

Child Marriage in
Kabul City, Afghanistan

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Abstract

Aim: The objective of this study was to investigate girls' early marriage and how it is experienced by those who have been exposed to it. The study was conducted in Kabul province, Afghanistan.

Method: The data collection was carried out with a questionnaire which was filled in by a sample of 180 women exposed to early marriage (married before 18 years of age).

Results: The respondents agreed upon that early marriage was a human rights violation, and the majority of them disapproved of the practice. Most of them had had unwanted pregnancies. However, half of them were still satisfied with their marriage, and they did not feel that early marriage always leads to problems with the husband or his parents. The majority of them felt supported by their family.

Conclusion: Since poverty is a background reason for early marriage, it is recommended that efforts should be made in Afghanistan to make it easier for young girls, either wedded or non-wedded, to get education and job training, and access to monetary assets. Attitudinal changes are needed, and mass media should be utilized for this purpose.

Key words: Child marriage, girls' early marriage, human rights violation, Kabul, Afghanistan

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1, Introduction

1.1 Background

Marriage is traditionally viewed as a joyful occasion and also as an achievement in grown-up life. Tragically, the act of early marriage gives no reason for festivity. Rather, a marriage enforced upon a child means that a young woman's childhood is abruptly interrupted and her principal rights are endangered (Lefevre, Quiroga, & Murphy, 2004; UNICEF, 2001). Young women are bereaved of their childhood and take upon themselves responsibilities for which they are neither mentally nor physically prepared. They have limited options to choose whether to marry or not, and with whom. Some are forced against their will into marriage, while others are too young to be able to make an educated choice. Untimely marriage denies them of the possibility for self-awareness, and, additionally, their rights to full wellbeing and prosperity, education, and support in life.

Marriage is a universally practiced arrangement which is carried out through particular cultural and traditional ceremonies of a society. The choice of a marriage partner is one of the most serious decisions faced by people. In contemporary western societies, this decision usually follows a period of learning during which people participate in informal more or less intimate partner relationships. Most societies have stipulated a youngest age for a girl to be lawfully wed, while in some cases, the actual age is considered of less importance than the physiological readiness for pregnancy. The Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI, 2008) reports that marriages in traditional societies often begin at an age below the internationally suggested lower age limit, i.e. when one of the parties is less than 18 years old, which in most societies is legally defined as an early marriage. The custom of early marriage is common especially in developing countries with a rural economy, with devastating impacts on women and families as a consequence (Locoh, 2016).

This practice is common in societies in the Middle East, South Asia, Saharan Africa, West Africa, and East Africa (Stone, 2009; UNDESA, 2000). Child marriage is particularly common in South Asia (Nawal, 2015). Marriage in these societies follows traditional patterns of

customary nature, which often impose force on the members which are to be married; in extreme cases, kidnapping of the bride occurs (UNICEF, 1998).

In addition to the negative effect on the girls, early marriage has negative outcomes also for the victim's own children and extended family, and society at large. UNICEF (2013) states that it is not just the girls that suffer due to early marriage, but also the population in general. Medical service expenses and lost chances of human advancement are only a few of the weights that society shoulders as a result of adolescent pregnancies. Early marriage undermines worldwide endeavors to battle against neediness in developing nations. Group (2014) clarifies that the custom of child marriage makes it difficult for families to escape poverty, and it undermines endeavors to fight destitution, HIV/AIDS, and other obstacles for advancement.

Children are reliant upon guardians and others for growing up. Marriage, as a social practice, is a religious and customary ceremony, which mirrors the reasoning, character, and traditions of the society in which it exists. All cultures have standards and norms regarding the lower age limit for young women to marry, considering that they are physiologically mature enough for childbearing. In some cases, even children who have not reached puberty are married. Marriage regularly takes place at ages considerably younger than the lawfully endorsed youngest age. Worldwide, early marriage is defined as the marriage of children and young people underneath the age of eighteen (Clark, 2015).

Girls are suffering disproportionately due to child marriage. The younger the children, the more prominent are the risks that marriage postures to their health and prosperity. Seventeen percent of girls in the least developed nations are married by their fifteenth birthday, and they subsequently will have to endure a number of intense negative physical and mental effects as a consequence (Locoh, 2016). The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of girls' early marriage on their personal and family life, in Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan.

1.2 Aim

Early marriage contributes to a series of negative consequences both for young girls and the society in which they live. It is a violation of human rights in general, and of the girl's rights in particular. For both girls and boys, early marriage has profound physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional impacts, such as cutting off educational and employment opportunities and chances of personal growth. The major overall aim of this research is to gain an understanding of the widespread problem of girls' early marriage in Kabul. The study aims at identifying reasons behind its perpetuation, and how it affects the victimized girls' wellbeing, and how it constitutes a violation of their human rights.

1.3 Marriage

Marriage is a joining between two persons, most commonly a man and a woman (in many countries of today, homosexual marriages are also legally accepted), with one practical consequence being that the children born by the woman as a result of the sexual union between the two will be accepted as genuine offspring of the two parties. Marriage is a significant establishment both for the individual and the society. For the individual, it is a huge and paramount occasion in one's life cycle, and for the family, it is also a significant happening. Marriage is often referred to as a *rite de passage* or rite of passage (van Genneep, 1909/2004), a transitional rite, which denotes the partition from one's family of origin and the creation of a new family unit. In many cultures, especially in rural areas in developmental countries, it may also mean, for the woman, a future life in the husband's extended family (Sharon, 2015).

In the prehistoric setting, the purpose of marriage was procreation, and without reproduction there was no marriage. In a number of societies, marriages are orchestrated (i.e. arranged), and negotiations are conducted by close family members, usually the parents, or by go-betweens. The date when the marriage will begin is also decided upon when the bride and/or the bridegroom still are children. The western idea of marriage is different in that the two individuals choose their partner themselves, and they decide themselves when they should get married. In western society, marriage is viewed as a partnership between two individuals, and reproduction need not

necessarily result from the association. In developing countries, it is often viewed as an agreement between two families, and reproduction is more emphasised (Rao, 2014).

1.4 Girls' Early Marriage

The expression "early marriage" (or "child marriage") alludes to formal marriages when at least one of the partners is under the age of 18 (Forum on marriage and the rights of ladies and girls, 2001; UNICEF, 2005). UNIFPA (2006) defines child marriage as "any marriage completed beneath the age of 18 years, before the young lady is physically, physiologically, and mentally prepared to bear the obligations of marriage and childbearing." Child marriage means that at least one of the two parties is under-aged, and the formal ceremonial and legal arrangements will be accomplished under traditional, usually religious, laws.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the most far reaching worldwide bill of rights for women, expresses that any agreement to be wedded, or marriage of a child, ought not to have any legitimate status. The Convention states further in its General Recommendation 21 (Article 16(2)) that the age for marriage for both male and female ought to be a minimum of 18 years, the age when "they have accomplished full development and ability to act". Most early marriages are masterminded and dependent on the assent of guardians, and neglect to guarantee the best advantages of the child in question. Early marriages usually incorporate components of power (Uvuza, 2013).

