



EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGES, CHILD BRIDES

Sibel Karadeniz Yağmur¹

¹Asst. Prof., Turkish Language Department, Gaziantep University

Abstract

Objective: Early and forced marriages continue to be a problem in the world and in Turkey. Factors leading to early and forced marriages and solutions will be evaluated.

Method: International articles, conventions, and Turkish family data on early and forced marriages will be examined and this human rights issue, which is still up to date, will be revealed.

Results: Child marriages under the age of 18 are considered early marriages. The rate of early marriage remains a problem for girls. When girls get married before the age of 18, they are included in the names of early bride, married, and child bride. Early marriages are generally the scope of forced marriages. The countries with the highest early marriage in the world are Niger 75%, Chad 72%, and Mali 71%. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute Family Survey 2021 report, women were married at an earlier age than men. While the rate of men who got married before the age of 18 was 4.4%, the rate of women was 24.2%. While the rate of men who made their first marriage between the ages of 18-19 was 8.9%, the rate of women was 23.0%. While the rate of men who made their first marriage between the ages of 20-24 was 39.6%, the rate of women was 34.6%. The reasons for forced marriage at an early age are gender inequality, poverty, traditional or religious practices, non-implementation of laws and regulations, and conflicts, disasters and emergencies.

Conclusion: early and forced marriages are a continuing social problem as a human right. Even the words of child brides are disturbing humanity. Supporting the education of girls, eliminating poverty and eliminating gender inequality will contribute to the solution in preventing early and forced marriages.

Keywords

Folklore and Sociology, Early Marriage, Forced Marriage, Child Brides, Literature

Introduction

Marriage is a partnership between two adults that is made formally with their consent, binding both parties. In child marriages, one or both parties, the child is under the age of 18, and the marriage is not formal, but usually religious or traditional. Marriage should be made freely with the consent of the spouses according to human rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Marriage or during puberty is defined as early marriage (Somerset, 2000 and UNICEF 2012, 75).

In terms of human and child rights, the child bride is never acceptable and even bringing these two words together is unacceptable (Zengin Taş, Esin, 2020).

Forced marriage is against human rights and is a violation of the parties' desire to marry freely and a violation of the parties' sexual and bodily integrity rights. (Sabbe, 2015, 141). Child marriage is forced marriage because there is no free informed consent of at least one party. Early marriages are often considered forced marriages (Rude-Antoine 2005, 18). The risk of forced marriage is high in individuals under the age of 18 (Hester, 2007, 32).

Early and forced marriages are a global problem. Statistics show that more than 700 million girls worldwide marry early, more than a third of this marriages occur before the age of 15; reported that the density is in less developed countries (mostly South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa) (UNICEF, 2014, 164 and Zengin Taş, Esin, 2020).

Method

In this article, the situation of early and forced marriage globally and in Türkiye, which is still up to date, will be written. International articles on early and forced marriages, conventions and family statistics in Turkey will be examined and data on this human rights violation problem will be revealed.

Results and Discussion

It is possible to say that one out of every three women in Turkey is engaged in child marriage. When we talk about early marriages, we often see "child brides". Early marriages reinforce the unequal position of women in society and cause women to decrease their life opportunities and life choices.

Activist Gülnur Ercik said, "We get our children married at an early age so that we can see a selfish magnanimity in this land, so that the "honor" that we have been coming to the grove for generations without knowing what it is, and that we think it is an honor to slaughter people, so that a plate is missing from our table so that the husband can feed the missing skirt." she criticized. Since early and forced marriages are carried out secretly with traditional and religious rituals, it is not possible to document and record them (Aydemir p.1-2).

Child marriage is a global problem seen worldwide. Ten million girls up to age of eighteen get married every year. This means that almost every 3 seconds, one child girl marriage is actualized (Bruce, J. and S. Clark 2004 and plan-uk.org. p.6).

According to the Plan UK child research report, it is unacceptable for the international community to remain silent about one in seven girls getting married before the age of fifteen. The situation is a human rights violation (plan-uk.org. p.6).

