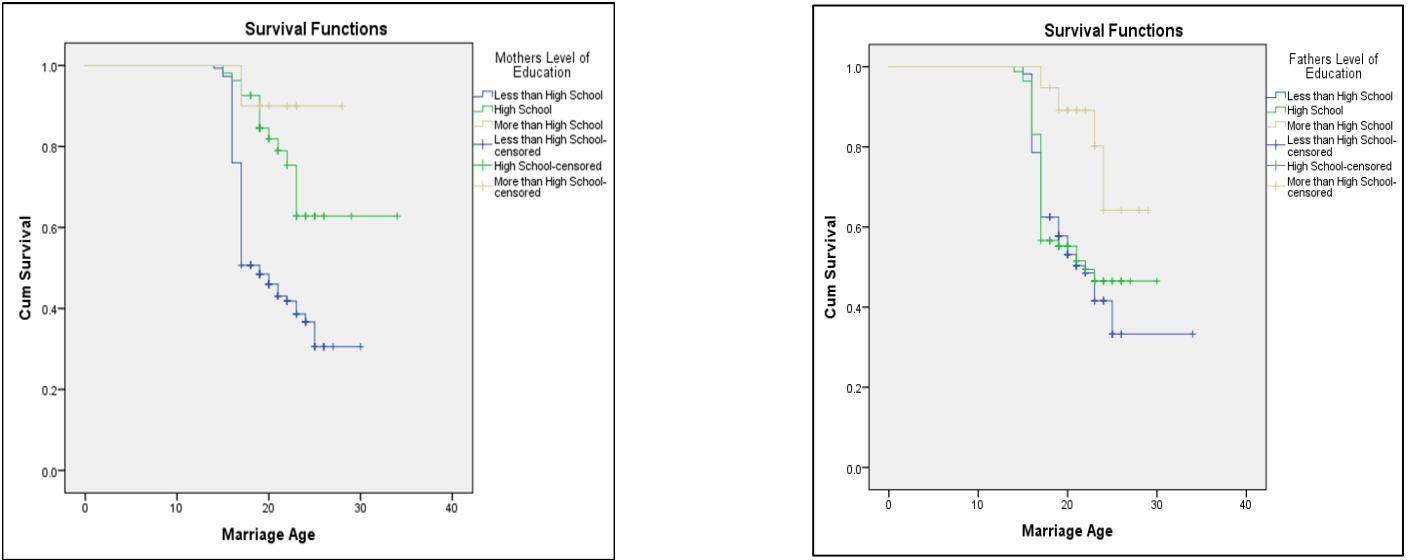
4.2 Differentials in Median Survival Time-to-Age at First Marriage by Family Background Characteristics

Table 2: Kaplan-Meier estimate of the median survival time to age at first marriage by Socio-demographic background characteristics

Variable / Category	Median survival time to first marriage (Kaplan-Meier estimate)					
	Females			Males		
	N	Median survival time	Log Rank χ2-value	N	Median survival time	Log Rank χ2-value
Paternal level of education						
Less than High school	112	22	7.179;	75	23	2.481
High School	83	22	p=0.028	85	24	p=0.134
More than High school	19	25		46	27	
Maternal level of education						
Less than High school	150	19	23.887;	131	24	3.442
High School	54	21	p=0.000	64	26	p=0.168
More than High school	10	24		11	27	

Differences in maternal and paternal educational attainment on the variation on the median survival age to early marriage were only a significant life course experience for their daughter ($\chi2=23.887$; p=0.000 and log rank $\chi2=7.179$; p=0.028 respectively). The observed differences were however not significant for their sons ($\chi2=3.442$; p=0.168 for maternal and $\chi2=2.481$; p=0.134 for paternal level of education).
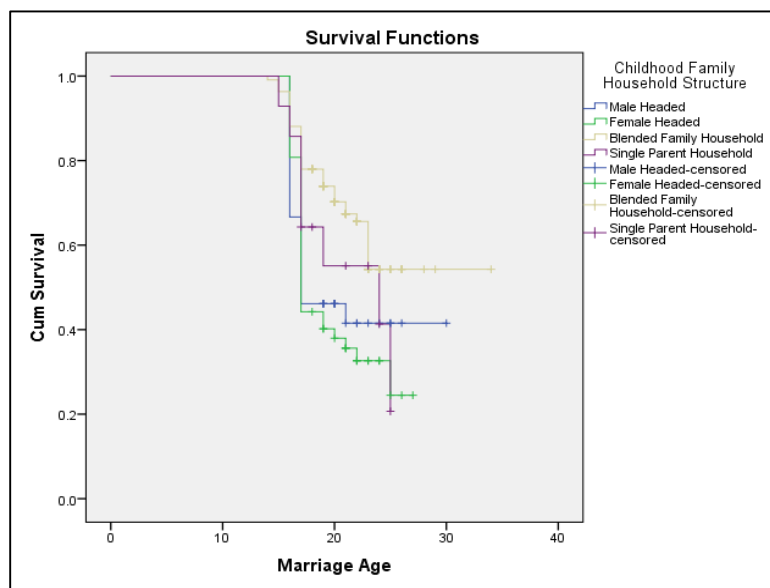
Figure 2: Kaplan-Meier plots displaying survivorship to age at first marriage by parents' level of education

