

# "how boys become men" by jon katz essay sample

[Life](#), [Childhood](#)



In the article "How Boys Become Men," Jon Katz gives us some examples to explain why men grow up to be insensitive. Katz points out that boys are supposed to learn how to handle things by themselves and hide their weakness and tears. Boys are always pressured to be tough and not allowed showing any emotions and fears. Boys' growing up experiences have prepared them for adulthood, all the attitudes and behaviors. I agree with Katz that boys learn from other boys. However, I believe the most important idea of how boys become men is how adults treat and teach boys differently from girls. In addition, boys are hearing messages that they need to be strong and tough from adults even though they are just babies. This might be the main problem that causes men to be insensitive or do not know how to express their own feelings.

Even though I do not have any experiences of how boys become men because I am not a man, I still know that adults treat boys and girls differently since they are born. For example, if a baby girl dresses in pink, people usually say "What a pretty girl" and then hold her very gently. If a baby boy dresses in blue, they will say "What a strong little boy". Instead of holding them gently, people usually hold a baby boy roughly and move him around. People will still say "What a pretty girl" if the baby boy was dressed in pink. I remember asking one of my four-year-old cousin why he does not wear pink. We all laugh after he answered with "boys don't wear pink, only girls wear pink and dress."

Dressing differently did not affect boys to become men, but the ways that adults treat boys and girls affected the boys to be rough and girls to be gentle. I still remember I was only allowed to play with dolls and fake cooking

materials. I wished to play with all those robots, cars, guns that my younger brother had. Boys are into all those fighting characters like superman, x-men, etc, while girls are forced to be interesting in Barbies and dollhouses. Boys will start fighting each other if they get into arguments. Instead of fighting, girl will find someone else to play with.

Adults are giving boys the messages that they need to be strong and tough even though they are just babies! As a girl, I receive encouraged and taught to be nurturing and sensitive to the needs of others, while boys are discouraged from expressing tender emotions and be tough. Then they become subjects to and participants in what they heard. Boys in their early childhood are trained not to cry, be tough, fearless and strong. I still remember when my younger brother fell down on the ground while he was learning how to ride a bicycle. My mom and I were expected and told him to pull himself back up and try again instead of sitting on the ground and asking for help. Another example, my friends and I went for a scary roller coaster ride last summer, then I asked one of the boys " was that scary?" he lied and said that's is nothing to be scare of. The reason I knew he was scared because I was his leg shaking after the ride.

Many boys feel out of touch with emotions that they do not understand and do not know how to handle. Even if they understand this disconnection, most of them would not have the tools to talk about it or the people with whom to discuss it. According to my experiences, we girls are falling for the " I don't know" and " I don't care" excuses. It is not that we really do not know the answers, but we are just trying to pretend that we do not know so that we

can ask for helps. This way we can always get the answers correctly.

Therefore, girls always ask for helps, but boys never do. That is why boys need to handle things by themselves and not asking for any help at all.

Therefore, boys just make decision, which they think is the best. I remember asking a male's friend few years ago if he thinks boys are dominant or not.

His answer was that boys did not intend to be dominant or control somebody; they just want to give what they think is the best for others.

I agree with Jon Katz that boys are forced to hide their emotions and fears that are why men become insensitive. However, it is their parents, society and everyone around them who affect the boys to become the men that they should be. If people treat boys same as how they treat the girls, I guess men will act the same way as women.

There are two important elements to understand child marriage, the definition of ' child' and ' marriage'. Although Article 266 of the Zambian constitution defines a child as " a person who has attained, or is below the age of eighteen years" and an adult as " a person who has attained, or is above nineteen years," the terms " child" and " adult" are not always measured in numerical values in Zambia (Mann, et al. 2015). There are sociological and biological markers that determine the age of the person. Reaching puberty is one biological marker. Sociological makers include withdrawal from or failure to complete school, engagement in sexual relationships, full-time labour, or wage employment and development of capacity to care for one's self and others. This is the reason why initiation ceremonies for girls who begin menstruation (often between 9 and 13)

include education on marriage, how to take care of a husband, and how to take care of a home as a mother (I bid).

