

The crucial role of international institutions to tackle child marriage issue

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Abstract

Child marriage is a violation of children's rights, and it violates international human rights conventions. Its practice remains high globally and has also increased in Nigeria and Indonesia. The efforts given by international institutions to address child marriage issues are certainly not lacking. Nevertheless, child marriage remains persistent in the global landscape. The prevalence of child marriage tends to be based on solid domestic reasons such as cultural and economic factors. This paper argues that the prevalence of child marriage globally occurs because of the absence of strict international policies to form international norms. This situation indicates the diffusion of norms from the international to the domestic level. Thus, the isomorphism theoretical framework is used to clarify the diffusion process of international norms condemning the practice of child marriage. Isomorphism theory explains that international institutions can set normative standards at the global level, which are then passed down to the regional, domestic, and individual levels. With that being said, international institutions play a crucial role in eliminating the implementation of child marriage. The authors used deductive analysis to utilize a structural approach that encourages a systematic explanation of the factors contributing to child marriage. With the existing theoretical framework, deductive analysis is meant to test the accuracy of isomorphism theory through an actual case study of international norm diffusion. Thus, deductive analysis will determine whether the norm diffusion process has been effectively distributed from the international to the individual level.

Keywords: child marriage; international institutions; norm diffusion; isomorphism

Article History

Received: January 17, 2024

Accepted: September 13, 2024

Cite this as: Duarsa, M. U. M. G., & Yazid, S. (2025). The crucial role of international institutions to tackle child marriage issue. *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences*, 17(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.20473/ijss.v17i1.54136>

Introduction

Child marriage is defined by UNICEF as formal or informal marriages between children under the age of 18 and adults or other underage children. Based on the UNICEF latest trends and future prospects report, there are around 640 million children who are experiencing child marriage (UNICEF, 2023). South Asia is the region with the most cases of child marriage, amounting to 290 million cases, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa with 127 million cases, and the region of East Asia with the Pacific for 95 million cases (UNICEF, 2023).

Child marriage is a form of violation against Article 16 (2) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979. It is stated in Article 16 (2) of CEDAW that the implementation of child marriage has no legal effect, and thus, the implementation of marriage legislation is necessary to address the issue of child marriage by strictly determining the minimum age for marriage (CEDAW in UNICEF, 2022). Furthermore, child marriage also violates Article 27 (1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989. It is stated in Article 27 (1) of CRC that State Parties shall recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development (CRC in OHCHR, 1989).

What needs to be underlined here is the urgency of child marriage in terms of the increasing number of cases and the remaining obstacles in tackling the issue. In 2018, UNICEF reported that over 40%



DOI 10.20473/ijss.v17i1.54136

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of girls in Nigeria, with around 22 million child brides, are married before their 18th birthday (Philipose, Toure, & Verhulst, 2018). The increasing number can be seen in 2020, when 43% of women in Nigeria were married before 18 (The 2020 UN Development Program report in Human Rights Watch, 2022). Considering that child marriage practices are quite common in Nigeria due to its traditional, economic, or even the granting justification from the domestic law, Nigeria now holds the status as the highest country that implements child marriage on the African continent.

It is important to acknowledge the impacts of child marriage since it can limit their life choices and education, put them in a situation where they can easily get violated and discriminated against, and deprive them of their right to participate in political, economic, and social life. Specifically, Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the second-largest number of child marriages. This region has its own obstacles in dealing with the issue. The rapid population growth in the region, along with the ongoing economic crisis, has increased the implementation of child marriage (UNICEF, 2023).

Furthermore, the increasing cases of child marriage also occur in the Southeast Asian region, that is, Indonesia. The outbreak of Covid-19 has caused an increasing number of child marriages in Indonesia from 2019 to 2020 (UNICEF, 2021). In 2019, child marriages hit the number of 23,126 cases, and it rose to 64,211 cases in 2020, three times greater than in 2019 (National Women's Commission in Hasudungan, 2022). The motive behind child marriage is often caused by economic and cultural problems. In this context, the Covid-19 outbreak played its role in causing the rise of child marriage in Indonesia, as the outbreak left many families in economic crisis (UNICEF, 2021).