The Kaplan-Meier plot on Figure 2 shows that by 23 years of age, nearly 53% of women whose fathers level of education was less than high school and 49% of women whose fathers level of education was high school are married compared to only 21% of women whose fathers level of education was more than high school in this population. By 23 years of age, nearly 60% of the women whose mothers had less than high school level of education was ever married compared to only 10% and about 26% among women whose mothers had more than high school and high school educational qualification respectively.

Figure 3: Kaplan-Meier plots displaying survivorship to age at first marriage by childhood family household structure

The plot diagram presented in Figure 3 shows that women from female headed households married earlier than the other family household structures at all ages. The Figure shows that by age 23 years, nearly 67% of women from female headed households and 57% from male headed households are married compared to only 36% women from blended family household structures.

In this study, wealth index was taken as a proxy for economic status of the household. The wealth index was decided by taking onto account a number of household possessions which are highly correlated with the economic condition of the household. The following weights was given to the following household items while calculating wealth index of the household: Car, 8; Motorcycle, 7; Video, 6; Gas, 5; Television, 4; Mobile smart phone, 3; Bicycle, 2; Radio, 1 and Nothing 0. The number of items possessed was multiplied by the weighting given to each in direct proportion to its price and accordingly the scores were assigned. The total score varied from 0 to 36 and they were grouped as follows: Poor, 0 – 11; Middle, 12 – 24 and Rich, 25 – 36.

Figure 4 shows a positive relationship between family economic status and first nuptial age. Cross tabulation results indicate that; early marriage was high (31%) among women from lower economic status compared with only 17 per cent from the middle economic status group. As the family economic status increases, early marriage declined. The study finding confirmed that the economic status of the natal family home impacts exposure to marriage among young females.