Child marriage is a practice in many cultures and traditions, exacerbated by poverty and increasing after natural disasters and emergencies..

One in three girls in developing countries married at the age of eighteen (UNICEF, 2011). Every day, more than 25000 girls marry under age of 18 (The Elders, 2023). The rate of early and forced marriages in Niger is more than 60 percent, in South Asia 46 %. The age at first marriage is not increasing around the world. However, the pace of change is slow. The median age at first marriage for girls is still below 18 in Guinea and Nepal (UNICEF 2009 and plan-uk.org. p.6).

The countries with the highest rates of early marriage were Niger 75%, Chad 72%, and Mali 71%. Gender inequalities because of cultural traditions, attitudes, and beliefs increase early marriage by negatively affecting official legal systems. Countries with the highest rates of early marriage have unequal consent laws for girls and boys, reinforcing the idea that it is okay for girls to marry early (plan-uk.org. p.7).

The factors that prepare forced and early marriages are gender inequality, poorness, and wrong traditional or religious practices, non-implementation of laws and regulations, and conflicts, disasters and emergencies (plan-uk.org).

Gender inequality is increasing forced and early marriage. Different indicators are used to measure gender inequality (Kaptanoglu and Ergocmen 2014).

The Global Gender Gap Index measures the current state and progress of gender parity and tracks the progress of gaps since 2006. In the measurement, economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment are used. According to a recent report of 2022, globally gender gap has been closed by 68.1% in 2022 and it was foresighted that with the rate of progress, after 132 years gender gap will reach full parity globally. In the 2022 index, 146 countries evaluated. Gender gap closer rate was 95.8% for the health and survival, 94.4% for educational attainment, 60.3% for economic participation and opportunity, and 22% for political empowerment. Ten countries (Iceland, Finland, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden, Rwanda, Nicaragua, Namibia, Ireland, and Germany) had a score of more than 0.801 and closed their gender gaps. Iceland was the top closing gender gap by 90.8%. Among regions, North America by a score of 76.9% was the most regions for closing the gender gap. Meanwhile, the score was 63.4% in Middle East and North Africa and 62.4% in South Asia (www3.weforum.org and www.weforum.org).

Türkiye was in the 124th rank among 146 countries with 0.639 score in the Gender Gap Report of 2022. Results by subindex for Türkiye were as follows: Economic participation and opportunity: 134th rank and 0.493 score; Educational attainment: 101th rank and 0.973 score; Health and Survival; 99th rank, 0.966 score; Political Empowerment; 112th rank, 0.123 score. (www.weforum.org)

Chronic poorness can cause girls to be viewed as an economic burden. In many countries, a lack of income, the high costs of raising children, and the apprehension that girls' income potential is relatively low are pushing girls into early marriage.

According to Parsons et al review, the highest rates of child marriage are found in the poorest countries. Financial transactions such as the bride price requested for the bride in marriage in these countries contribute to the practice of child marriage. In case the groom gives a bride price to the bride's family, these families provide

economic benefits by marrying their daughters. The younger bride's age increases the amount of money families could obtain (Parsons, 2015)

Early and forced marriages could be seen as a normal occurrence due to negative traditional and religious rituals. Families may think they are right about this kind of unacceptable marriage. In many countries, to protect the concept of family honor and the virginity of girls, families marry their daughters in childhood before they are ready for marriage (Senderowitz, J. 1995 ve plan-uk.org. p.8).

In countries with high early and forced marriage laws are available, but enforcement is inadequate. With non-enforcement of the law, by marrying their daughters early, families may not even realize that they are disobeying the law and committing an offense. These girls who get married at an early age do not know their legal rights. As in our country. When child marriages are the subject of lawsuits and are reported in the press, it is known and only then the laws are discussed. However, in child marriages, the laws are either not known or ignored, and women are married under the supervision of their parents, so these marriages do not go to court.