Quite similar to the case in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, child marriage in Indonesia is also partly driven by the rapid increase in population. It will also impact Indonesia's economy. That is what happened in 2020 when the poor population amounted to 26.4 million people (9.8% of the population). As parents lost their jobs during the pandemic, the implementation of child marriage became widespread. That is based on economic hardships and the belief that the economic burden on parents is lessened. On the other hand, cultural reasons also lead to the implementation of child marriage when children are married. There is a strong traditional belief that it is forbidden to refuse a man's proposal to a girl, even if she is under the age of 18. Therefore, to prevent this perception, most parents in Indonesia marry off their daughters despite them being underage (Hasudungan, 2022).

International institutions such as UNICEF and OHCHR are responsible for addressing child marriage issues. Those institutions were formed by the UN, meaning they have the capacity to conduct a binding policy regarding child marriage issues. This binding policy is manifested in convention agreements such as CEDAW and CRC. The problem here is that those binding written policies are still violated. Hence, this situation hampered the formation of international norms. In other words, international norms are formed through international agreements that are strict, binding, and not violated. When international agreements are still violated and not well conducted, international norms cannot be formed.

According to Parsons et al. (2015), the implementation of child marriage is motivated by economic factors. It is stated that families have the potential to gain economic benefits by marrying off their daughters. They will also gain greater financial benefits if the bride is younger (Parsons et al., 2015). Moreover, another analysis explains that cultural factors encourage child marriage implementation. According to Kohno et al. (2020), patriarchal ideology drives child marriage practices. Since this ideology is strongly internalized in society, underage girls become accustomed to following their parents' decision to marry at a young age (Kohno et al., 2020). Those analyses often discussed child marriage issues based on cultural and economic factors. Cultural and economic factors are generally used as foundations to explain why child marriage is difficult to eliminate at the domestic level. Thus, it is important to explore and understand more about how international institutions work to address the issue of child marriage in the global landscape.

Despite the economic and cultural factors, this article argues that the difficulty in tackling the child marriage issue at the domestic level stems from the absence of strict international policy made by international institutions. It is also important to underline that international policy promotes the formation of international norms, which are then internalized by state countries. Marriage is a

socially constructed practice that derives from the formation of norms. These norms have to exist first at the international level, then the norms will be passed down and be adopted at the domestic level. This situation is referred to as norm internalization. Thus, this article argues that the process of norm internalization at the domestic level is hampered by the fact that international institutions themselves have not been able to establish a strict policy by specifically determining the legal age of marriage in order to overcome child marriage.

The role of international institutions such as UNICEF and OHCHR is indispensable in this case since they work at the outer layer of the system that deals with the issue of child marriage. International institutions are seen to be responsible for setting strict policies on the minimum age for marriage. In accordance with Shamin Asghari's (2019) argument, the international system, specifically the human rights system, should be firm in addressing the issue of child marriage by establishing a policy that correlates with child marriage. It is stated that in spite of the fact that the international system identified marriage before the age of 18 as forced marriage, there are still legal domestic systems that set the minimum age of marriage below the age of 18 (Asghari, 2019). For example, in Afghanistan, there are domestic laws that allow the implementation of marriage under the age of 16 for girls when the practice is permitted by their father or a judge. All of these regulations are manifested in Article 70 of the Civil Code of the Republic of Afghanistan 1977 and Article 99 (1) of the Shiite Personal Status Law (Girls Not Brides, 2021).

This situation can also be seen in Sub-Saharan Africa as the second largest region for child marriage, where the implementation of laws for the minimum age of marriage remains inconsistent (Maswikwa, Richter, Kaufman, & Nandi, 2015). With that being said, this article tries to emphasize the role of international institutions in establishing a strict child marriage policy instead of focusing on domestic factors of cultural and economic. Hence, this article comes with the research question, "why is the international institution responsible to promote child marriage policy in a global landscape?".

The authors use the theory of isomorphism norm as the theoretical framework. The isomorphism norm theory explains that there are layers of how international norms can then be adopted at the domestic and individual levels. Isomorphism is also defined as a process of restriction and determination that forces groups within a population to imitate and adopt the existing conditions (DiMaggio and Powell in Cai, 2023). Generally, isomorphism norm theory emphasizes that an existing condition has been adopted and contextualized. This situation then leads to uniformity in political, economic, and social practices (standards). The way isomorphism works is by providing Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on how to form certain identities and how countries need external recognition. In realizing this way of working, isomorphism then encourages countries to join international organizations (Meyer in Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008).