Figure 4: Percentage distribution of age at first marriage by household wealth index among the female respondents
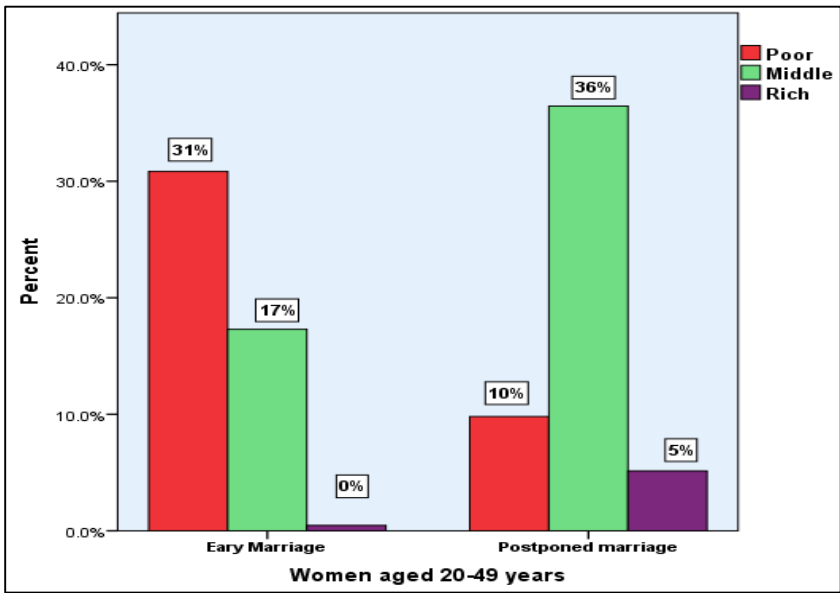
Figure 5: Kaplan-Meier plots displaying survivorship to age at first marriage by exposure to television mass media
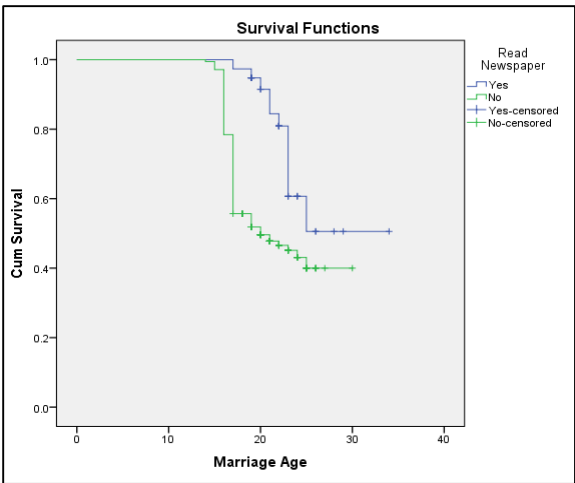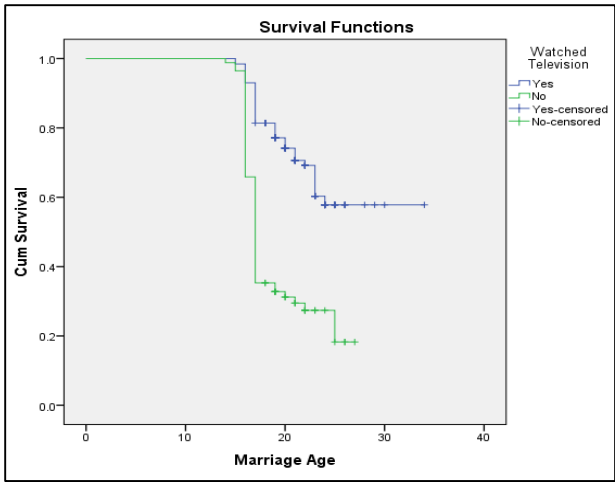
Figure 5 illustrates that by 23 years of age, just over 73% of the women who reported that they never watched television during their childhood were ever married compared to only 33% of the women who reported they watched television during their childhood. On the other hand, Figure 4.27 illustrates that by 23 years of age, over 53% of the women who reported that they did not read a newspaper during their childhood were ever married compared to only 29% of the women who read a newspaper during their childhood.

4.3 Pathways analysis: Path analysis results showed that early marriage was directly affected by family wealth, natal parity size, household structure and number of media exposure during childhood. While household structure (*β*= 1.65; 95% CI= 0.42 to 2.88; p= 0.053) and natal parity size (*β*= 1.41; 95% CI= 0.38 to 2.49; p= 0.062) was not a significant predictor of age at first marriage, the number of media exposure ≥2

media sources had a significantly greater likelihood of decreasing early marriage (β = -2.57; 95% CI= -3.59 to -1.47; p =<0.001). Family wealth of not poor had a significantly greater likelihood of decreasing marrying at an early (β = -2.36; 95% CI= -3.24 to -1.22; p= <0.001) (Table 3).

