

Parents' Perception Towards Ending Girls' Early Marriage in Uyui District, Tabora, Tanzania

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Abstract

Early marriage is a global problem facing most countries, including Tanzania and other developing countries. The government and other organizations, including Civil Society Organizations (SCOs), have made different efforts to end early marriages in different regions in the country. Despite the efforts made, the problem persists in some of the regions in Tanzania, including Tabora, where the study was conducted. The theory of change developed by Girls Not Brides was used to show the importance of parents in ending the early marriage. Thus, parents were the unit of analysis. The study employed a qualitative approach with little support of quantitative data where descriptive statistics were obtained. The study found that most respondents (74%) were not aware of marriage laws. The study also found that parents' perception in ending girls' early marriage was related to cultural upholding (norms and values) where the fornication and giving birth at the parents' homes were prohibited. Another finding was that girls were taken as a way of solving economic problems in the study area. The study recommends that the community be given awareness and appropriate education on the impact of girls' early marriage on their physical and psychological condition. The community should also be trained on intrapreneurial activities to improve their economic status. It will enable them to take care of their families and stop using their daughters as assets. The marriage laws should also be mainstreamed to all levels of the government and the communities to ensure that all people know them.

Keywords: Early Marriage, Marriage Laws, Parents and Perception

Introduction

Early marriage is a global issue affecting children, most specifically girls. Early marriage results in many effects, including death, dropping out of school, and psychological trauma (Goli *et al.*, 2015), specifically to girls. Despite the impact, different works of literature show that most communities believe that early marriage protects from early pregnancy and fornication to a girl

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child (Malhotra, 2010; Mahato, 2016; WHO, 2018). Different governments address early marriage within and outside the nation and other public and private institutions as it is perceived as among child violence (Schlecht *et al.*, 2013; United Nations, 2014). Early marriage is when a girl or a boy is married at the age where she or he is not capable of shouldering social and physical family issues happening to marriages and bearing and raising children (Plan International, 2021). According to the World Health Organization (2013), early marriage is when a girl or a boy engages in marriage before 18 years old. Among other developing countries, Tanzania is said to have the highest prevalence rate of early marriages in the world (United Nations, 2014). Tabora is among the three regions with a high early marriage prevalence with 58% (ibid). It has to be understood that young girls who are married off are more likely to have children while they are still physically immature, which puts them at a higher risk of dying from pregnancy and childbirth complications (WHO, 2018). Thus, early marriage is termed as child violence because it deprives of the rights, including the right to education, child protection, right to live, right to play, and right to participate in decision making (URT, 2008; Yüksel-Kaptanoglu & Ergöçmen, 2014). Thus, practicing girls' early marriage is one of the hindering factors to implementing the Child Development Policy of 1996.

Based on the disadvantages of early marriages, different national and international institutions have made different efforts to end girls' early Marriage. For instance, a hunger project established in Bangladesh was making campaigns to end an early marriage after realizing that it is causing physical, psychological, and mental effects on young girls (Ame, 2013). In addition to this, an article "preventing early pregnancy and poor reproductive outcomes among adolescents in developing countries" was published by the WHO to motivate and educate people on the implications of early marriage, specifically to girls who are most affected (Svanemyr *et al.*, 2012). In Nigeria, CSOs such as Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) have played a significant role in fighting against early marriage, specifically for girls (Amzat, 2020).

Different efforts to end early marriage were also made by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the Government of Tanzania, where they aimed to end an early marriage by 2030 (United Nations, 2014). In this line, more than 25 CSOs established a network to end early marriage in Tanzania. Moreover, different rules and regulations have been formulated to curb the situation. The established rules and regulations include: The National Plan of Action to End Violence against Women and Children 2017/18-2021/22, which addresses the issue of ending child

marriage; the Government developed a National Plan of Action on FGM/C and Child Marriage 2018; Gender and Children desks have been established in 417 district police stations in Tanzania. Child-friendly courts and child protection committees have also been established at the district and ward levels. Tanzania's Child Development Policy (2008) acknowledges that marriage at 15 deprives a child of his or her rights.