In this case, international organizations work as agents of rationalization. That is, they have the capability to define and set what it needs to be as the world standards. The mechanism that operates when a country adopts the world model will make the country more supported on the external (global) and internal (domestic) levels. Therefore, this situation causes more countries to follow and adopt the norms which were created by the international system.

In addition, DiMaggio and Powell in Cai (2023) have also proposed that institutionalized ideas have pressured organizations to adopt similar structures and forms, resulting in increasingly similar outcomes. It is also important to acknowledge that the process of isomorphism does not always succeed because of the existence of decoupling. Isomorphism explains decoupling as the gap between actors (political elites/international organizations) and the implementation or practice of norms (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008). The less resources an actor has, the more apparent the decoupling is.

Methods

In writing this research paper, the authors used a descriptive research method with a qualitative approach. The choice of descriptive research method is based on the authors' motive to show the

urgency of child marriage implementation in a global landscape and how international institutions respond to it. Hence, this method is intended to provide clear and detailed answers to the research question of this paper. Data collection is done by using secondary data such as official documents and reports from UNICEF, UNFPA, and OHCHR. For the official reports, the authors used three in total. Two UNICEF official reports are used to show data trends of child marriage practices globally, with an emphasis on South Asia as the region with the largest number of child marriages. One UNFPA official report is also used to show and explain Article 16 (2) of the UDHR about child marriage. Official documents used for this research are taken from UNICEF and OHCHR. These documents are important for showing and highlighting the content of articles in CEDAW and CRC about child marriage.

Secondary data are also collected from journals and books related to child marriage and its policies. This research used eleven journals and three books in total. The journals used in this study are important to indicate relevant data for the analysis. Nine journals are capable of showing the real circumstances of child marriage in several regions, such as South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, and specific countries like India, Indonesia, and Iran. The journals also present the stances of their authors regarding child marriage. These stances are important for this research to highlight gaps and bring novelty to the study. Two journals are specifically used to explain the concept of isomorphism theory and norm diffusion. Three books are also used in this research, mainly to explain isomorphism as a theoretical framework, describe the methods of deductive reasoning, and desk analysis.

The authors used secondary data to enhance the quality of the analysis, as secondary data collection can prompt critical thinking from different perspectives and identify novel gaps in previous analyses of child marriage. Tertiary data from the internet, such as official organization websites (UNICEF, OHCHR, Girls Not Brides, and Human Rights Watch website), are also used in this research. The purpose of collecting tertiary data is to provide more detailed information that was not fully captured in the secondary data collection.

All of the data span from 2011 to 2023 and shed light on the state of child marriage practices both globally and domestically. The data also cover the regulations enacted by international and domestic authorities to tackle the issue of child marriage. Those data are collected through the desk research method, which focuses on data that have been officially published by other credible parties. Desk research emphasized the clarification of existing data sets to develop new perspectives on the issue of child marriage. Therefore, collecting those data is crucial for (1) examining how regulations on child marriage are developed at both global and domestic levels, (2) showing child marriage implementation in several specific regions as a case study, and (3) analyzing the link between those collected data and theoretical framework.

After collecting those data, the authors used deductive analysis intended to explain existing issues using a theoretical framework. The use of deductive analysis is to provide a structural approach that helps the authors analyze data so that the research question can be answered systematically based on existing theory. Deductive analysis begins with an existing theoretical framework or concept, which is then subject to testing. Deductive analysis in this research is marked by the existence of isomorphism theory, which explains the process of norm diffusion. Then, the theory will be tested through an actual case of international norm diffusion (norms that condemn child marriage practice). Thus, deductive analysis will determine whether the norm diffusion process has been effectively distributed from the international level down to the individual level.

Results and Discussion

This research paper argues that international institutions have failed to promote global standards that condemn the practice of child marriage at the domestic level. Such argument is stated by analyzing and exploring these indicators, which include:

Inconsistencies in international minimum marriage age policies

Historically, many international conventions have established regulations to address child marriage issues, but there is still no international pressure to set a minimum age for marriage. According to Article 16 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, marriage must only be performed with the free and full consent of the parties to the marriage (UDHR in UNFPA, 2012). In this context, the word consent is contradictory when one party in the marriage is not mature enough (a child) to understand the situation and make an informed decision about marriage. With that being said, since the term consent in the case of child marriage sounds peculiar, a policy to set a minimum age for marriage is necessary without mentioning the word consent in it.

