

Child marriage

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



Child Marriage is an ancient practice that is prevalent especially in poorly developed countries having devastating consequences on the children involved. Every year millions of girls get married worldwide, before the age of eighteen. The worst thing is that the children don't even know what is going on at the engagement ceremony. Most girls who start early marriages become pregnant immediately. Statistics show that the number of death cases during pregnancy is twice as frequent for women under twenty, because when they become pregnant, their body is not sufficiently developed.

To start with, I think that living away from these practices, few of us realize that these things really exist. This is the reason why I chose to write about this topic and also because I think that we have to make those around us understand that this issue is a priority and each of us could do something in order to protect these children. I strongly believe that children should always be a priority for us. Coming across a shocking article which said that forty million girls under the age of eighteen, marry each year or around one girl every two seconds, had made me more aware of this subject than ever before.

Marriage is a formalized, binding partnership between consenting adults. Child marriage involves either one or both spouses being children and may take place under civil, religious or customary laws with or without formal registration. A child is usually someone under 18. According to the Convention on the Elimination on all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) - marriage before the age of 18 shouldn't be allowed since children don't have the ' full maturity and capacity to act'.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that marriage should be 'entered only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses'. Where one of the parties getting married is under 18, consent cannot always be assumed to be 'free and full'. On one hand the causes of early and forced marriage are complex, interrelated and dependent on individual circumstances and context. But the practice is driven by: gender, inequality, poverty, negative traditional and religious practices, failure to enforce laws, conflicts, disasters and damages.

On the other hand it contributes to driving girls into a cycle of poverty and powerlessness. They are likely to experience violence, they are abused, they have forced sexual relations, poor sexual and reproductive health, illiteracy and lack of education. Despite the laws and the organizations that advocate for children's rights, there are countries where child marriage is still allowed. It seems to me that in such countries the lack of education is the main reason that has led to the preservation and spread of these practices. Child marriage is a product of cultures that devalue women and girls and discriminate against them.

The discrimination," according to a UNICEF report on " Child Marriage and the Law," " often manifests itself in the form of domestic violence, marital rape, and deprivation of food, lack of access to information, education, healthcare, and general impediments to mobility. " According to this report in the poorly developed countries, where the population has no access to education, religion is a custom that is followed closely by each family. In these countries women usually have no rights and laws are made against

them. For example, the Hindu religion has enjoyed not keeping a girl unmarried even at a so small age as 8 years.

Puberty sets in among Indian females generally after 11 years, when any marriage is considered unholy. It's suggested that the girls should be married before puberty. The opposite view point is that, "The Hindu Marriage Act", which was adopted in 1955, is specified that the groom must be aged 21 years old and the bride 18. Despite of this, in the "Ending child marriage" report, author Rachel Vogelstein, which is a fellow in the Women and Foreign Policy Program, says: "India has the largest number of married girls in the world, accounting for 40 percent of all child marriages worldwide.

Bangladesh has the highest prevalence of child marriages in South Africa, with 66 percent of the young women married before eighteen and 32 percent married before fifteen". This demonstrates that only enacting a law on the sidelines is not enough to diminish the number of these marriages. Nevertheless, in Nigeria children are married even before they are born and they grow up together. This is their way to ensure that families do not fall into disgrace, if a girl who became pregnant without being married, her family would be marginalized.

Such practices are based on traditions of thousands of years which seem that many people do not want to change them, no matter how much suffering it causes around. I am totally opposed to the fact that some poor families by marrying very young children, even three years old, get rid of the responsibility of taking care of the children who got married. Poor families marry off young daughters to reduce the number of children they need to

feed, clothe and educate. In some cultures, a major incentive is the price prospective husbands will pay for young brides.

Between spouses can even be 60 years difference. It is very hard to imagine what negative impact this may have on the growth and development of young girls. The girl who gets married as a child is confined in the four walls of the household and in almost all the cases, the married girl child gains no further education, and as a consequences increasing the illiteracy. Besides the already mentioned religious, educational and cultural effects, this would be the social one.

It appears to me, that by not accepting this fate, lots of children are forced to spend their entire life in a marriage that did not even have the chance to choose, can have fatal consequences leading to honor killings or mass suicides. Gul Meena is just one of the millions of victims of these unspeakable practices of today's modern society. Her tragic life impressed me a lot from the very first moment I read her story. She is a seventeen years old young girl from Pakistan, who at only twelve was forced by her family to marry and move into her husband's home who was sixty.

In an interview with reporters from CNN she spoke about the moments of horror that she went through in the 5 years since she has entered into this terrifying marriage: “ My family married me off when I was 12 years old. My husband was 60. Every day he would beat me. I would cry and beg him to stop. But he just kept on beating me”. And if the cruelties of life were not enough, she has grown up with ignorant parents who didn't give her a hand when she begged them to. She says: “ My family would beat me when I

complained. They told me you belong in your husband's house – that is your life “. I think this is unfair.