Despite the efforts done by the government and different organizations, including CSOs, towards ending the early marriage, the practice is persisting in the country. Different studies have been done to know how different groups in the community perceive early marriage. For instance, the study done in Indonesia by Susilo *et al.* (2021) reveals that society perceives early marriage to avoid social sanctions of fornication, being pregnant out of wedlock, and solving economic problems. Another study found that child marriage is associated with social beliefs where marriage is considered an instrument to acquire social status in the local community (Schaffnit *et al.*, 2019). In the same line, the adolescent's perception of early marriage was related to gender, age, level of parents' education, and the number of siblings (Duraku *et al.*, 2020). In relation to this, Biswas *et al.* (2020), in their study, found that adolescence perceives early marriage as a social phenomenon of adulthood and being ready for marriage; poverty resulted in children dropping out of school and engaging in adult responsibilities, including getting married; and a dream of forming individuals' family. However, information on how parents perceive ending the early marriage was minimal whereby; studies including Agege (2018) suggested the importance of finding the information on parents' perception of early marriage. It being the case, the study strived to fill the gap by finding out how parents perceive the ending of girls' early marriage in the study area. It is because, family as a primary institution, has a significant role to play to curb the situation. After all, it is where children are raised, socialized, and equipped with informal education, including the impact of engaging in marriage acts at a tender age (Livesey, 2010; Berger and Font, 2015; Pope, 2016). The findings of this study may bring forth the knowledge to the Ministry of Health, gender, elderly, and children on the parents' understanding of the children's rights and how they implement them based on how they are stated in the revised Child Development Policy, 2008. The study also provides knowledge on dealing with factors limiting parents in ending early marriage within communities.

Moreover, the findings of this study add different strategies for implementing Child Development Policy for the benefit of the future generation. This study's findings also provide insights for educational providers to prepare relevant content based on the situation, which can positively assist in ending girls' early marriage within family levels. It has to be noted that all people in the community have a role in ending girls' early marriage within communities, as suggested by the Theory of Change on Child Marriage. The fighting against the social evil of early marriage will start at the family level and be extended to the whole community by adopting a systematic approach.

Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Change guided the study on Child Marriage developed by Girls Not Brides. The Girls Not Brides is a global partnership of more than 350 civil society organizations in more than 60 countries (Atim, 2017). The main aim is to end an early marriage and enable girls to fulfill their potential (Javel & Mughal, 2020). The theory points out that there is no single solution to ending child marriage and that everyone has a role to play. It also explains that efforts to address child marriage must respond to local contexts because of the people's different cultures. In the same line, different organizations involved in ending an early marriage through different programs and investments should take different forms in implementing their activities (Girls Not Brides, 2021). Different studies also proposed the theory of change on child marriage to end early marriage (Atim, 2017; Javel & Mughal, 2020). They propose that different actors, including parents, communities, health providers, education services, religious leaders, local and national government, and international organizations, should end the problem of early marriage (Atim, 2017).

Given that other organizations and the government have played a role in ending early marriage, the theory was used to determine the parents' perception at the family level. Finding out parents' perception also discloses how parents perceive the process of ending girls' early marriage and provide ways of engaging them. It is because parents have a huge role to play in ending early Marriage by cooperating with other actors.

Materials and Methods

Description of the Study Area

Tabora region is located in the mid-western part of Tanzania on the central. The region shares a border with the Shinyanga region in the North, Singida region in the East, Mbeya and Rukwa regions in the south, while the western border is shared with the Kigoma region (URT, 2015). According to URT (1998), the name Tabora originated from Matoborwa, meaning sweet potatoes, which was a staple food for Nyamwezi people who form the large population of Tabora. Visitors could not pronounce the word Matoborwa; instead, they called it Tabora, which later came to be known as Tabora. According to the 2012 Tanzania National Census, the population of Uyuni District was 396,623 (Census (PHC), 2012; URT, 2015). The rationale for selecting this area was because the district is among the areas with a large percentage (58%) on the issue of early marriage in the country (UNFPA, 2017).

Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional research design where data was collected at a single point in time. According to Setia (2016), in a cross-sectional study, the investigator simultaneously measures the outcome and exposures in the study participants. In this study, the cross-sectional research design is used to assess parents' perception towards ending girls' early marriages in the study area. The study adopted a mixed approach (qualitative and quantitative). The qualitative approach took a more significant part of which respondents had to explore their concerns through open-ended questions in the questionnaire and a checklist. According to Palmer & Bolderston (2006), the qualitative approach is designed to understand people and the environment they live in and their culture and norms. This is because it provides the opportunity for the participant to explore what is happening in their context based on the issue in the investigation. On the other hand, the quantitative approach deals with collecting and analyzing numerical data for statistical analysis (Bhandari, 2020).

Sampling Procedure/Techniques

The study used probability and non-probability sampling procedures in which purposive sampling procedure was used to select key informants who were Community Development Officers, District and Ward Education Officers, District Executive Director (DED), Ward Executive Officer (WEO), and Village Executive Officers (VEO) and Village Chairpersons.

Purposive sampling techniques allow the researcher to generalize the population that has been selected and studied; however, it is highly prone to biases (Sharma, 2017). Snowball sampling techniques were used to select (23) parents in the Uyuni district council who gave a hand in marriage to girls under fifteen years old. Through the snowball technique, the researcher can easily find the respondents, and it is cost-effective, but only a small number of people will be reached because the technique is applied to the population with the same trait (Levine, 2014).

Purposive sampling was used to select 1001 parents who had girl children in the study area. Then a simple random sampling technique was used to get (100) respondents, 10% of the identified parents. Etikan *et al.* (2016) explain that the purposive sampling technique is helpful in selecting participants based on their qualities. Therefore, the selected respondents had to have girl children as they were the target population. The selected number was due to the nature of questions of which, most of which were open-ended questions that allowed the respondents to give out what they knew on the subject matter. The collected information was predicted to be homogeneity, implying that the population/data/results may be similar because the population shares similar cultures and traditions (Jager *et al.*, 2017). Simple random sampling is used to discern smaller sample sizes from a larger population and research and make generalizations about the larger group. It is one of several methods statisticians and researchers use to extract a sample from a larger population (Depersio, 2018). Simple random sampling can be performed through the table of random numbers and the lottery method. In this study, the lottery method was used to select the study's respondents.

Methods and Tools for Data Collection

The face-to-face interview has different advantages to a researcher where the interviewee's voice can be heard. It is easier to learn body language, intonation, and increasing social interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Opdenakker, 2006). The method was very useful in this study because it provided a chance for the researcher to see the respondents' reactions based on their perception of ending early marriage. In this research, face-to-face interviews were used to collect the primary data from both parents and the key informants. The questionnaire with close and open-ended questions was used to collect information from the parents.

In contrast, a checklist was used to gather information from the key informants: Community Development Officers, Ward Executive Officers, Village Executive Officers, Education

Coordinators at the Ward Level, and Village Chairpersons. The qualitative data was recorded for triangulation with quantitative data.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data obtained from the key informants and respondents, specifically those obtained through open-ended questions. The process involved in the content analysis were: transcription of the recorded data; returning the transcribed data to the participants, specifically the key informants for verification; coding process; creating categories with the like codes; and reading carefully and establishing the cases. On the other hand, data obtained through closed-ended questionnaires were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20, where descriptive results including frequencies and percentages were obtained to support the qualitative data.

Results

Awareness of Early Marriage and its Impact on Girls

Results on awareness of early marriage show that most respondents (73%) understand that early marriage is when a girl is married below the age of 18. Although they did not mention any regulatory framework, their explanation is based on the Sexual Offences Special Provision Act, adopted in 2017, which enlightens that the appropriate age of a girl to be married is 18 years old. On the other hand, 27% of the respondents understand that early marriage is when a girl gets married below the age of 15. Most of them explained that when a girl reaches puberty, she is ready for marriage. For example, one of the respondents said,

"To me, when a girl reaches the puberty level is a grown-up person already, and she is ready to get married, I also got married the year I finished standard seven" Respondent 83, Isenga Village, Ufulimwa Ward, June 2020.