However, the proposal of a universal agreement of age of 18 as the lower limit for a suitable age to get married has not gone undebated. Some authors suggest that instead of deciding upon a general age at which girls and young men ought not to be wed, the spotlight should be put rather on countering the undesirable impacts of early marriage. According to these authors, a general age limit for marriage is not desirable, since social orders and financial circumstances to some extent need to be considered (Shireen, 2014).

Child marriage is common in South Asia, where 50-70% of girls marry before the age of 18. Although both women and men are its victims, women are more often affected. Early marriage shortens their childhood and bereave them of their physical and mental wellbeing, and of their

human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that people must get married with full consent and at a legitimate age. According to Nour (2009), more than 60 million women around the world are every year married when they are below 18 years of age, and of these, 31 million are from South Asia.

In addition, studies show that child marriage is common in impoverished areas with low health facilities (Raj, 2010). In 2007, 50% of Pakistani women between the ages of 20 and 24 reported that they had married before the age of 18, and that they were experiencing spousal violence and controlling behavior from the part of their husbands (Muhammad, 2011).

The principle factor that drives this negative habit is the protection of customs. Acknowledged as a normal practice, child marriage is in these societies not properly investigated and scrutinised. All in all, it is viewed as a standard procedure with the purpose to keep up family ties and networks; at the same time, child marriage is considered good as a preventive measure, since it makes it more difficult for the individual youth to indulge in romantic or immoral activities, thereby running the risk of being sentenced to social shunning. Thus, it helps to upkeep the family honour.

In poor families, parents or guardians have no economic assets for their girls' tutoring; therefore, they need to wed their little girls as early as possible, so they themselves can be liberated from the duty of educating their child. Parents do not see their daughters' future anywhere else aside from sending them off to the bridegroom's home. Accordingly, one of the elements that add to the practice of child marriages is neediness. A poor family may consider the little girl as a financial weight that must be dispensed of through marriage at a young age. Furthermore, it is financially profitable to wed little girls at a young age, since the expense of marriage (dowry) then is lower.

Of the various social factors that support child marriage, the concept of "respect" (*izzat*), or honour, is by all accounts the most significant one. There is strong pressure on guardians to wed their little girls at an early age in order to diminish the danger of shame related to having sex

without marriage. In this way, child marriage is an advantageous method to dispose of the burden of security for the daughter and transfer the obligation of protecting the girl's honour to the bridegroom's family. It is commonly thought that child marriage is a powerful method for the prevention of the transgression of sexual conduct norms among youngsters, especially young ladies (Locoh, 2016).

Another reason for child marriages is to sustain relationships between families for reasons of influence, economy, or security. This type of marriage is referred to as *wattasatta* (trade marriage), which serves to keep up the level of influence between families by guaranteeing that their girls are traded in marriage. The trade includes that at least the bride, but sometimes also the bridegroom, is under-aged. These marriages are for the most part sorted out by guardians or senior individuals from the families. Youngsters, especially girls, are not counseled with respect to their opinion about the marriage. Truth be told, it is considered "despicable" to take into account the feelings of a lady with respect to her marriage.

Still another explanation for the custom of child marriage in South Asian society, in line with modern gender theory, is that it fortifies male domination and reduces the possibilities for young women to take control of their own life. The duty of a young lady in these societies is determined by social standards and social desires for her to be in turn a little girl, a sister, a spouse, and a mother. Marriage gives women little status in families and society. Keeping control over young women's sexuality is a typical motivation to wed them at an early age. A young lady's sexuality is seen as her husband's property once she is engaged to be married. The control of a young lady's sexuality is fundamental to ensure the respect and honour of her father, her family, and her village.

Early marriage has a relationship with either a lack of or a low level of education, particularly for females. Guardians are not willing to put resources into the instruction of a little girl, since young ladies will leave their parental home at the time of marriage and, along these lines, any interest in their education is viewed as a waste. After marriage, a young woman's prospects for education are also hopeless, due to social norms making the life of a wife incompatible with receiving education or job training. Early marriage constrains the advancement of a young lady's

capacities, assets, information, social help, and versatility, which restricts her haggling power with her better half and her in-laws. This powerlessness deems young wives to the likelihood of abuse, savagery, loneliness, and relinquishment. The absence of education and training among the guardians, due to restricted financial resources, fortifies the pattern. The ignorance of the parents decreases the chances that the young wives will get any kind of formal education or job instruction at all. Young ladies are frequently kept out of school because no esteem is given to their training. Thus, child marriages tend to become the most "alluring" answer for young ladies, who will have to accept household obligations, with no working career in sight. Of those young ladies who have had the chance to attend school, the majority of them drop out before the eighth grade. When all is said and done, guardians do not see any prospects in putting resources into young ladies' training, since they will have to accept the obligations of marriage anyway.

It cannot be ruled out that sex segregation is another factor that prompts child marriages. Afghanistan is a male centered culture, in which ladies for the most part have household obligations to perform. In child marriages, young ladies are restricted to homes that compel them to surrender their instruction and any chances of an individual career outside of the home. Subsequently, ladies are subject to their male accomplices and keep on enduring that for the rest of their lives. Sadiwa et al. (2013) stated that "sexual orientation segregation is at the foundation of unsafe customary practices against young men and young ladies, and these practices are sustained to keep up the prevailing position of men and young men over ladies and young ladies in a male centric culture."

Destitution is one of the main considerations supporting early marriage. Where destitution is existing, a young lady might be viewed as a financial weight, and one less little girl is one less mouth to feed (Forum on marriage and the rights of ladies and girls, 2001; UNICEF 2001). Guardians prefer to the marry their girls while they are still young, with the expectation that the marriage will profit them both monetarily and socially, and also mitigate money-related weights on the family. Marriage to a considerable older and financially more established man is normal practice in certain societies. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the bride's family may get dairy cattle from the husband's family as dowry, while in South Asia, the bride's family pays dowry to the husband's family (UNICEF 2001). The younger the girl child is, the smaller is the dowry to pay.