For me and not only, it is hard to believe how these parents' honor, religion and respect for traditions prevail at the expense of their children. In November 2012, after 5 years of marriage with a man who could be her grandfather, Meena Gul met a young Afghan and decided to elope with him in Afghanistan. But misfortune has made that after just one day she ran away, was found by her brother who armed with an ax, killed his friend and tried to kill her. He hit her 15 times in the head, face and arms, leaving her in a pool of blood, but still made ?? a fleeting chance to see and call an ambulance.

No one thought she would survive. Medical effort was not in vain. Meena survived this terrifying attack of his brother, but her fight for survival continues. She must be protected all the time by her family, where she is a disgrace and who will try to kill her again. She needed counseling in order to overcome this trauma. Gul is now in a shelter in Afghanistan and at the moment she does not want to think about the future, but she needs a future. Since she came to the shelter Gul tried to take her life several times, unfortunately. In this case are thousands of women who have survived such cruelties and live in shelters.

The question is, how can they be helped and what measures can be taken for the other girls to be protected and never get into the same situation? These girls being married at a very young age and being kept away from school, even if they manage to escape from this situation, most often starve or become victims of human trafficking because they do not know how to

<https://assignbuster.com/child-marriage/>

live. Even bonded slaves are in a better position than the women who have to face this fatal accident known as child marriage. This practice is mostly frowned upon in mainstream Romanian society. These parents spend money for the event where all the community of gypsies is present.

Once marriage arrangements are made it is very difficult for children to break the deal and choose another partner. If a child decides to marry someone else then his or her family must pay back three times the dowry, and the child could risk being outcast completely. The worst is that the children didn't even know what was going on at the engagement ceremony. They thought it was just a usual party in the courtyard. Later they will be told and they will marry at sixteen or eighteen years old. Repeated studies have shown the important role that education must play in efforts to eliminate child marriage.

Research by UNICEF shows that the more education a girl receives, the less likely she is to be married as a child. Improving access to education and eliminating gender gaps in education are therefore important strategies for ending the practice of child marriage. Education of the parents is just as important as education of the children. Education will broaden their horizons and will help convince parents of the benefits in having their children educated. Fawziyya Al-Jammal is a mother from Egypt. She married off her six daughters between the ages of 11-16, a practice that is a source of pride for her among the villagers of Upper Egypt.

She said: " I am proud that I married them off, and managed to protect their honor. If a girl turns 16 and isn't married yet, she is considered an old maid. If a girl can do all the house chores she can get married at any age. "

<https://assignbuster.com/child-marriage/>

also shows her ignorance about the laws which forbid child marriage. She is very convinced by the fact that no law will be able to change this situation in the community she lives in: “ They can make whatever laws they want, but in the villages, we don’t abide by them. Girls will continue to marry young no matter what. ” The reality shows that these ancient customs cannot be changed in a fortnight.

A lot of work and patience is needed especially from the side of the Governments, international organizations and also from the volunteers in order to succeed in this by educating the population in changing these customs. The authorities of these communities themselves should imply more in applying their own laws and to penalize severely any trial of breaking the human rights. Important personalities from the politics and from high life society or even the media have always brought their contribution with constant efforts to fight against this phenomenon.

They had some legislative proposals such as raising funds for sustaining and offering a future for women who are victims of violence of their own husbands or families. Also large sums of money were invested for the implementation of lots of educational programs. As far as I am concerned what is required on the part of the citizens and the government in general is to join hands and raise a movement so wide that every parent could only visualize themselves locked up in jails even if they think of committing such a crime.

It is essential on the part of the citizens to remain active. People who witness child marriages should be determined enough to launch a police complaint against the parents of both the bride and groom. It is essential on the part of

<https://assignbuster.com/child-marriage/>

the government to award the people who inform about the conduction of child marriages and also to enforce harder laws to discourage this practice. Thus by helping two children from entering into such a horrendous affair, you are assuring a brighter future not only for these children but for India as a whole.

To sum up with, early marriage is often perceived as the only option for girls and is often seen by parents of young girls as a means of securing both their own and their daughter's future. Child marriage is an issue that cannot be solved in isolation as it is results from a complexity of social, cultural and economic dimensions and widespread gender discrimination. The causes and consequences of child marriage are intrinsically linked, including girl's lack of autonomy and low levels of education, poor health status, poverty and overall low socioeconomic status.

Repeated studies have shown the important role that education must play in efforts to eliminate child marriage. Research by UNICEF shows that the more education a girl receives, the less likely she is to be married as a child. Improving access to education and eliminating gender gaps in education are therefore important strategies for ending the practice of child marriage. In conclusion when a girl is pulled from school and forced to marry young, her personal development is stunted. She is left with few – if any – negotiation skills and therefore has limited decision-making power in her new household.

Often uneducated and unskilled, many child brides are completely dependent on their husbands and in-laws to survive. Girls are often not yet mature or skilled enough to properly perform household tasks or care for their husbands and children. Child marriage also deprives a girl of the

<https://assignbuster.com/child-marriage/>

valuable and necessary skills required to enter the labor market, therefore denying her the opportunity to help lift herself - and her family - out of poverty. In short, pulling girls out of school and forcing them into early marriage ensures that poverty will be handed down from a mother to her daughter, and family to family, for generations to come.