Another respondent said,

"When a girl is grown up and is able to bear children is supposed to be in her husband's houses based on our traditional values" (Respondent 67, Isenga Village, Ufulumwa Ward, July 2020).

The statements from the respondents were also supported by the key informants who said;

“Most parents in this area do not see the importance of helping their little girl reach their dreams. What they tell them when they reach puberty is that ‘now you are a grown-up person, you need to get married’ is sad though... ..” (Key informant 2, Ufulumwa Ward, July 2020)

Table 1: Awareness of Early Marriage

Variables	Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Understanding of	at 18 years	73	73
Early Marriage at 15 years		27	27
	Total	100	100

Sources of Information on the Understanding of Early Marriage

Most of the respondents who fall in 73% in Table 1 said they learned about early marriage through mass media and seminars. Others said they learned about early marriage when they attended pregnancy cases handled at the ward level. Others said that they learned when they were at primary schools. For instance, one of the respondents said,

“I heard about early marriage when I escorted my neighbor to the Ward offices where a man impregnated a girl while she was in standard six. When the Ward Executive Officer explained, he mentioned that impregnating a girl under the age of 18 was a huge mistake that led someone to jail. Through that incident, I knew that a girl is not supposed to get marriage below the age of 18” (Respondent 26, Isenga Village, Ufulumwa Ward, June 2020).

In supporting this, some of the respondents and key informants reported the following:

“There are different seminars conducted in this area regarding the issue of early marriage and their impacts through organizations such as TGNP, Mass Medias, and community meetings conducted by community development officers. The same issue is also taught in primary and secondary schools that most communities have attended. Therefore, practicing early marriage by the majority in this community is not related to lack of knowledge but hardship related to the economic situation and relying on traditions” (Key informant 3, Ufulumwa Ward, July 2020).

Parents Understanding on Marriage Laws

Results show that very few respondents (26%) understood marriage laws where most of them mentioned the Law of Marriage Act of 1971, where a boy is eligible to marry at the age of 18 years old while a girl can marry at the age of 15 years old. The current laws that allow a girl to marry when she is 18 years old were not mentioned. For example, one of the respondents said,

"A fifteen-year-old girl is a grown-up person, and she can get married even the laws of our country allow that" (Respondent 39, Isenga Village, Ufulumwa Ward, June 2020).

Table 2: Parents' Understanding of the Marriage Laws

Variables (%)	Groups	Frequency	Percentage
Understanding on the law	Yes	26	26
	No	74	74
	Total	100	100
Sources of Information	Mass Medias	75	75
	Meetings	25	25
	Total	100	100

The remaining percentage (74%) of the respondents, as shown in Table 2, does not know any documented law which guides marriages. This was supported by most of the key informants in the study area; for example, one of the key informants said,

"Majority of parents do not know the laws guiding marriage. To them, a girl is ready for marriage when she reaches her puberty stage. However, we collaborate with Civil Society Organizations including Non-government organizations and Faith-Based Organizations to provide education on the National laws which allow marriage at eighteen years and above specifically at schools" (key informant 3, Isenga Village, Ufulumwa Ward, June 2020).

When responding on the issue of understanding laws guiding marriage issues, one respondent said,

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"There might be some government laws, but I do not know any" (Respondent 26, Isikizya village, Ufulumwa Ward, June 2020).

Another respondent said;

"I do not think if we need any law to guide us on the issue of marrying our children, if a child is ready for marriage, she has to go to start her family. What we need to do is to find a responsible man for her" (Respondent 32, Isikizya village, Ufulumwa Ward, June 2020).