The second element is the definition of marriage. In Zambia, there is no one single definition of marriage. Zambia practices a dual legal system, customary law and statutory law (Panos 2014, Nsemukila 2015). Hence there are two types of marriage; Customary law marriage and statutory law marriage. In Customary law marriage, each ethnic group has its own definition. However, a valid marriage must fulfil the following four conditions: a person has to reach puberty and undergo appropriate initiation ceremonies, parental or guardian consent, negotiations and payment of dowry (Lobola) and a performance of a specific selected ritual signifying marriage e. g. wedding (Mushota 2005). This has caused a conflict in law. Statutory law prohibits sexual intercourse with a person below the age of 16 and classifies it as an offence called " defilement" (Section 138 of the Penal Code), and yet recognition of customary law marriage allows it. Statutory law marriage is regulated by the Marriage Act. According the Marriage Act, To marry one has to be at least 21 years of age. A person below 21 years needs parental consent to marry. However, the law does not specify the threshold below 21 years at which consent from parents is not acceptable. The law also allows a high court judge to consent that a child below the age of 16 can be married.

Therefore, Child Marriage can be defined as the formal union or informal union entered into by an individual before reaching a certain age specified by some global organizations as high as the age of 18.

According to the June 2017 Child Marriage research in Zambia, it was written

that there are three (3) major types of child marriage and these are; Marriages among peer adolescents, these are child marriages starting at the age of 11 for girls and 14 for boys, usually with an age difference of about two to three years. In this type of child marriage, Adolescents decide to marry each other on their own. The second type of marriage is Intergenerational marriage, this is a type of child marriage where an adolescent girl is married to an older man (in some instances an adult twice her age). Intergenerational marriages may be necessitated by various factors including poverty, where marrying off the child serves as means for the girl to escape poverty and be provided for, and the girl's family may also benefit through the payment of dowry (lobola), whose value has been increasing. The third type of child marriage is a marriage to rectify a situation to avoid shame and dishonor to the family (Mann et al 2015) e. g. when a teenage girl is pregnant, in most cases she is forced to marry the person that impregnated her as a way of avoiding family shame.

There are a lot of causes of child marriage, poverty is one of them. Child marriage is associated with high levels of poverty, hence in Zambia it is seen as a rural phenomenon, although there are some reported cases of child marriages taking place in urban areas. Poverty leads many parents to withdraw their daughters` from school and offer them for marriage to older men (in most cases) in exchange for payment of ' lobola' (a dowry for the bride). More than half of girls from the poorest families in the developing world are married as children. Families and sometimes girls themselves believe that marriage will be a solution to secure their future. Giving a daughter in marriage allows parents to reduce family expenses by ensuring

they have one less person to feed, clothe and educate. Families may also see investing in their son`s education as more worthwhile investment. In some case, marriage of a daughter is a way to repay debts, manage disputes, or settle social, economic and political alliances. In communities where a dowry or ' bride price' is paid, it is often welcome income for poor families and men often have to pay less especially if the bride is young and uneducated.

Cultural practices is another reason for child marriage. Child marriage is a traditional practice that in many places happens simply because it has happened for generations. In some communities, when girls start to menstruate, they become women in the eyes of the community. Marriage is therefore the next step towards giving a girl her status as a wife and a mother. Traditional practices often go unquestioned because they have been part of a community's life and identity for a very long time. But as said by the widow of Nelson Mandela, " Traditions are made by people and people can unmake them (Graca Machel). According to the 2017 report, cultural practices such as polygamy are also a major cause of child marriage in Zambia, as young girls are married off to older men who are respected in their communities.

Gender inequality is amongst the major causes of child marriage, in many communities where child marriage is practiced, girls are not valued as much as boys, they are seen as a burden on their family. Marrying your daughter at a young age can be viewed as a way to ease economic hardship by transferring this ' burden' to her husband's family. Child marriage is also driven by patriarchal values and the desire to control female sexuality, for

instance, how a girl should dress, how she should behave, who she should be allowed to see, to marry etc. families closely guard their daughters' sexuality and virginity in order to protect the family honor. " Girls who have relationships or become pregnant outside of marriage are shamed for bringing dishonor on their family," (Namaganda . A. K. 2012)

Insecurity is another cause of child marriage, many parents marry their daughters young because they feel it is in her best interest, often to ensure her safety in areas where girls are at risk of harassment and physical or sexual assault. Child marriage can increase in humanitarian crises, such as in conflict or after a natural disaster. When families face even greater hardship, they may see child marriage as a coping mechanism in the face of poverty and violence.