1.5 Girls' Early Marriage and Family Life

In cultures where girls' early marriage is common, there is a considerable social pressure on families to adjust to the practice. Inability to conform to the norm may result in scorn, negative comments and family disgrace. Prevailing neighborhood standards about the most suitable age for marriage, the craving for agreeable spouses, the consideration of family networks, and other standard prerequisites are all cherished. Child marriage is legitimised within male centric societies, as a guarantee that the marriage transfers the father' responsibilities to take care of, educate, and secure the honour of his daughter to her future companion. Furthermore, the marriage, or pre-wedding assurance of marriage of under-aged children, is in parts of Africa and South Asia esteemed as a method for uniting families and establishing relations between them, for the purpose of taking care of business, land, or other property, notwithstanding for settling debate between families (UNIFPA, 2006).

Young girls who are married will undoubtedly be constrained into having sex with their spouses, who generally are considerably older and more established. This will have serious negative wellbeing outcomes, as the young lady is not mentally or physically developed to be able to handle this. Early marriage is also related with early pregnancy. Newly wedded girls are under colossal strain to demonstrate their fruitfulness in the first year of marriage. Girls who get early married unavoidably also will have children of their own early, and they are likely to have numerous children, in light of the fact that their insights into contraception are poor, and if they have any, their possibilities to buy or receive contraceptive pills or any other means of prevention are still frail.

Some desperate girls who have been constrained into marriage attempt to flee or take different roads to leave their spouses; others, again, are relinquished by their husbands. In any case, these girls are typically left with the duty of bringing up their children alone without their spouse and either family's economic help, making them bound to a life in destitution. Even if they stay married, the spouses are often considerably older than their wives, and therefore might die when the wife is still young. Generally, girls are not permitted to remarry, or they are passed onto their dead spouses' siblings. To make things even worse, the young lady's own family is not likely to

take her back once she has been bereaved of her husband. In societies that license polygamy, the young wife might also have to consider the existence of senior co-wives. By and large, the senior spouses treat the more youthful wife with harshness and hatred (Marsha, 2016).

Singh (2017) points out that since young ladies often are married to men who are older than themselves, the age contrast will in general fortify the weakness of the young wife, who is consequently at more serious danger of maltreatment and less inclined to advocate for herself. Newly wedded young girls are likely to be beaten and maltreated. They are often vulnerable to abusive behavior at home. A study in Egypt found that 29% of wedded teenagers were beaten by their life partners and others. Of these, 41% were beaten when they were pregnant (Singh, 2017).

The World Health Organization evaluates that the risk of death following pregnancy is twice as high for ladies in the age range of 15 and 19 years than for those between the ages of 20 and 24. The death rate is up to multiple times higher for young mothers in the age range of 10 and 14 than for those of around twenty years of age. Pregnant young girls face unquestionably more medical issues than more mature pregnant women, especially as young girls often get less pre-birth care. Teenage girls are unquestionably more vulnerable to pregnancy complications than adult women. They are similarly more in danger of hunger, hypertension connected to pregnancy, and eclampsia than women who are over 20 years of age (UNFPA, 2012).

The fear of the HIV disease has made men in some African nations to look for youthful virgins and therefore uninfected accomplices. Instead, girls who marry at a young age are at high danger of contracting sexually transmitted maladies such as HIV/AIDS. Youthfully wedded girls are even at higher hazard in light of the fact that their more experienced spouses may be contaminated by past sexual connections. Besides, the age difference between the young lady and her spouse, and her lack of personal income, make it practically unimaginable for the young lady to arrange safe sex or request it. Early marriage more often than not implies that young ladies enter marriage without sufficient knowledge about basic sex, contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy (World Health Organization, 2015).

1.6 Early Marriage as a Violation of Girls' Human Rights

Birth, marriage and death are the standard triad of key occasions in a great many people's lives. Yet, just one of them, marriage, involves decision. However, numerous girls, and fewer, but still many young men, enter marriage with no entitlement to choose. Some are constrained into marriage at an early age. Others are simply just too young to even consider making an educated choice about their marriage. The right to a free choice of one's marriage partner is explicitly expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and in numerous other writings about human rights. Child marriage is a clear violation of human rights (UNICEF, 2001).

While it is imperative to think about early marriage from a mental and physical health point of view, a human rights approach offers another type of examination of the issues. A human rights approach starts from the supposition that the individual rights of the women in question and the rights of the general public are inseparably connected - they cannot be isolated from one another. As the examination of causes and effects of early marriage show, the general public cannot flourish if the interests of women and girls are disregarded. In addition, women and girls are rights bearers themselves, they are qualified for a similar dimension of regard and concern and right to fulfil their potential as men and boys (Le Fevre, 2012).

A human rights approach necessitates that issues which otherwise may have been viewed as private family concerns, such as marriage, are understood and treated as open issues. It demands that society must guarantee that the interests of women and girls are not treated as "family matters". In this manner, young women's destiny is not only the obligation of her father, mother, or spouse, but it should be viewed as a major concern for any culture or society, striving to maximize the potential of every one of its individuals, women and men alike, in a non-oppressive manner (UNICEF, 2013).

1.7 Recognition of Girls' Rights

Awareness of the essential human rights of young women is the initial phase in the uprooting of the practice of early marriage and its negative effects. The rights of women within the marriage

and the (extended) family are among the main human rights of women unequivocally agreed upon according to worldwide law. Albeit numerous nations have set up laws forbidding marriage before the age of 18, these laws often are not upheld.

The UN Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) held in Beijing in 1995 conveyed further visibility to the issues related to the rights of women throughout the world, including early marriage of immature girls. The FWCW Platform for Action for the Girl mentions steps that need to be taken, including the formation of policies and projects to help families in supporting women, in instructing and helping them to receive and sustain jobs, with the explicit purpose to the end intra-family victimization of young women. Be as it may, even milestone international meetings are insufficient: much work is additionally required to continue support endeavors for the rights of juvenile girls, and to transform supportive attitudes into compelling projects (ICRW, 2013).

2. Method

2.1 Nature of the Study

The study is quantitative in nature as the data were collected with a questionnaire. The main goal of the study was to investigate girls' early marriages in Kabul city of Afghanistan. The study was cross-sectional, and the data were gathered in a period of two (2) weeks.

2.2 Sample

The sample consisted of 180 married women, all from locations in Kabul city in Afghanistan. The data were collected through a purposive sampling technique, which is a non-probability sampling technique. The aim was to target only women who had been exposed to early marriage

themselves. The age distribution is presented in Table 1. Almost eighty percent of the women were below 45 years of age, and more than half of them were 15–30 years of age.