Furthermore, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) claims that women should have the same right as men to freely choose a partner, where betrothal and marriage of a child shall have no legal effect (UNFPA, 2012). However, on the contrary, CEDAW also states in Article 16 (2) that in some countries, the practice of child marriage is permitted if it is conducted with the consent of the girl or with the approval of the parents (UNICEF, 2021). Another international institution, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), claims that what is considered child marriage is when one of the parties is a child below the age of 18. However, OHCHR states an exception, that is, when the age of the child is considered as an adult by the applicable law (UNICEF, 2021).

What needs to be underlined here is that international institutions such as UNICEF and OHCHR define child marriage as marriage under the age of 18. However, other international institutions and conventions emphasize the statement of exemption. Just like how CEDAW claims that the implementation of child marriage is acceptable if there is consent from the prospective husband and wife and how OHCHR claims that it is acceptable when the applicable law defines the age of the child as an age of majority. This ambiguity causes the internalization of international norms in the context of child marriage to become complex at the domestic level.

The ambiguity of international policy affects the domestic level: How state countries respond to it

When the minimum age of marriage is ambiguous at the international level, it will cause difficulty in forming an effective child marriage policy at the domestic level. For example, Tanzania and Zambia are two countries in the African region with the largest and most continuous child marriage practices; those countries have set a policy for a minimum marriage age of 18 but did not consider child marriage as a proscribed practice. Hence, this situation has caused countries to provide exceptions to child marriage policy regulations. That means that when the practice of child marriage has parental consent or permission from the court, then child marriage is considered legitimate (Wang, 2016). According to the Zambian Marriage Act of 1964 in Article 17, the legal age of marriage is set at 21. However, with parental consent, the marriage is permitted within the age of 16-20, and with court approval, marriage is permitted within the age under 16.

On the other hand, Tanzania, with its Marriage Act of 1971, allows the practice of child marriage at the age of 15-17 (for girls) and the age of 18 (for boys) with parental consent. Moreover, with the court's permission, child marriage is legal for girls at the age of 14. In the South Asia Region, specifically India, the country enacted The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in 2006, which regulates the minimum legal age of marriage, which is 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys. However, it has failed to prevent child marriage practices in India due to its poor justice system, such as police, judges, and religious actors who encourage child marriage (Ethiraj, 2022). The situation illustrates how state countries react to the ambiguity of international policy. The absence of strict international policies at the global level has resulted in domestic policies having exemptions regarding their marriage regulations.

The failure to tackle the child marriage issue is caused by how the international norms are not internalized perfectly at the domestic level. In this research paper, international norms always refer to norms that condemn the practice of child marriage. The non-binding nature of marriage policy at the domestic level is partly influenced by cultural and religious factors. Nevertheless, this paper

tries to show how the ambiguity of policies at the international level is also a contributing factor in the failure to address the child marriage issue. The isomorphism norm theory thus explains how the international institution works at the outermost layer of the system, which is being the first responsible actor to address child marriage issues.

International institutions' failure in diffusing norms according to isomorphism perspective

Internalization of norms should not be focused on domestic errors. Instead, it has to focus on the outermost layer, international institutions. What the international institution has done to tackle the child marriage issue is a way to see the effectiveness of norm internalization at the domestic level. Isomorphism claims that a world model exists, which is then duplicated and imitated by a state (Meyer in Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008). Isomorphism sees the world model as an agent of rationalization, which is seen as an actor with legitimacy. That is the reason; why the state then imitates the world model.

Norm internalization (norm diffusion) emphasizes the argument that there are international norms that exist first at the global level. Isomorphism explains that those international norms will then be diffused, adopted, and internalized by state countries at the domestic level. When those norms are diffused to the domestic level, it will encourage the formation of strict domestic policies related to child marriage (Draude, 2017). Since international norms are established through binding policies, the absence of strict policies at the international level represents what isomorphism refers to as the failure of norm diffusion (decoupling).

By looking at one specific child marriage case in India, it is clear that there is an international norm that condemns the act of child marriage, and it passes down to the domestic level in India, which means that there is a global standard norm that is duplicated by the Indian government. In this case, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNICEF define child marriage as a practice in which one of the parties is under the age of 18 at the time of marriage (UNICEF, 2021). That statement is seen by isomorphism as a model that is then duplicated and internalized by global countries, such as India.