Parents Perception in Ending Early Marriage

The parents' perception in ending the early marriage was related to the factors which hinder the process of fighting against early marriage for girls, including cultural upholding (avoiding the issues of fornication and giving birth at parents' home), poor economic condition, number of family members, early pregnancy and children's desire of having their own families.

Cultural Upholding

Most of the respondents explain that, based on their culture, it is a shame for a girl to give birth at her parent's home. When this happens, parents are being blamed for their failure to raise their children in a desirable manner. For instance, one of the parents from Isikizya village explains,

"Based on our culture, a girl is supposed to get married as soon as she reaches her puberty level because she can easily engage in a relationship with men and get pregnant at home. It will be seen as a loose parent when this happens, and it is a shame to the whole family." (Respondent 24, Isikizya village, Ufulumwa Ward, June 2020).

The information was also supported by the key informant from Ufulumwa Ward, who said,

Most of the parents in this area believe that they are already adults when their children finish standard seven. So if they keep on holding them at home, they will start having affairs with different people, so the only solution is to marry them out (Key informant 1, Ufulumwa Ward, June 2020).

Poor Economic Condition

Parents' perception of ending an early marriage is also related to the economic situation. Based on most of the respondents, ending an early marriage can make their life difficult economically

because they get money through bride price and economic support from the sons-in-law. One of the key informants reported,

“Majority of parents marry their children at the age of 13-14 years in order to get bride price which will boost their economic conditions as well as reducing the burden of taking care of a large family” (Key informant 2, Isikizya village, Ufulumwa ward, June 2020).

The information was also supported by one parent, who said,

“My family is too big to take care of so many children; when a girl has grown up, she has to get married and reduce the number of people. Besides, I am blessed with many girls, so I may be lucky that those who marry them can take us out of this poverty” (Respondent 21, Isikizya village, Ufulumwa Ward, June 2020).

Another informant said,

“Most of the people believe that when a girl is married to a man who is rich, then the whole family will automatically be out of poverty life, so when a girl is capable of giving birth can be married at any time...” (Key informant 9 Ufulumwa Ward, July 2020).

Children's Desire of Having Their Own Families

Some of the parents had perceived children's desire to be free from their parents through having their own families as the issue that hinders the process of ending an early marriage in their area. In elaborating this, one of the respondents said;

“Most of the discussions of our children when they meet is having a family. This is also portrayed when they play where others act as mothers and others like fathers with their children. So, when they reach the puberty level and finish standard seven, they end up in marriage. Others go to secondary schools, but they drop out and get married or because of pregnancy.” (Respondent 4, Ikenga village, Ufulumwa Ward, June 2020)

Early Pregnancy

Parents also perceive early pregnancy as a hindrance to ending the early marriage. According to them, most children do not even understand the owners of their pregnancies. At the last moment,

they are being forced to get married to whomever they mention to avoid shame within the family. When elaborating, one of the respondents said,

“These children nowadays are highly attracted to good things like chips, good clothes, shoes, and others. In this case, they are forced to engage in relationships to get money to buy items of daily use that they like and anything they want because parents do not provide them with everything they need. As a result, they end up getting unwanted pregnancies and other sexual diseases. Most parents force their children to go to people who impregnated them the moment they realize that their girls are pregnant” (Respondent 13, Isenga village, Ufulumwa ward, June 2020).

Discussions

Awareness of Early Marriage and its Impact on Girls

In assessing parents' awareness of early marriage, respondents were asked to respond on their understanding of early marriage to specify the age at which they think a girl is ready for marriage. Later, the respondents had to explain the answers they provided. Table 1 revealed that most respondents understand that early marriage is when a girl below eighteen (18) is given out for marriage. Those in this understanding are based on the different regulatory frameworks, including the Sexual Offences Special Provision Act, adopted in 2017, which enlightens the appropriate age of a girl to be married in 18 years. Because at this age, a girl is capable of taking care of herself and her family since she is mature and can address challenges that may arise in marriage. Also, marriage at the appropriate age (over 18) decreases the occurrence of some health problems to women, such as maternal mortality rate, since their pelvic muscles are ready to give birth. This statement is supported by Nour (2010), who reported that marriage before 18 years has many effects on girls' health, such as the increased risk for sexually transmitted diseases, death during childbirth, obstetric fistulas. Other studies reveal that getting married at a young age leads to psychological problems and suffering because a little girl or boy cannot make rational decisions regarding critical issues, including conflicts (Abdul *et al.*, 2018).