Table 1.
The Age Distribution of the Respondents (N = 180)

15–30 years	100	55.6 %
31–45 years	43	23.9 %
46–60 years	15....	15.0 %
> 60 years	10	5.6 %

2.3 Instrument

The questionnaire consisted, besides demographic information, of questions pertaining to the central issue of the study, with closed response alternatives on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” = 1, to “strongly agree” = 5. The seventeen items of the questionnaire were, based on their content, grouped together into three subscales, labelled (1) “Girl’s Early Marriage, (2) [Impact on] “Family Life”, and (3) [Girl’s Early Marriage as a] “Human Rights Violation”. The formulation of the individual items, and the Cronbach’s α -scores of internal consistency (reliability) of the subscales, are presented in Table 2. The reliability scores were all satisfactory.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the principles concerning human research ethics of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013), as well as the guidelines for the responsible conduct of research of The Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2012). The data are stored according to the regulations of the European Union. Participation was voluntary without any form of economic or other incentive; all participants were adults, and the research was conducted with informed consent, strict anonymity, and confidentiality.

Table 2

The Items and Subscales of the Study. Cronbach's α -scores are Presented as Measures of Reliability of the Subscales

Girls' Early Marriage (6 items, $\alpha = .75$)

- Do you accept arranged marriages at a young age?
- Do you think people can live happily even if they have married early?
- Were you forced to get married by your family?
- Do you have any knowledge about the impact of early marriages?
- Do you get of support from your family?
- Are you overall satisfied with your early marriage?

Family Life (6 items, $\alpha = .74$)

- Does a girl's early marriage lead to an unhappy family life?
- Have you had any physical problem due to your early marriage?
- Do girls' early marriages lead to premature maternal deaths?
- Can you easily cope with your husband's parents?
- Do you enjoy your sexual life?
- Have you had unwanted pregnancies?

Human Rights Violation (5 items, $\alpha = .72$)

- Do you think girls' early marriage should be legal?
 - Is abuse is always present in girls' early marriages?
 - Do girls' early marriages directly threaten their health and well-being?
 - Do girls' early marriages lead to fights with their husbands?
 - Is the early marriage of girls a human rights violation?
-

3. Results

3.1 Analyses of Single Items

In this section, the respondents' answers to the single items are presented (see Figures 1 – 16).

Comments are presented in the figure texts.

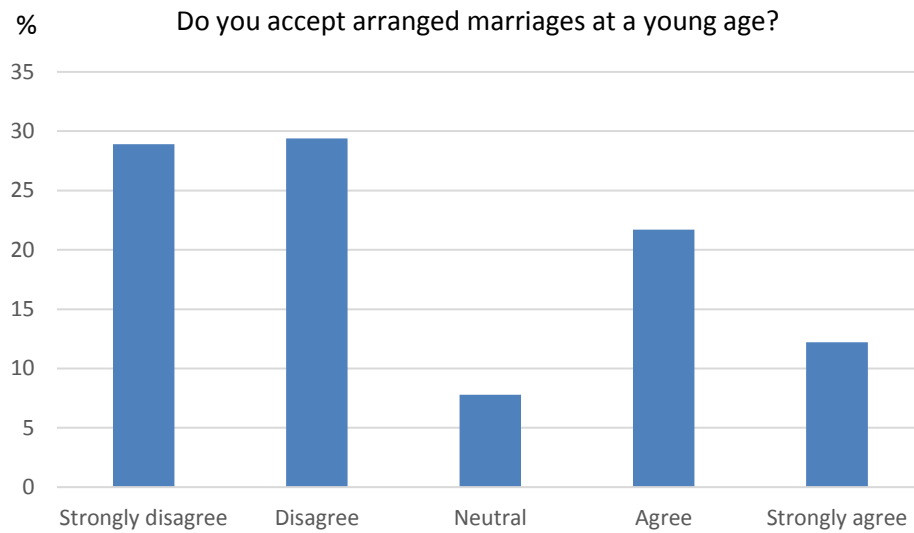


Figure 1. The responses to the question revealed that the respondents in general tended to disagree, i.e. they did not approve of child marriages.

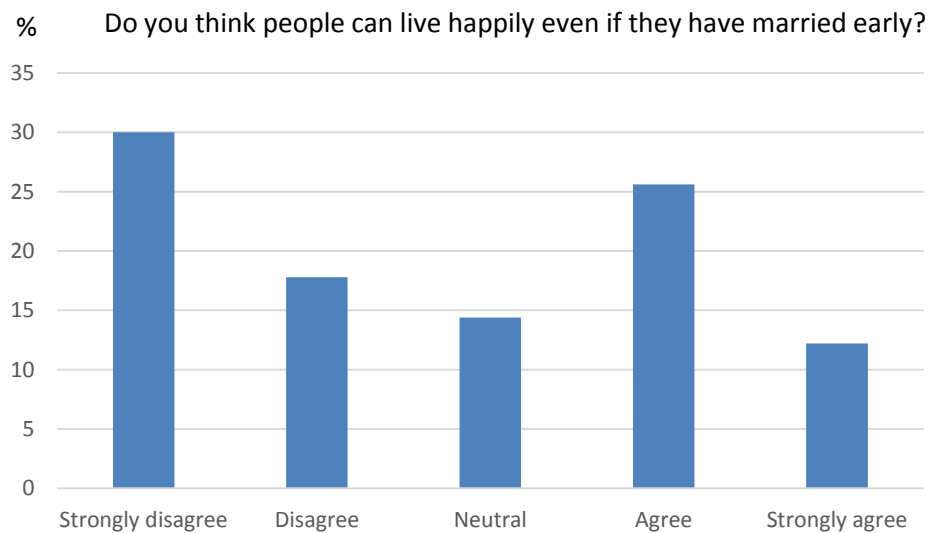


Figure 2. The responses to the question revealed that the respondents were quite divided and somewhat equally often disagreed and agreed with the statement, with the disagreement being slightly higher.

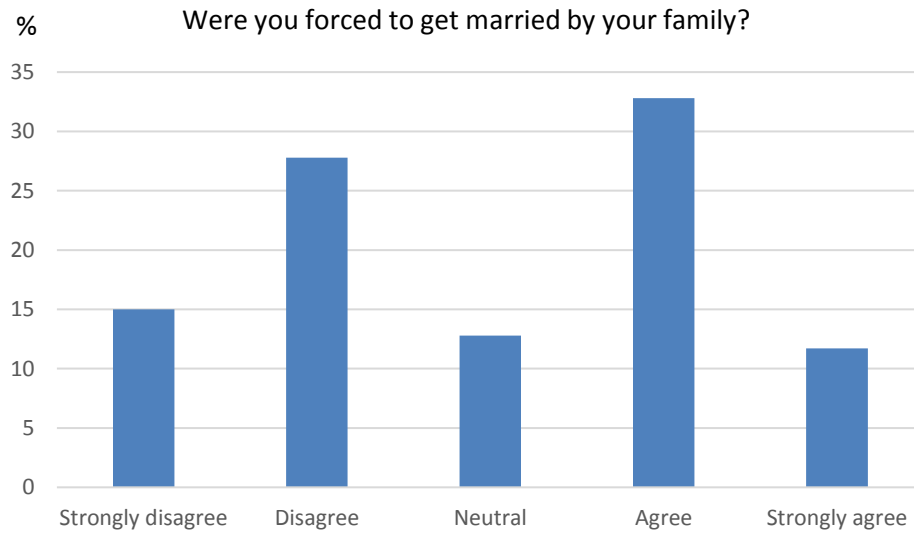


Figure 3. The responses to the question revealed that the respondents were quite divided. Although they all had been exposed to early marriage, in roughly half of the cases, they still did not consider it to have been against their will.

