

Unveiling the Realities of Marrying Too Young: Evidence from Child Brides in Sub-Saharan Africa and Infant Mortality Implications

Authors : Emmanuel Olamijuwon

Abstract : Despite laws against child marriage - a violation against child rights, the practice remains widespread in sub-Saharan Africa and globally partly because of persistent poverty, gender inequality, protection and the need to reinforce family ties. Using pooled data from the recent demographic and health surveys of 20-sub-Saharan African countries with a regional representative sample of 36,943 girls under 18 years, this study explores the prevalence, pattern and infant mortality implications of this marriage type while also examining its regional variations. Indications from the study are that child marriage is still very high in the region with variations above one-tenth in West, Central and Southern Africa regions except in the East African region where only about 7% of children under 18 were already married. Preliminary findings also suggest that about one-in-ten infant deaths were to child brides many of whom were residing in poor households, rural residence, unemployed and have less than secondary education. Based on these findings, it is, therefore, important that government of African countries addresses critical issues through increased policies towards increasing enrollment of girl children in schools as many of these girls are not likely to have any economic benefit to the region if the observed pattern continues.

Keywords : child marriage, infant mortality, Africa, child brides

Conference Title : ICPD 2016 : International Conference on Population and Development

Conference Location : Boston, United States

Conference Dates : April 25-26, 2016