Natural disasters and emergencies could increase child marriage due to the economical burden of families. Natural disasters and crises greatly affect girls and increase early marriages. Families adversely affected by disasters see early marriage as an option to reduce their economic burden and gain benefits. Disaster situation managers and policy makers should make good programs to mitigate disaster impact and provide assistance to such families to prevent child marriages (Luh Putu Ratih Kumala Dewi and Teguh Dartanto, 2019).

In a study, Claudia Felten-Biermann looked at the results of 2004 Asian tsunami for women and argued that in such natural disasters, there is not enough protection against sexualized violence that sexualized violence increases. The author concluded that more stringent measures should be taken to prevent it (Felten-Biermann, C. 2006).

Child marriages often harm a girl's development. With early pregnancy, social isolation begins, the child must drop out of school, could not pursue a career, and the girl's risk of domestic violence increases (data.unicef.org).

To end early and forced marriages around the world, poverty and hunger must be eradicated, girls' education must be ensured, gender equality supported, women empowered, child mortality reduced, maternal health improved, and HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases combated (plan-uk.org. p.12).

According to the child marriage report of UNICEF 2022, across the world, 20-24 years old women who were married before the age of 18 are 19% and before age 15 was 1%. The highest child marriage rate is in West and Central Africa, with nearly 4 in 10 young women married before age 18. In West and Central Africa, women aged 20 to 24 years married before age 18 was 37% before age 15 12%. In Eastern and Southern Africa, women aged 20 to 24 years married before age 18 is 32% and before age 15 is 9%. In South Asia, 20-24 years old women who were married before the age of 18 is 28% and before age 15 is 7%. In Latin America and Caribbean, 20-24 years old women who were married before the age of 18 is 21% and before age 15 is 4%. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 20-24 years old women who were married before the age of 18 is 10% and before age 15 is 1%. In East Asia and Pacific, 20-24 years old women who were married before the age of 18 is 7% and before age 15 is 1%. The child marriage prevalence is decreasing globally. Although the risk of childhood marriage in South Asia drops from 50% to less than 30%, unfortunately, the number of child brides was 12 million per year (data.unicef.org).

In the investigation of early marriages in Türkiye, the cities where girl child marriages most common were Kilis with 15.3%, Kars with 15.2%, Ağrı with 15.1%, Muş with 14.4%, and Bitlis with 12.7%. (Ağyel, Meltem 2020, p. 3).

According to the Turkish Statistical Institute Family Survey 2021 report, when the age at first marriage of married, widowed and divorced individuals were examined, 36.9% of first marriages were in the 20-24 years, 23.5% in the 25-29 years and 16.5% in the 18-19 years. The age at first marriage, which is considered appropriate for women, was stated as 25-29 years with 47.8%.

When the age at first marriage, which individuals considered appropriate for men and women, was examined, the appropriate age at first marriage for men was 25-29 years 51% and for women 25-29 years 47.8%. When the age of first marriage is analyzed by gender, women married earlier than men. While the rate of men who got married before the age of 18 was 4.4%, the rate of women was 24.2%. While the rate of men who made their first marriage between the ages of 18-19 was 8.9%, the rate of women was 23.0%. While the rate of men who made their first marriage between the ages of 20-24 was 39.6%, the rate of women was 34.6%. When examining how individuals with marriage experience make their choice of spouse according to gender, the rate of men who married with arranged and self-consent was 45.9%, while the rate of women was 46.3%, while the rate of men who married by family decisions without being asked for their opinion was 8.6% and rate for women was 12.5%. The rate of men who got married by their own decisions and with the consent of their families was 37.5%, the rate of women was 32.7%, the rate of men who married without their own decision and the consent of their family was 2.6%, and the rate of women was 2.8% (data.tuik.gov.tr, 2021).

Conclusion

Early and forced marriages are an ongoing social problem as a human rights issue. Supporting children's education, elimination of poverty, and elimination of gender inequality contribute to the solution.

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