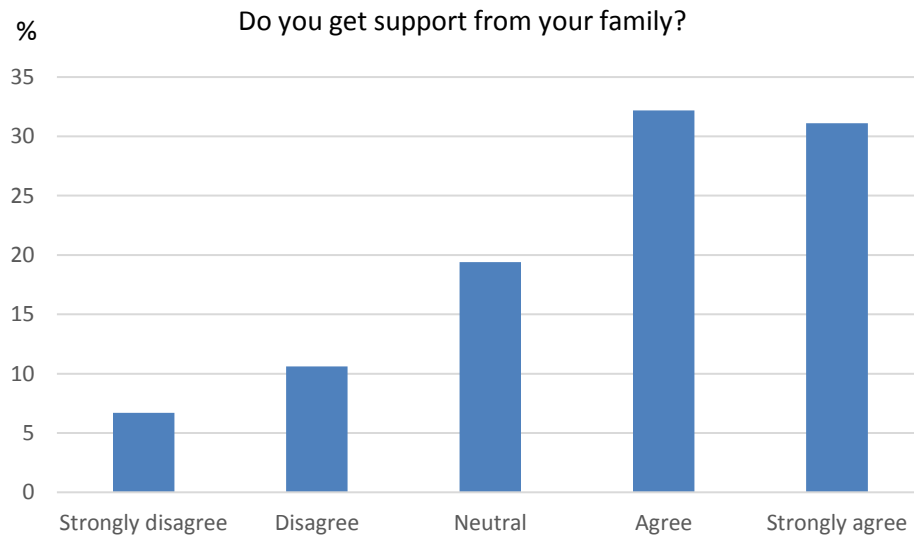


Figure 4. A clear majority of the respondents opined that they did get support from their family.

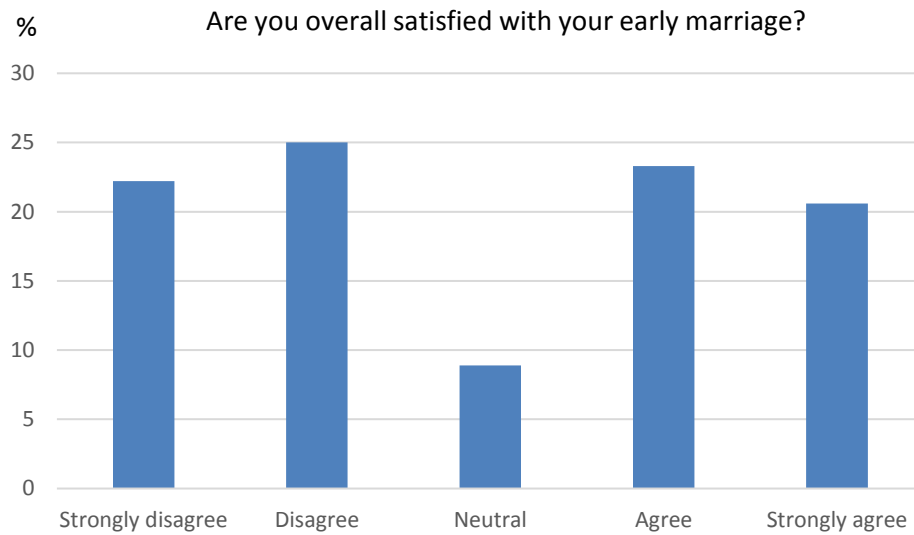


Figure 5. The respondents are clearly quite divided: half of them appear satisfied, while the other half did not.

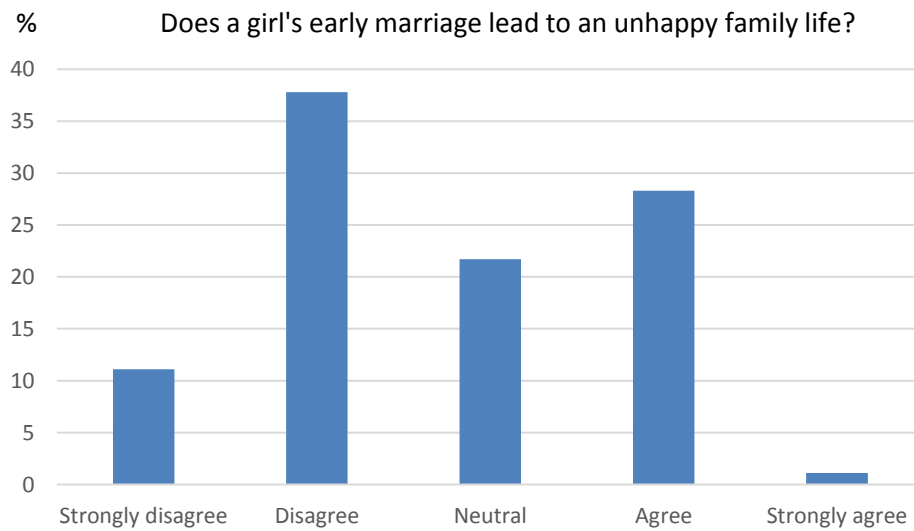


Figure 6. The majority of the respondents tended to disagree, i.e. they opined that early marriage did not necessarily lead to an unhappy family life.

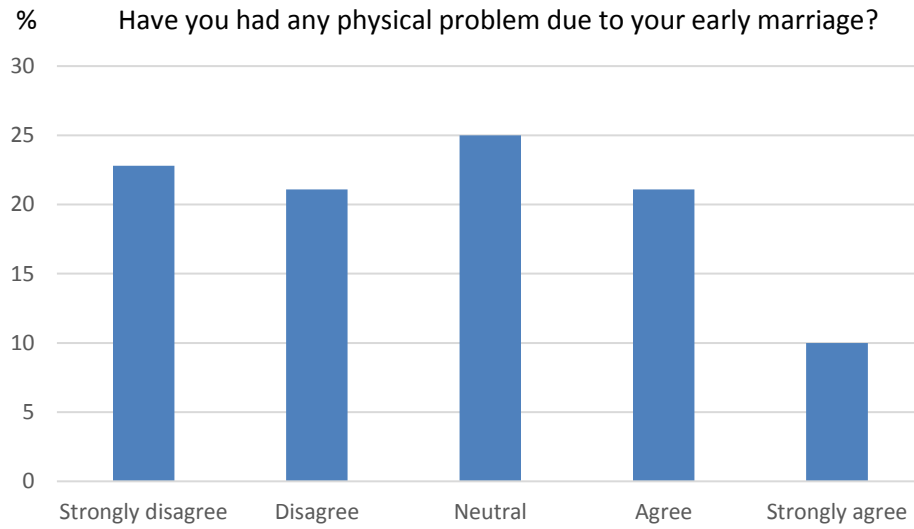


Figure 7. Slightly more of the respondents were of the opinion that they had not had any physical problems as a consequence of their early marriage.