On the other hand, results in Table 1 show that few respondents understood that early marriage is when a girl is married below 15 years old. According to them, when a girl reaches puberty, she is a grown-up person and ready to marry. Some of them pointed out that they experienced the same as they got married when they finished standard seven. It implies that understanding a grown-up

or attaining a girl's maturity differs from community to community. Those who term early marriage as when a girl can be married before reaching the age of 18 rely on traditional beliefs towards a grown-up person, which is different in many cultures within and outside the country without considering the act's consequences. Different literature explores that a girl who is married at a younger age (under 18) is more likely to die during childbearing or birth than a woman married at the age of 20 years and above, experiencing complications of childbirth including obstetric fistula and hemorrhaging, contracting HIV and other sexual diseases (USAID, 2012; Jones *et al.*, 2014; Jones *et al.*, 2015). Based on the literature, it is important for different communities, especially parents, to understand the impact of getting married at a tender age and end it for the betterment of their girls' future.

The findings of this study also reveal different efforts made by different organizations, including the government, to make the community aware of the impact of girls' early marriage. One of the key informants mentioned TGNP, mass media, and some of the topics taught at the primary and secondary schools, which dealt with fighting girls' early marriage. Therefore, the key informants associated the practice of early marriage with the hardship of life and relying on traditions. The explanations of the key informant were also related to the clarifications that poor living conditions of people accelerate early marriage in the study area. The provided explanations are also supported by different studies, which show that most of the poorest girls in Tanzania are getting married before the age of 18, and most of them are second or third wives (Jouhki & Stark, 2017; Stark, 2017). This implies that there is still the presence of communities that terms their girl children as assets or ways of solving their economic hardship. This situation needs to be taken care of by the responsible organizations to ensure that children's rights are being taken into consideration and the girls are assisted to reach their future dreams. This is when the theory of Change on Child Marriage developed by Girls Not Brides needs to be applied where every individual, including parents, should have a role to play in ending girls' early marriage. It has to be understood that when family, specifically parents, fail to take care of the children, they create sufferings in their future. Based on this study, giving a hand in marriage to a little girl for any reason is not what a parent should do because it affects the future life of a child.

Parents Understanding on Marriage Laws

Parents' understanding of marriage laws was investigated by asking them whether they know the guidelines on marriage issues based on the established laws of the country. Results in Table 2 show that most respondents did not know the laws guiding marriage issues in Tanzania. Based on the Law of Marriage Act of 1971, a boy is eligible to marry at the age of 18, while a girl can get married at 15. However, this law was amended on 8 July 2016. The High Court of Tanzania ruled out Sections 13 and 17 of the Law of Marriage Act, where the minimum age of marriage for girls was changed to 18 years as those of boys. This Law of Marriage Amendment information was not in the respondents' minds as they were based on the Marriage Law of 1971, which allows a girl to be married at 15. For example, one of the respondents pointed out that the law allows a fifteen-year-old girl to get married as she is already a grown-up person. The statements from the respondents provide evidence in practice of old laws of 1971 that gives the room for parents to give a hand in marriage to the girls at their young age.

In the same line, the Marriage Act of 1971 also provides other restrictions that many parents violate when allowing and forcing the children to get married because of their economic situation. For example, a section in the Marriage Act of 1971 says, "*No marriage shall be contracted except with the consent, freely and voluntarily given, by each of the parties thereto*" (The Marriage Act, 1971). The violation of this restriction is proved in the research conducted by Abebe (2014), who found out that many girl children are forced to get married. The very reason for forced marriage is for the security of their families, specifically to get rid of the economic crisis. Based on the education system in Tanzania, a fifteen-year-old girl is supposed to be at an ordinary level in secondary school; therefore, giving a hand in marriage to a girl under eighteen years old is denying her right to education. In this case, there is a need to enforce the established sanctions for those violating the marriage laws and make sure that communities are informed on the laws and consequences that can result when the laws are being violated.