The authors will provide two perspectives on isomorphism. First, international institutions have successfully established global norm standards, and state countries have replicated and adopted these norms at the domestic level. However, there is an internalization of norms at the individual level that still fails. That means that the practice of child marriage is still implemented in society. Isomorphism would explain this situation as decoupling, which is the gap between the rationalization model (international institution) and its implementation. A strong domestic culture causes difficulty for new norms to penetrate the domestic system, so the government forces new norms to be adopted by the country. This situation focuses on domestic failure, which is dominantly motivated by cultural and economic reasons.

Second, international institutions have successfully established global norm standards, but not to the fullest extent. That means that the internalization process at the state (domestic) level becomes non-binding. This situation then causes numerous domestic policy regulations to have many exceptions, just like what happened in Zambia with The Zambian Marriage Act of 1964 and Tanzania with The Tanzanian Marriage Act of 1971.

Based on the second perspective, isomorphism explains the situation as a failure of international institutions to promote normative standards to be internalized at the domestic level. With that being said, decoupling in this situation occurs due to the failure of the outermost layer actor (international institution) to promote international norms that condemn the practice of child marriage. The problem here is that international institutions still fail to establish strict regulations relating to child marriage at the global level. Thus, the absence of strict regulation at the global level has hampered the formation of international norms, which has caused regulations at regional and domestic levels to become non-binding.

The regional error can be seen in how the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as a regional organization, still gives minimum attention to child marriage issues. Moreover, Southeast

Asia does not have a regional body which specifically focuses on human rights; ASEAN did inch, but not very frequently either. ASEAN shows its Human Rights Declaration and the establishment of The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). ASEAN already recognizes the importance of human rights awareness, and thus, they are aware that they should develop a human rights culture at the same level in each member country. However, the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration still has no binding force (Sianipar, 2014).

Sianipar (2014) also stated that ASEAN member States are not obligated to implement what is listed in the Human Rights Declaration. That means if ASEAN member states violate or disobey the declaration, they will not be sanctioned. ASEAN Human Rights Declaration only makes moral demands on ASEAN member states to respect and protect the human rights of every individual in the ASEAN region. By underlining the fact that it has no binding force, there is a gap. That means the norm diffusion itself experiences an obstacle at the regional level before entering the domestic level and before being adopted at the domestic level.

Isomorphism would explain this situation by saying that there are layers to international norms that are then adopted by the state at the domestic level. These layers are: (1) international institutions as the world model; (2) regional institutions; (3) domestic governments; (4) individual level. Therefore, the absence of norm distribution at the second level, namely the regional level, is why the diffusion of international norms is not well distributed. The emphasis of the argument is on how often the obstacles of norm diffusion occur, first, at the international level, where international institutions have not yet strictly established regulations related to child marriage. Second, the non-binding obligation at the regional level has made the diffusion of international norms difficult.

The extent to which international institutions have taken action

Although international institutions have failed to promote international norms to eliminate child marriage practices at the domestic level, it does not mean that international institutions have not tried anything to tackle the issue. There are many actions that UNICEF has taken, such as collaborating with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in the Global Program to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage.

The cooperation formed by UNICEF and UNFPA is a practice of global governance to overcome common problems. Both parties certainly seek to address the issue of child marriage by providing empowerment programs through education, skills, and other alternative pathways to prevent pregnancy and marriage of underage women (UNICEF, 2024). In 2016, UNICEF and UNFPA conducted a program in 12 countries with the highest cases of child marriage: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia.

One of the significant impacts of UNICEF and UNFPA collaboration can be seen in Bangladesh. According to UNICEF's report on Bangladesh child marriage in 2022, there are 34.5 million child brides, and 13.4 million of them are married before the age of 15. In the current situation, the child marriage rate in Bangladesh is 51%, which puts the country in the top 10 list of countries with child marriage cases. However, the practice of child marriage in Bangladesh has actually been reduced, with the rate in 1970 at 90% (UNICEF, 2022).