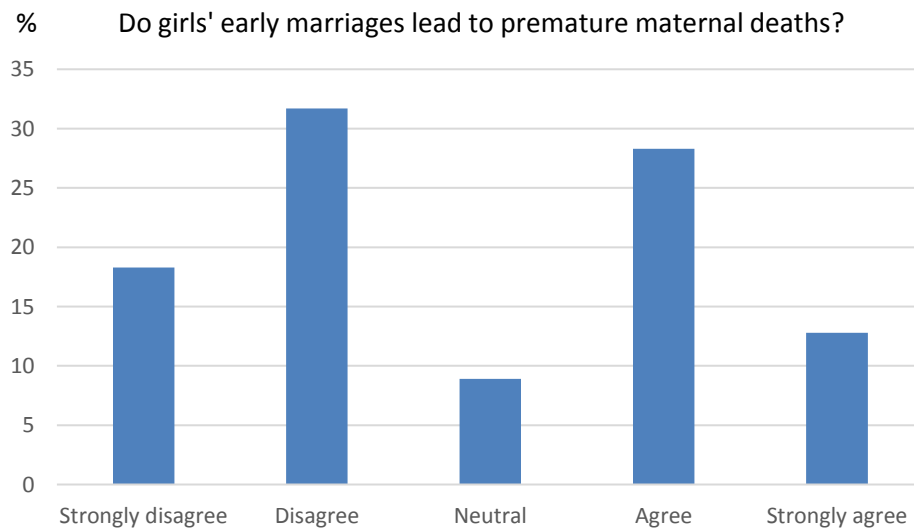


Figure 8. The respondents were quite divided, with slightly more disagreement than agreement with this statement.

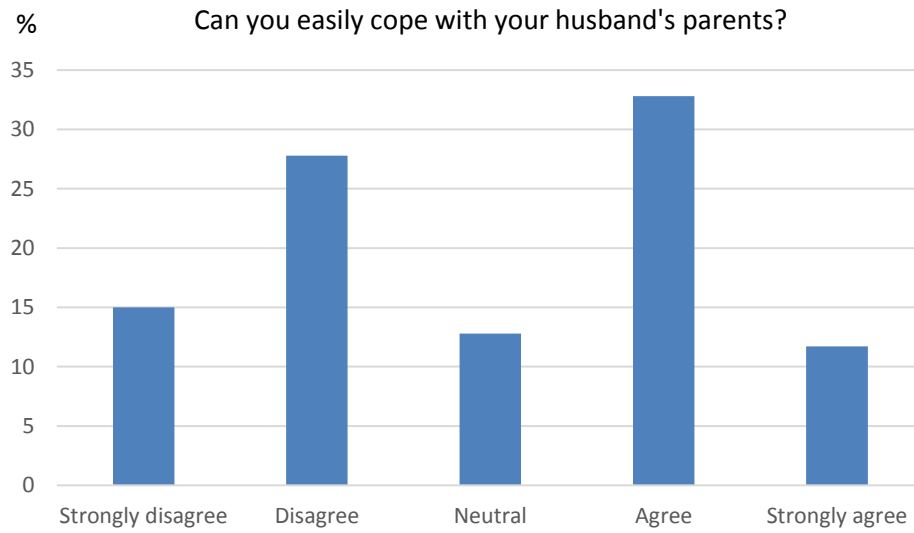


Figure 9. Again, the respondents appeared quite divided, with equally much agreement and disagreement; i.e., equally often did they feel that they easily could cope with their husband's parents as they did not feel so.

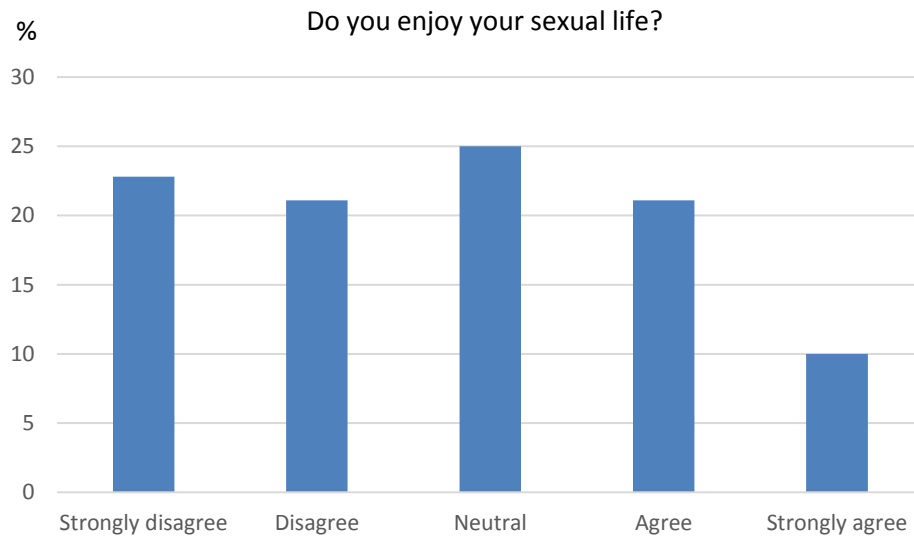


Figure 10. A slight majority of the respondents did not agree with this statement, i.e. they did not find their sexual life as a source of enjoyment.