According to the economic impacts of child marriage research, Child marriage has a lot of effects at individual, family, community and national level. The first global study on the economic cost of child marriage shows that this human rights violation also has a major negative impact on national economies. The economic impacts of child marriage research, conducted jointly by The World Bank and The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), shows that the biggest impact of child marriage are related to fertility and population growth, education, earnings and the health of children born to young mothers. The study highlights that investments in ending child marriage can help countries achieve multiple development goals. Speaking at the launch of the report in Washington DC, Executive Director of Girls Not Brides said, " This research provides crucial evidence showing that marriage doesn't just impact the lives of the 15 million girls



married every year, but also has a major negative impact on the economic development of the countries in which they live" (Sandaram . L.).

Education is another sector that is affected by child marriage. The results of the three (3) years research conducted jointly by the World Bank and The International Center for research on women (ICRW) strongly supports the promotion of girls' education to not only protect girls from marriage but also provide them with the tools to lead more empowered lives. According to this research, girls who marry as children are less likely to complete secondary education. The report also shows that child marriage and early childbearing have significant implications.

Women married before the age of 18 are likely to have more children, impacting both their own health and welfare as well as that of their family. More children in a household reduces the ability to pay for food, education and health care. At national level, child marriage contributes to population growth by increasing fertility. The report estimates that " a girl marrying at 13 will have on average 26% more children over her lifetime than if she had married at 18 or later" (ICRW report). The report also shows that infant morbidity and mortality is higher amongst children born to mothers under the age of 18. It is estimated that 38 mothers die each month due to complications relating to pregnancy and child birth in Zambia. These conditions are disproportionately pronounced among teen mothers. Thus, mortality is still high and only declining at a very slow rate from 649 deaths/per 100, 000 live births in 1997 to 483 (UNFPA 440) in 2010. The report was concluded by saying, " The 750+ member organisations of girls not brides will not be surprised by the results of this research. Every day,

they see the devastating impacts of child marriage. Our members have a key role to play to in raising public awareness of this harmful practice and encouraging their government to take action. Using evidence from the World Bank and ICRW study will help make their collective voice stronger.

Governments must understand that ending child marriage is not only the right thing to do, it is also the smart thing to do" (Ms Sundaram).

There is need to stop child marriage in Zambia and the world at large, in 2013 Zambia launched the campaign against marriage which is being spearheaded by the ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs in close collaboration with ministries of Health, Gender and Child Development, Community Development, Mother and Child Health, United Nations Fund for Population Activities and Civil Society Organisations to end child marriages. Zambia's permanent representative to the United Nations Dr. Mwaba Kasese Bota led this effort. The Marriage Act establishes a legal age for marriage, and the Penal Code makes sex with a girl under 16 an offence in Zambia, these provisions rarely apply in customary law.

On 10th June 2014, it was outlined that " child marriage presents a serious challenge to development and needed to be criminalized" (Dr Kaseba . C. S 2014). Later the republican vice president reinforced Dr Kasebas' remarks by declaring " child marriage a national crisis and also calling it criminalization in Zambia" (Wina . M. I 2014). Recently, it was highlighted that the scenario of early marriages and pregnancies had become worrisome and as first ladies, their goal was to try and find ways to eliminate or reduce early marriages and teen pregnancies. She further emphasized that as first ladies their agenda was advocacy for a free Africa with no child marriage.

The Marriage Act establishes a legal age for marriage and the Penal Code (code of laws concerning crimes and offenses and their punishment) makes sex with a girl under 16 years an offence in Zambia, these provisions rarely apply in customary law. Under statutory marriage however, child marriages are illegal, and considered a form of child abuse. The legal age for marriage under statutory law is 18 for females and 21 for males. On the other hand, under traditional law, marriage can take place at puberty, and it is common for girls to be married or have sexual relations under the age of 16.

According to the New Vision Newspaper dated 23rd October 2014, it was written that Regional psychosocial support initiative programme officer Chilekwa Chisanga has observed that children still remain victims of reproductive health dysfunction due to lack of adequate knowledge.

Speaking in an interview in Sinda after a two days children reproductive health sensation programmes of issues of reproductive health rights to children and parents. " As you might be aware that eastern province stands at 61% on early marriages but during our two days on community sensation on children reproductive health rights, we discovered that early marriages, teenage pregnancy and unsafe abortions are so rampant in Katete and Sinda" (Chisanga . C.). She said that major root cause of the vices is lack of adequate knowledge that can protect these children. " Our children in these communities lack adequate knowledge and information that can protect them from the perpetrators of the teenage pregnancy, early marriages and other vices that disadvantage their reproductive health rights" (chisanga . C.). She finds it very disturbing that Zambia still continues losing energetic

youths and children who are suppose to be drivers of development.

In conclusion, child marriage is

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