

## Pengalaman Pernikahan dari Perspektif Anak Perempuan: Scoping Review

### *Marriage Experience from the Girl's Perspective: A Scoping Review*

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#### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Child marriage is a marriage that is conducted formally or informally by spouses or with one of the spouses aged 18. Child marriage is a phenomenon that involves socio-cultural elements thus many factors influence it. Girls are 3 times more likely to experience child marriage than boys. Various conditions that occur in child marriage have generated interest in seeing a broader view of how married girls view their married life. **Objective:** This review was conducted to explore research findings related to the experiences of girls who were married under 18 years of age so that it could be used as an illustration to see the condition of girls in child marriage life. **Methods:** This review used three databases PubMed, ProQuest, and EbscoHost. The search for articles used main keywords, namely "child marriage", "women experience", and "marriage life" combined with helper keywords. The articles were full-text, in English, not limited by year and country, and discussed child marriage from a woman's perspective. **Results:** This review was done on 10 articles that were screened and analyzed out of 2259 articles. All articles used a qualitative method and were originated from Malaysia (2 articles), Pakistan (2 articles), Iran (2 articles), United States, Morocco, Jordan, and Israel. The total participants were 187 people from all articles. The causes of marriage in girls were poverty, prevention of premarital sex, adolescent pregnancy solutions, and personal desires of the girls. The state of marriage was seen from self-actualization and pressures on the role of girls in married life. **Conclusion:** This review summarized the reasons for marriage before the age of 18 were due to poverty factors, the avoidance of premarital sex, teenage pregnancy solutions and the willingness of girls themselves to marry. This review also summarized the situation of girls in child marriages who were unable to be self-reliant and were under pressure to perform their position in the household. Child marriage also caused new issues in the lives of girls, hence it was necessary to consider getting married at the age of under 18 years.

**Keyword:** Child Marriage, Teenager, Marriage Life, Scoping Review

#### ABSTRAK

**Latar Belakang:** Pernikahan anak merupakan pernikahan yang dilakukan secara formal atau informal oleh pasangan atau salah satu dari pasangan yang berusia dibawah 18 tahun. Pernikahan anak merupakan fenomena yang melibatkan unsur sosial budaya sehingga banyak faktor yang mempengaruhinya. Anak perempuan 3 kali lebih berisiko mengalami pernikahan anak dibandingkan anak laki-laki. Berbagai kondisi yang terjadi pada pernikahan anak memunculkan ketertarikan untuk melihat lebih luas bagaimana pandangan anak perempuan yang telah menikah pada kehidupan pernikahannya. **Tujuan:** Tinjauan ini dilakukan untuk mengeksplorasi temuan penelitian terkait pengalaman perempuan yang menikah di bawah 18 tahun sehingga dapat menjadi gambaran untuk melihat kondisi anak perempuan dalam kehidupan pernikahan anak. **Metode:** Tinjauan ini menggunakan tiga database PubMed, ProQuest, EbscoHost. Pencarian artikel menggunakan kata kunci utama yaitu "child marriage", "women experience", dan "marriage life" yang dikombinasi dengan kata kunci bantuan. Artikel full text, berbahasa inggris, tidak dibatasi tahun dan negara, serta membahas pernikahan anak dari sudut pandang perempuan. **Hasil:** Tinjauan ini mengulas 10 artikel yang telah disaring dan dianalisis dari 2259 artikel. Seluruh artikel merupakan artikel dengan metode kualitatif. Artikel yang ditinjau berasal dari Malaysia (2 artikel), Pakistan (2 artikel), Iran (2 artikel), United States, Moroko, Jordan, dan Israel.

Total partisipan dalam tinjauan ini adalah 187 orang dari seluruh artikel. Penyebab pernikahan pada anak perempuan adalah kemiskinan, pencegahan premarital sex, solusi kehamilan remaja, dan keinginan pribadi dari anak perempuan. Kondisi pernikahan dilihat dari aktualisasi diri dan tekanan peran anak perempuan dalam pernikahan. **Kesimpulan:** Tinjauan ini merangkum adanya faktor kemiskinan, pencegahan premarital sex, solusi kehamilan remaja, dan keinginan dari anak perempuan untuk menikah sebagai alasan pernikahan dilakukan sebelum 18 tahun. Tinjauan ini juga merangkum kondisi anak perempuan dalam pernikahan anak yang tidak mampu untuk mengaktualisasikan diri dan mengalami tekanan untuk pemenuhan peran dalam rumah tangga. Pernikahan anak sering kali menimbulkan permasalahan baru pada kehidupan anak perempuan sehingga perlu dipertimbangan untuk melakukan pernikahan pada usia di bawah 18 tahun.