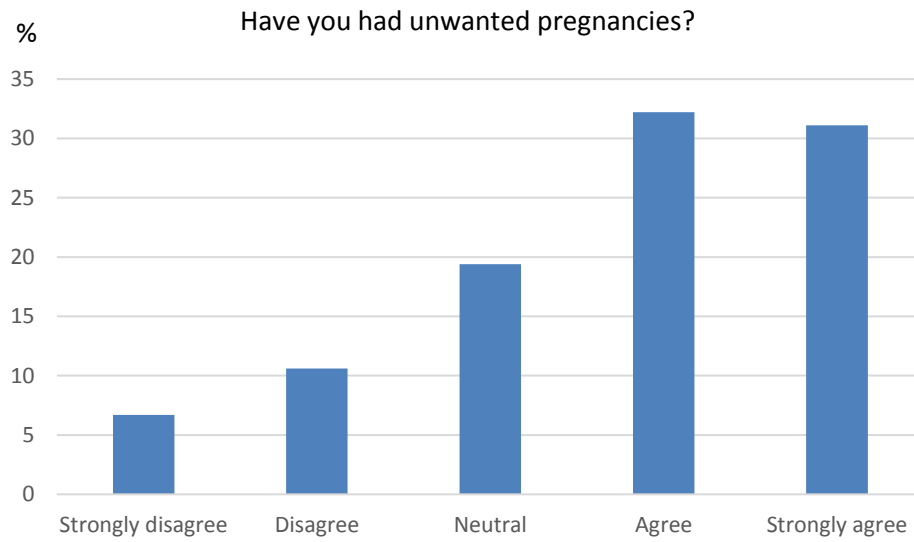


Figure 11. A clear majority of the respondents agreed, i.e. most of them had had unwanted pregnancies.

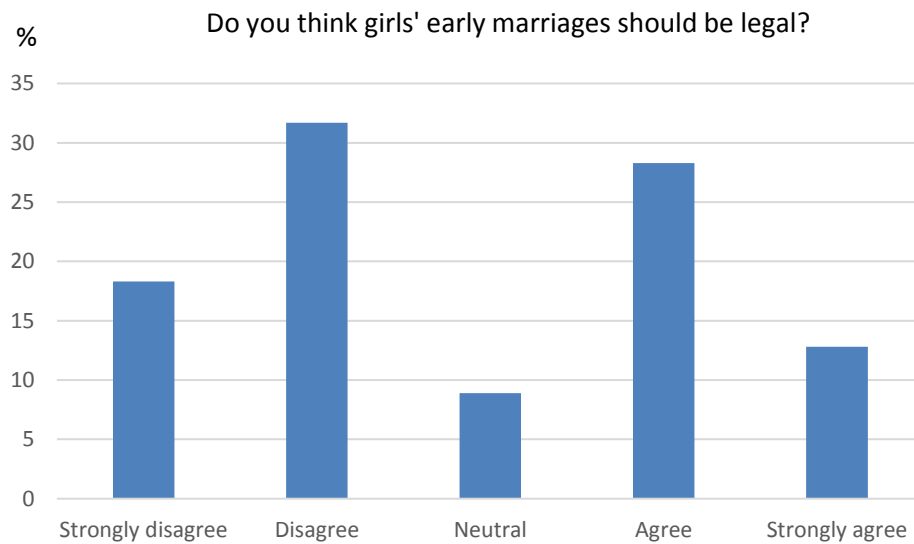


Figure 12. A slight majority of the respondents disagreed, i.e. they felt that early marriages should not be legal.

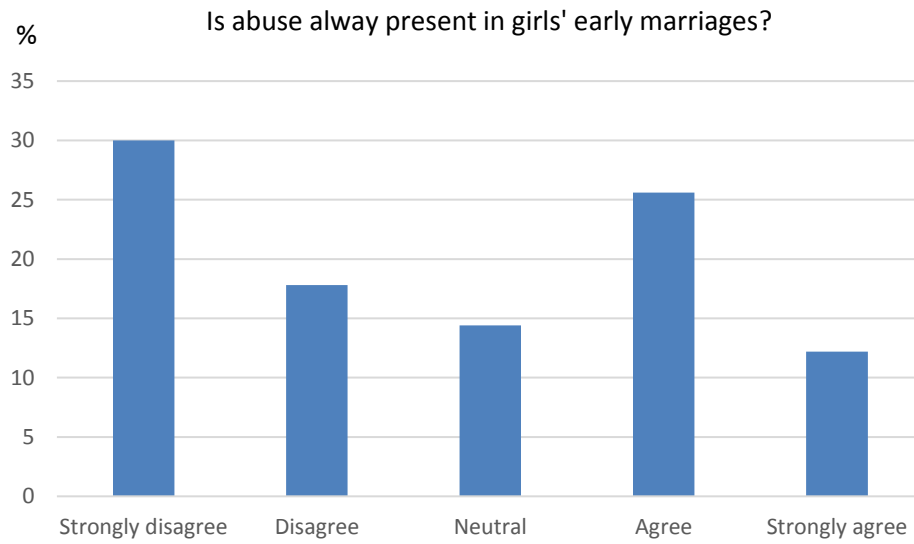


Figure 13. There was slightly more disagreement than agreement with this question, i.e. a slight majority opined that abuse does not necessarily have to be present in early marriages.

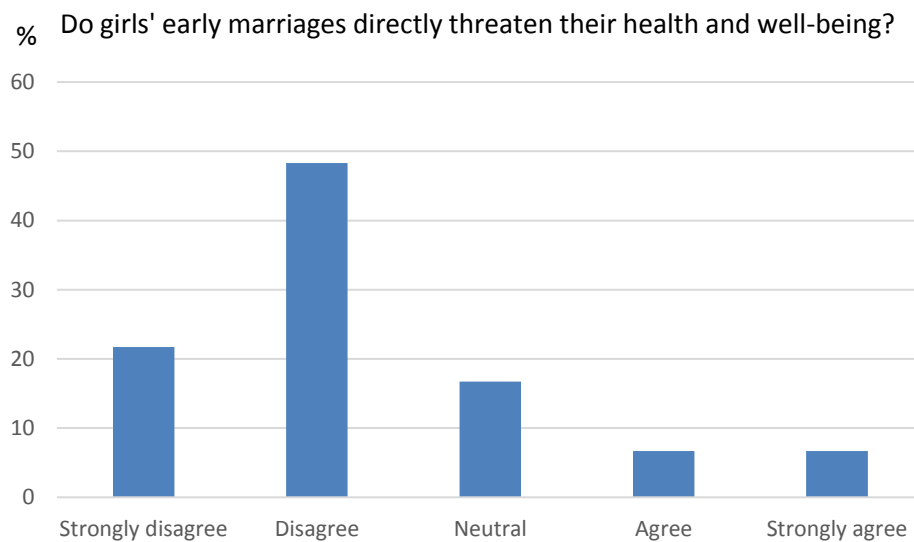


Figure 14. A very clear majority of the respondents did not see early marriages as a threat to their health and well-being.