The findings of this study reveal that some of the parents do not consider the age of the girl child before giving her out for marriage. The key informant explained that some of the children were married the moment they reached their puberty level. This is even worse because some girls reach puberty at the age of nine. According to (Faqua and Rogol, 2013), a girl can reach puberty from 8 to 14 years old. Marrying a girl at this age is dangerous to her mental and physical health.

The ignorance of people is also linked to other laws. For example, the Local Customary Law (Declaration) order, GN279 of 1963, allows each ethnic group to follow and make decisions on marriage issues based on its customs and traditions. This clause is particularly relevant to early marriage since communities have the power to apply their own traditions without breaking statutory laws. The community has to understand the consequences of giving a hand in marriage to a girl at her tender age. It is vital to abide by the laws of marriage, which provide a reasonable age for boys and girls that is 18 years old. At this age, a girl can be expected to be mature to handle family issues, including bearing children.

Parents Perception in Ending Girls Early Marriage

Parent perception in ending girls' early marriage was associated with cultural upholding (avoiding the issues of fornication and giving birth at parents' home), poor economic condition, number of family members, the desire of having own families, and early pregnancy. These are among the factors that hold back the whole process of fighting against early marriage to different communities.

Cultural Upholding

Data revealed that different information on fighting against early marriages to girls had been provided to many communities through mass media and seminars. Besides the communities taught at primary and secondary levels, however, most parents are still acting based on what their culture (norms and values) direct them. In other words, ending an early marriage can be considered intransigence with their culture as it can lead the little girls to engage in fornication and give birth at their parents' home. This was observed during the discussion with the parents, who explained that they marry their little girls to prevent them from engaging in a relationship and getting pregnant as it is against their tradition. Giving birth at parents' homes is a shame, and the whole family is termed irresponsible. The study done by Wilda (2020) revealed community culture as a hindrance to ending girls' early marriage. It implies that ending girls' early marriage can be possible when the community is able to know the consequences of marrying girls at their tender ages. This is when the community learns to practice traditions that lead to positive results

and abandon those harmful practices, including girls' early marriage, resulting in physical and psychological effects.

Poor Economic Condition and Big Families

Poor economic conditions and a large number of family members have been related to how parents perceive the whole process of ending early marriage. Most of the respondents term their girls as the solutions to their dire economic situation and a way of reducing the number of family members. When a girl is married, the parents benefit from their sons-in-law. At the same time, early marriage is among the ways of reducing the number of dependents to take care of. Based on the respondents, if they fight against girls' early marriage, they will always remain with their economic hardship. The respondents' thinking is supported by the study done by UNICEF (2015), which reported that parents always feel that a young girl is an economic burden and therefore wish to marry their young daughters before they become an economic liability. Another study done by Abebe (2014) reveals that people are aware of the negative impacts of early marriage but continue to practice it because of various reasons, including security for the future. This shows that female children are taken as assets by other families. As a result, a child is forced to get married to anyone who can support the family. Marrying young girls limits them from being able to decide on what is right for their life as well as failing to defend themselves where they should be. It also shows that children are less or not being protected and supported because what is in the parent's mind is the situation they are facing, not what might happen to a child getting married at a young age. This shows the importance of informing the community on different livelihood activities based on their environment, improving their sources of income. Because of that, they will focus more on the importance of education to children rather than marrying them. The study shows the importance of informing the community on children's rights as stipulated in the Child Development Policy of 1996, which was revised in 2008. Among the mentioned children's rights are the right to education, the right to be protected, and the right to participate in decision-making. Doing so can bring the best insight into implementing the Marriage Act and Child Development Policy of 2008.