According to Girls Not Brides (2023), the practice of child marriage is actually declining on a global scale. Ten years ago, the rate of child marriage cases reached 23%, and recently, it has been reduced to 19%. Thus, around 68 million cases of child marriage have been successfully reduced in the last 25 years. In addition, the global success in reducing the practice of child marriage is driven by India's 20% reduction. However, the progress of global child marriage eradication efforts remains uneven as India itself still has a large number of child marriage cases (Girls Not Brides, 2023).

This condition is also emphasized by UNICEF in the report Towards Ending Child Marriage: Global Trends and Profiles of Progress in 2021, where child marriage becomes less common with a significant decrease in cases. However, the prevalence of child marriage in India, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Indonesia is still considered high (UNICEF, 2021). As the previous data shows, the practice of child marriage is declining on a global scale, and international institution's failure to

promote international norms to eliminate child marriage is considered a challenge. As stated by UNICEF, despite the global decline in child marriage cases, the number of cases is still high.

International institution's failure is not a challenge

International institutions should focus on how to tackle child marriage issues and not frame the failure as a challenge. The point is how international institutions acted in dealing with child marriage cases. If the failure is framed as a challenge, then the perspective of international institutions in addressing child marriage issues will be directed to domestic factors. They will ask, "what has gone wrong in the process of norm internalization at the domestic level?". Thus, the answer will always be based on economic and cultural reasons.

On the contrary, if failure is framed holistically or that failure is perceived as a universal failure, then the lens of international organizations will question, "how much is the amount of effort that international institutions have given and done?". Thus, by framing the failure as a holistic problem rather than a challenge, the focus will be on the international institution itself as a world model. Hence, the emphasis is on how international institutions as world models have failed to promote international norms to eliminate child marriage due to their ambiguity in setting the minimum age for marriage. That is what needs to be focused on, which is how the international institutions work because what happens on the international level will affect the domestic level.

To corroborate the argument, the author takes an example based on related research that has been done before. In Bokaie et al.'s (2021) research, *Challenges and Strategies to End Child Marriage*, it is stated that poverty, social culture, and negligence towards child marriage are seen as challenges in addressing child marriage issues (Bokaie et al., 2021). The research also provides convincing solutions, such as establishing legal regulations, economic support, and efforts to change domestic norms and beliefs. That is what happens when child marriage is perceived as a challenge because the focus is on domestic factors.

Again, what needs to be underlined here is how those efforts to address child marriage, as stated by Bokaie et al. (2021), will be fully achieved when an international institution as a world model succeeds in establishing strict universal regulations in the first place. By highlighting the diffusion process of international norms, it is safe to say that norm internalization will start from the outermost level (international institutions). That is exactly why international institutions should be able to establish strict regulations on the child marriage issue, namely because international institutions are world models that will be imitated at the domestic level.

Conclusion

With child marriage being prevalent in today's world, it is important to explore the factors of child marriage from another perspective. Considering that many studies on child marriage issues often explain how cultural and economic factors are the drivers of child marriage practices, the solutions provided always lead to empowerment efforts, ranging from education to economic assistance. The efforts made by international organizations clearly show how international organizations focus on the issue of child marriage as a domestic problem (due to cultural and economic factors).

Despite the efforts of international organizations, the child marriage issue remains prevalent. Domestic factors are not entirely to blame; international institutions are also responsible for this. How norms are promoted by the world model, namely the international institutions themselves, needs to be considered. By using the theoretical framework of isomorphism, the world model as the outermost layer is supposed to be able to become an example for countries to adopt its international norm. The failure of international institutions to strictly set a minimum age of marriage has caused the implementation of laws and regulations at the domestic level to be flexible and non-binding.

As a result, child marriage remains a prevalent issue today. There is a need to emphasize the diffusion process of international norms. That means if child marriage policy is not binding from the outermost level, it cannot be effectively adopted at the regional, domestic, and individual levels.

Therefore, the answer to the research question “why is the international institution responsible to promote child marriage policy in a global landscape?” is that international institution works as the world model or the first layer of the system to set global standards. In other words, the international institution becomes a responsible actor in promoting normative standards at the global level, which are then passed down to the regional, domestic, and individual levels. Thus, international institutions play a crucial role in eliminating the implementation of child marriage.

Acknowledgement

Firstly, the authors would like to give thanks to God for always being with the authors throughout the process of making this research paper. A sincere thank you to Sylvia Yazid Ph.D., for offering the opportunity by giving the support, time, and guidance in writing this research paper.

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