**Kata Kunci :** Pernikahan Anak, Remaja, Kehidupan Pernikahan, Scoping Review

## INTRODUCTION

Child marriage is a marriage conducted formally or informally by spouses or with one of the spouses aged below 18 years (Zaman and Koski, 2020). Child marriage is a phenomenon that involves social elements hence there have always been new cases every year (International Center for Research on Women, 2020). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report showed that during 2009-2019 a decrease in the cases had occurred by 4% of the total (United Nations Children's Fund, 2019). It was still far from the target for case reduction in the span of the last 10 years. UNICEF predicted that they would continue to increase to 120 billion in 2030 (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020). UNICEF also showed that in 2018, the top 10 countries with the highest number of cases consisted of developing countries (Machel and Roinson, 2018). India became the country with the highest absolute number in 2018. (Machel and Roinson, 2018).. Data also showed that a percentage of child marriage in developed countries existed despite the number was far smaller than in developing countries.

The development of the cases in the world was caused by several factors, such as beliefs in a culture or religion, teen pregnancies, poverties, and the child's personal desires (Kabir, Ghosh and Shawly, 2019; Lowe, Joof and Rojas, 2020). Girls were three times more at risk to experience marriage below 18 years old than boys (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020). Society still assumed that girls were destined to marry, manage a house, and give birth to a child as soon as

possible (John, Edmeades and Murithi, 2019). Girls were also more frequently being used as a solution to the low economy of the family by being married off someone much more mature and steady in terms of occupation (Chirwa *et al.*, 2019). Girls were thought to be insignificant to have high education since they would only end up managing a house and offspring. Marriage conducted as early as possible was believed to be able to prevent girls from being infertile thus a lot married off their daughters at the age considered younger (Sedekia *et al.*, 2017). Child marriage on girls would also impact the child's life post the marriage.

The majority of girls that have gotten married reported not go back to school (Sekine and Hodgkin, 2017). The desire to go was often hindered by pregnancies post-marriage or the change of their role as a wife or mother (Dewi, 2018). Girls that were married tended to have problems in pregnancies due to the overly young age and mental condition not ready to experience the pregnancy-labor processes (Adedokun, Adeyemi and Dauda, 2016). The stress level in girls that experienced child marriage was also considerably high as girls were forced to be able to adapt quickly in the married situation and with the roles and responsibilities that came from being a wife, daughter-in-law, and mother (John *et al.*, 2019). Another condition that often occurred in girls married at a young age was losing the power of decision-making for themselves or their families (Shahabuddin *et al.*, 2017). This frequently induced pressure in girls since the perceptions of husbands and the husbands' families about them who thought were still immature thus unable

to decide the best choice for themselves or even the families (Taylor *et al.*, 2019). Different conditions in child marriage triggered an attraction to see thoroughly how the married girls view their married lives. This review focuses on exploring and summarizing (scoping) literature that covered motivations, experiences, and views of girls that have been married before 18 years old towards their married lives. The purpose of scoping review is to provide the general picture of literature which have high potentials and were related to a wide topic (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005; Pham *et al.*, 2014). This literature review aims to see various reasons and conditions on child marriage hence helping healthcare workers in identifying problems that emerge in child marriage. This review also can give a picture to girls regarding marriage below the age of 18.

## METHODS

This review used scoping review method that aimed to map and give a wide picture of the covered literature (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005; Pham *et al.*, 2014). Scoping review was done by identifying research questions, identifying related studies using a systematic literature search based on the research questions that have been formulated, collecting study results, conducting discovery tabulations, compilations, analysis, descriptions, and result reporting (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005). This review was guided by the first question, "how did child marriage happen?" and the second question, "how was the girl's condition after the marriage happened?"

This review utilized three databases namely PubMed, ProQuest, Ebsco. The main keywords were "child marriage", "women's experience", and "marriage life". These keywords were developed with helper keywords ("early marriage", "qualitative") from MeSH and were combined with "OR" and "AND". Articles used were published full-text articles and articles that were issued up to year of 2020 (not restricted by publication date). The non-existent restriction in year relied on the purpose that would widely explore the condition of child marriage. The articles used English, qualitative method, and the research locations weren't restricted by countries. The articles referred to the discussion on

child marriage taken from the perspective of women that have experienced marriage of the age below 18. The focus of this review was the cause of child marriage and the condition of the girls after the marriage thus the articles selected should describe the situation.

Participants in this review article were women, not restricted by age, who have been married at the age below 18, and not restricted by their current marital status. Articles that were not included in this review were those that covered child marriage but referring to conference abstracts or blogs, those that did not explain age, age of being married for the first time, and sex, also those that did not enclose research ethics.