Early pregnancy

Early pregnancy is one of the factors perceived as a hindrance to the process of ending an early marriage by parents where lust was mentioned as a source of it. This was found when parents

pointed out that most girl children like good items in their day-to-day life like cloth, food (chips), shoes, handbags, and others that their parents can hardly afford to buy for them. This results in early pregnancies being changed into forced marriages where the girls are sent to the men who impregnate them. According to some of the parents, the girls themselves sometimes hinder the efforts of fighting against early marriage. Studies were conducted by WHO (2011), Hidayana *et al.* (2016), and Baatse *et al.* (2018) show that early pregnancy is the most cause of early marriages in many communities, specifically in developing countries. This is because girls are being forced to follow men who impregnated them because, to many African countries, having a child at home is taboo. The situation creates much confusion, especially for a girl when she falls into the hands of a man who had no intention of marrying her. In the end, a girl is mistreated, and sometimes they are married as second wives (Hidayana *et al.*, 2016). In this scenario, a parent celebrates that a child is married while a pregnant child is physically, mentally, and emotionally suffering in a man's house. The government and other organizations need to introduce forums within communities to educate children on issues of self-understanding and the effects of engaging in a pre-marital relationship at a tender age.

Children's Desire of Having Their Own Families

The research findings revealed that most of the children in the study area prefer to be free from their parents' bondage by starting their own homes at a young age. This tendency is accelerated by the way they are being raised. One respondent provided examples of phrases that pollute young girls' minds, such as '*you have grown up, you need to get married*' or '*I will find a good man for you.*' This implies that parents impact the actions of their children through the different words and comments they provide to them. Other respondents also added that having a family is among the issues discussed by children, especially those that have reached puberty. This is also portrayed when they play where others act as mothers and others like fathers with their children. In that situation, when a man approaches her for marriage, the girl gives in and ends up getting married or pregnant. Others go to secondary schools but drop out and get married or because of pregnancy. The study conducted by Biswas *et al.* (2018) revealed that fulfillment of romantic and erotic desire and the dream of forming own family by the adolescents hindering the efforts of fighting against girls' early marriage. This implies that serious measures, including impacting

positive thought teaching the girls on self-realization on their future basis, will enable them to meet their dreams.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

The study concludes that providing education on the impact of girls' early marriage on their physical and psychological being can be among ways of changing parents' perception in ending an early marriage, which is currently related to cultural upholding, poor economic condition, early pregnancy, and the girls' desire of having their own families at a tender age.

The study also concludes that empowering the economic conditions of communities can be among the ways of motivating parents to fight against girls' early marriage in the study area. This study also proves that parents have a significant role in ending an early marriage with the support of other organizations. Thus, ending an early marriage is a cooperation of different actors (the government, civil society organization, and families) as stipulated in the Theory of Change on Child Marriage developed by the organization called Girls Not Brides.

Lastly, mainstreaming and enforcing the marriage laws to all levels of the government and the community will be among the ways of enforcing the issue of ending girls' early marriage to communities that are still practicing it.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the government and other organizations, including CSOs, increase efforts to educate communities on the impact of early marriage and enforce the established laws, specifically those dealing with marriage issues. Health specialists should be included in providing scientific impacts of early marriage to children and specify the appropriate age where a girl is legally and medically matured to take marriage responsibilities, including childbearing and enduring difficulties resulting from marriages. This should be implemented to the population which is yet to understand the impact of forcing their children into early marriages.

There is also a need for the community to be trained on entrepreneurial activities using the available resources within communities to enable them to improve their livelihood. This can be done through training and workshops by CSOs and the government. Doing so can help parents be able to take their children to school and solve other economic problems. It has to be

understood that the more time spent at school, the more the increase of an individual's maturity and independent level. Therefore, taking children to school will help them reach the appropriate age of taking family responsibilities.

Lastly, the government should make sure that the regulatory frameworks, including policies and Acts, rules and regulations on marriage prepared within different organs, are mainstreamed to the community through government officials available at the lower levels of the government (District Councils and Municipalities, Wards and Village).

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