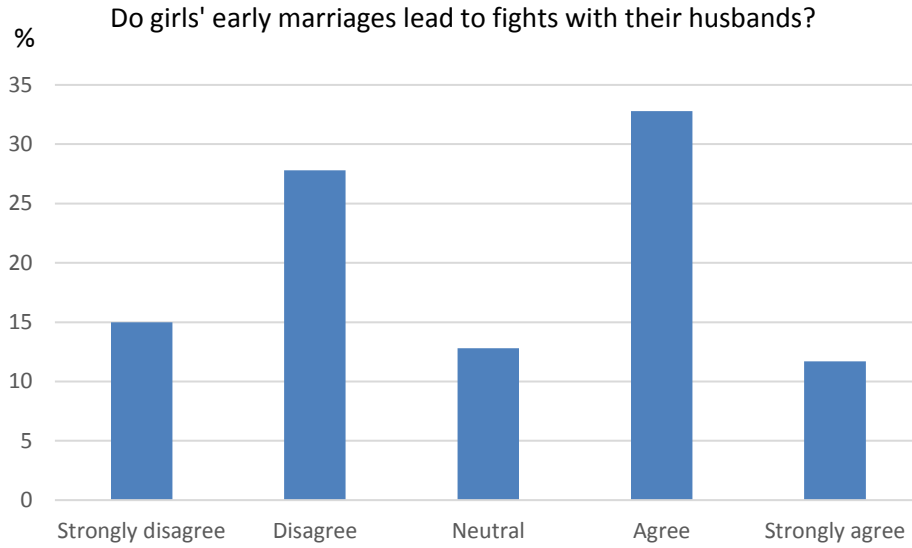


Figure 15. The respondents were divided in their responses to this question. Half of them felt that early marriages lead to fights with their husbands, while the other half did not.

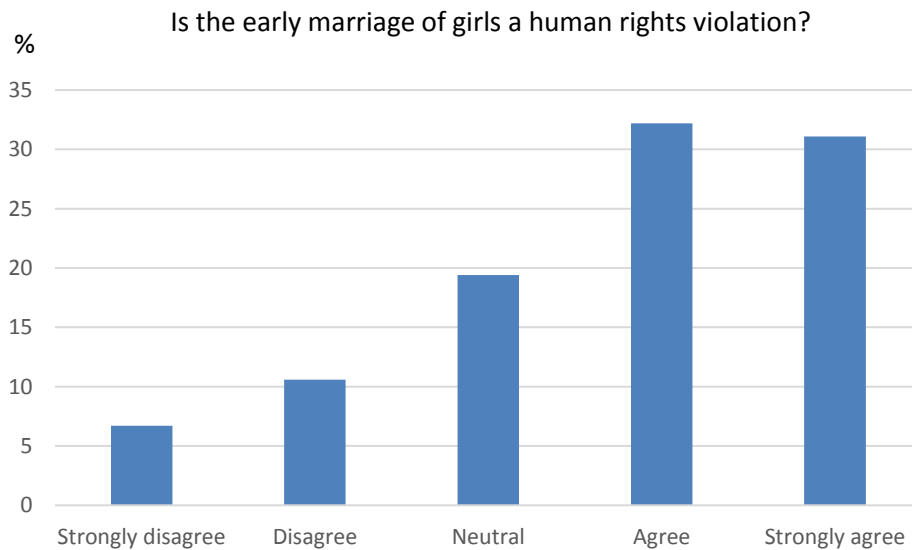


Figure 16. The respondents were quite clear about their opinion in this case: a clear majority opined that the custom of early marriage of girls is a human rights violation.

3.2 Analyses of the Subscales

In this section, the relationships between the three summed variables, or subscales, are analysed. The correlations between them are presented in Table 3. As the table shows, they all correlated highly with each other.

Table 3

Pearson Correlations between the Subscales of the Study

	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) Girls' Early Marriage			
(2) Family Life	.72***		
(3) Human Rights Violation	.67***	.58***	

*** $p < .001$

It could be speculated that the women's own personal experiences of early marriage would have an impact on their family life, and likewise on their views upon early marriage as a human rights violation. Since the data are cross-sectional, and there is no temporal distance between when the data for Girls' Early Marriage and the other two subscales were collected, any conclusions from such analyses are speculative and should be treated with caution. It could also be argued that the scales are partly overlapping each other. However, two regression analyses were conducted, both with Girls' Early Marriage as predictor; the first one had Family Life as its predicted, or outcome variable, and the other had Human Rights Violation as its predicted variable. The results are presented in the following.

It was found that Girls' Early Marriage predicted Family Life very strongly [$R = .73$, $R^2 = .52$, $Adj. R^2 = .52$, $F_{(1, 88)} = 96.13$, $p < .001$].

The other regression analysis revealed that Girls' Early Marriage also predicted Human Rights Violation very strongly [$R = .69$, $R^2 = .48$, $Adj. R^2 = .47$, $F_{(1, 88)} = 80.61$, $p < .001$]. However, these results should be interpreted with caution.

4. Discussion

4.1 Conclusions

This study has demonstrated that girl's early marriage, an acknowledged social practice in Kabul city of Afghanistan, finds some support among the respondents, although they for the most part did not agree with the practice, and were of the opinion that it is a human rights violation. It is still broadly authorized, despite the fact that it is a violation of human rights also according to the UN. It is concluded that the custom of marrying girls at a young age has a significant negative effect on the society. Early marriage does abuse the rights of girls at this age, and it is an issue that impacts upon girls in large numbers and with great power. Although it is a human rights' abuse also when boys are married at a young age, the issue of girls' early marriage has received more attention, and probably rightfully so, since they are more exploited and bereaved of all possibilities to get an education, a job, and an income for themselves. Child marriage has a more negative outcome for girls than for boys. When teenage girls, or even children, are married at a young age, they are not the slightest bit prepared for a wedded life, and their marriage will deny them of all opportunity, close all doors for self-improvement, wellbeing and prosperity, training, and support in city life. It invalidates the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Various serious outcomes result from early marriages. In addition, it undermines the battle against poverty and related difficulties in developing nations.

4.2 Recommendations

Poverty is one of the main factors supporting the custom of early marriage. Accordingly, it is recommended that there should be efforts to improve the possibilities for young women, wedded and non-wedded alike, to receive monetary assets in Afghanistan. Innovative efforts should be made to open doors for them to get training and jobs. Micro scale credit programs give young women the monetary assets they often need. Attitude changes are also needed, to advance changes in frames of mind and conduct. It is imperative to give girls higher status and more command over their lives, not the least to voice their own choice regarding marriage.

The education of girls is by all accounts central, not only because it gives them knowledge, but it also postpones the time of marriage to later. The problem as it is now is that education is costly, and when money is scarce, it is probably not going to be spent on girls. Indeed, even when instruction is sponsored or even free, guardians need to pay for a portion of the expenses of school participation for their children,

for example for books and other school regalia. To help this situation, the government and NGOs should offer help for girls' education and training, for example, free books, outfits, grants, etc.

Utilizing mass media for information is also important. It is necessary to use media strategies, incorporating TV, radio, and the internet for educational purposes, and for supporting attitude changes.

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