Table 3: The result of path analysis for family background characteristics (n=420)
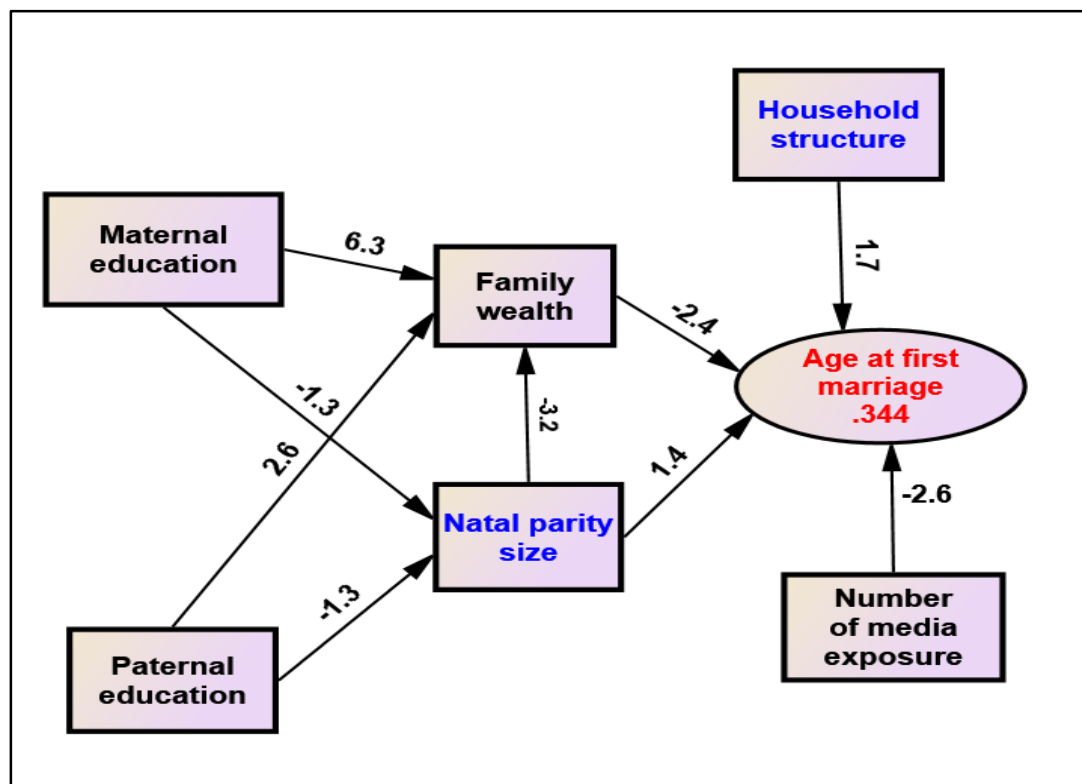
Dependent Variable	D	Independent Variable	Path Coefficient	CI 95%		P-value
				Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
Direct Effect						
Early age at first marriage	←	Family wealth Not Poor	-2.36	-3.24	-1.22	<0.001
Early age at first marriage	←	Natal parity size ≥3 Children	1.41	0.38	2.49	0.062
Early age at first marriage	←	Household structure Single parent	1.65	0.42	2.88	0.053
Early age at first marriage	←	Number of media exposure ≥2 media sources	-2.57	-3.59	-1.47	<0.001
Indirect Effect						
Family wealth Not Poor	←	Maternal education ≥High school	6.28	3.97	8.59	<0.001
Family wealth Not Poor	←	Paternal education ≥High school	2.60	1.95	4.25	<0.001
Natal parity size ≥3 children	←	Maternal education ≥High school	-1.38	-2.30	-0.44	0.009
Natal parity size ≥3 children	←	Paternal education ≥High school	-1.28	-2.28	-0.27	0.009

Family wealth and natal parity size were influenced by the level of parental education. Maternal education ≥High school had a significantly greater possibility of increasing family wealth above average (not poor) (β= 6.28; 95% CI= 3.97 to 8.59; p= <0.001). Paternal education ≥High school had a greater likelihood of increasing family wealth above average (not poor) (β= 2.60; 95% CI= 1.95 to 4.25; p= <0.001). On the other hand, paternal and maternal education level ≥High School had a greater possibility of decreasing natal parity size ≥3 children (β= -1.28; 95% CI= -2.28 to -0.27; p= 0.009) and (β= -1.38; 95% CI= -2.30 to -0.44; p= 0.009) respectively

Moreover, the Coefficient of Determination (R^2) for the equation level goodness of fit shows that the indirect and direct combination of the family background characteristics accounted for 34% of the variation in first nuptial age across gender of reproductive age in Homa Bay County (Figure 6). This implied that these variables were collectively significant and individually effective. While all family background characteristics, except household structure and natal parity size, were significant in total – some key variables were the largest contributors to first nuptial age in Homa Bay County. In order of importance, these number of media exposure

(-2.6), family wealth (-2.4), followed by household structure (1.7). Natal parity size (1.4), though no less important, was the least important contributor on the effect on first nuptial age.

Figure 6: The structural model of path analysis for family background characteristics and age at first marriage (n=420)

Discussion of Findings: The study showed that parents educational level has no influence on age at first marriage among males in Homa Bay County. This could suggest that male children's attitudes towards union formation does not reflect the attitude and values of their parents' in terms of parental level of education. This was a surprising finding bearing in mind that literature offers a counter-argument proposing that having more than high school education have a decreased propensity to marry early in relation to individuals with high school level of education (Hoem *et al.,* 2006). However, among women, the results are consistent with observations by Cavanagh (2011). This may be explained in relation to the fact that women with very educated parents are socialized to abide by the parental career goals and standards and reinforced by the parental role models as well. Findings by Shrestsha (1997) in Nepal revealed that educated parents instill in their daughters the ambition to be something other than conventional family roles of being a homemaker. These findings suggest that female children's attitudes towards union formation does reflect the attitude and values of their parents'.

The results showed that there is no significant difference between childhood family structure and age at first marriage for both sexes. For both men and women, blended-headed households tended to be less engaged with early marriage practices than single parent households, male and female-headed households. A fair amount of literature indicates that children from one parent households are generally at a disadvantage compared to children from two-parent or blended households (UNICEF, 2005). Due to poverty which has been established to be higher in one parent households, the children are vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation, violence and

abuse that may eventually lead to higher likelihood of early marriage and teenage pregnancy (UNICEF, 2005). These results may further indicate that single-parent and female headed households is associated with scarcer and reduced resources, a lot of dependence on kin, and high incidence of poverty, which is a major factor behind early marriages, particularly among women (Pankhurst, 2002). Poorer mothers in female headed households may therefore be less equipped to provide financial support for their children and may acquiesce to early marriage for their own daughters. On the other hand, the child-rearing burden is distributed equally in two-parent families and the presence of both parents' nurture and equip their children with relevant information, education and counselling to enable them improve (UNICEF, 2005).

The study results are consistent with observations by Quisumbing and Hallman (2003) and Gheda (2010) that reported that most lower economic status families consider marrying off their daughters early. This is as a strategy to reduce their economic hardships and to accumulate resources through bride wealth and obtaining future financial sustenance from the husband. Johnsons (2006) found that more affluent households may raise children's consumption aspirations, leading them to postpone marriage until they attain what they perceive to be an adequate standard of living. Greater parental resources may postpone marriage by fostering higher educational ambitions and achievement; in turn, real or perceived conflicts between educational attainment and family formation function to postpone the transition to marriage (Thornton, Axinn & Teachman, 1995).

The study results show that the father's work experience as a wage labor has a negative impact on the timing of marriage of men. However, the effect was unexpectedly non-significant. The results are inconsistent with observations by Glynn *et al.* (2010) that father's experience of wage labour can also facilitate the risk of marriage of their sons and daughters through wider contact of colleague workers in the work place. Additionally, father's participation in wage labour before his daughter's marriage is often associated with autonomous choice of spouse and timing of marriage (Fricke & Teachman, 1993). This autonomy sometimes could lead to early involvement and quick intimacy resulting to early family formation.

Findings from the analysis support those in previous studies. Yount *et al.* (2018) for example, found that the particular programs and values such as negative consequences of early marriages that one or more media channels disseminate are transmitted directly into the home, and have the ability to directly affect every member of the household despite the level of education. A study by Savitridina (2014) in Philippines further suggested that television and newspaper media have the greatest influence and understanding to make healthy decisions or advocate for behavior change due to the informative programs, news broadcasts or advertisements aimed at discouraging premature marriages. However, the finding is discordant with empirical findings of South *et al.* (2016) who reported that exposure to media messages facilitate early union formation by making young people feel closer to their partners.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It has been revealed from this study that in the order of largest contribution, number of media exposure (-2.6), family wealth (-2.4), household structure (1.7) and natal parity size (1.4) influence first nuptial age. Therefore, the government through the ministry of education and development partners should avail enough resources to subsidize education of poor households with bursaries, scholarships and other essential school supplies. This aims at improving their socio-economic status, reduce adolescent pregnancy and non-marital fertility. There is also urgent need to re-orientate the thinking and value system of both parents and their children through mass

educational campaign regarding the importance of education and the need for parents to insist on their children going to school (at least up to tertiary level) before getting married or seeking employment.

It is recommended the government should empower and raise the self-esteem of girls and women from poorer socioeconomic neighborhoods through poverty alleviation programs and income disparities, to benefit both rural and urban dwellers. To postpone age at sexual debut and prevent premarital fertility, parents and government policy should filter out immoral media content from reaching young people, to introduce compulsory comprehensive sexuality education as a stand-alone subject in primary and secondary schools, and to encourage parents to be good role models on issues pertaining to sexuality. According to UNESCO (2018), children from ages 5 and upwards have a right to learn about issues related to sexuality that are relevant to their lives, in an age-appropriate, culturally relevant manner. The topics and learning objectives should address four age groups and corresponding levels, namely: ages 5 to 8 (Level 1), ages 9 to 12 (Level 2), ages 12 to 15 (Level 3), and ages 15 to 18+ (Level 4). Deliberate overlaps should accommodate the broad range of learners who might be in the same class.

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