Article search on 3 databases obtained 2259 articles. These articles were being read on the titles and abstracts for selection. Titles and abstracts that were not aligned with this review's purpose were excluded (exclusion) hence they became 111 articles. The filtered articles were being re-reviewed by focusing on duplication and reading the entirety of the articles therefore 14 articles were left. All of the articles were being re-read by paying attention to the congruence and clarity of results on each article and it was decided that there were 10 that fit this review.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Articles used in this review were 10 articles, as follows: 2 Malaysian, 2 Pakistan, 2 Iranian, 1 United States, 1 Maroko, 1 Jordan, and 1 Israel (Table 1). In these articles, the causes of child marriage in girls aged below 18 and the married lives of girls married at the age below 18 (Hamid, Johansson and Rubenson, 2009; Nasrullah *et al.*, 2014; Henry *et al.*, 2015; Sedekia *et al.*, 2017; Al-Kloub *et al.*, 2019; Kohno *et al.*, 2019; Tirgari *et al.*, 2019; Wahi *et al.*, 2019; Beredugo *et al.*, 2020).

### Causes of Marriage on Girls Aged Below 18

#### Poverty

Poverty has become the reason for girls to marry at a younger age. Poverty often caused girls to stop schooling (Kohno *et al.*, 2019). Girls were thought not to need the ownership of a high education because they would serve households and follow their husbands (Britwum *et al.*, 2017). Girls that were unschooled, were not able to do

manual labor as well thus they only stayed at home. It's different with boys, as they usually would still be kept not to marry to continue school (Misunas, Gastón and Cappa, 2019). In case the boys stop going to school, they would be able to do manual labor to help the life of the family thus they would not be married off at a young age. Girls that did not go to school usually would help with household chores like managing the house, cooking, or babysitting their younger siblings (Beredugo *et al.*, 2020).

Girls able to do household chores were generally thought to be ready for marriage despite their age was still not appropriate according to marriage requirements (Britwum *et al.*, 2017). The condition of girls that did not go to school nor have other skills caused them not to have any other purpose hence to get married was assumed to be the best decision (Kohno *et al.*, 2020). The marriage that happened to girls in poor families was often thought of as the solution for a load of the economy of the families (Al-Kloub *et al.*, 2019). Married girls were no longer the families' responsibilities thus families were not obligated to provide for their life necessities. Early marriage would help the families to stabilize the family economy due to the help from the males' families. (Efevbera *et al.*, 2019). Not only that, the families with low economy felt they were not able to provide proper lives for their daughters thus they married off the daughters early in the hope for an improvement in the daughters' lives (Kohno *et al.*, 2020).

#### Prevention of Premarital Sex

Marriage at a younger age became one of the reasons most families for prevention of premarital sex in their daughters (Kohno *et al.*, 2019). Families felt the need to marry off their daughters to prevent pregnancies outside marriage which stained the families' reputations (El Arab and Sagbakken, 2019). Social life with promiscuity tendencies and risky behaviors such as alcohol consumption or prohibited drugs strengthened the families' reason to married off their daughters (Kohno *et al.*, 2020). Many child marriage cases happened because the daughters did not return home or slept over at their boyfriends' even though they have not known to have done premarital sex or if there were pregnancies (Dewi, 2018).

The girls mentioned that their families thought marrying off their daughters to prevent premarital age had a smaller disadvantage than being pregnant outside marriage (Al-Kloub *et al.*, 2019). Families with higher religious levels also limited their daughters' social lives and married the daughters off younger to prevent zina and sins due to violating the orders of the religions (El Arab and Sagbakken, 2019; Kohno *et al.*, 2020).

#### Solution to Teen Pregnancy

Marriage was thought to be the way out for unwanted teen pregnancies (teen pregnancies outside marriage) (Tirgari *et al.*, 2019; Kohno *et al.*, 2020). Families assumed that marriage was a form of responsibility for the actions that their daughters did. They felt not able to pay for the processes of pregnancy and labor hence marrying off their daughters to the ones that got them pregnant was the best solution (Tirgari *et al.*, 2019).

The girls also thought it was better to get married soon than not to have a husband when the child was born (Kohno *et al.*, 2020). Girls tended to support the parents' desire for them to get married soon because they did not have other solutions to solve the pregnancy problems they were going through. Abortion became another choice but it had bigger risks and induced the guilt of killing their own children (Kenny *et al.*, 2019).

#### Family Traditions

The traditions of family in marrying of the daughters at a young age was experienced by several families. The elders would choose the spouse with the best qualities in the economy, education, and morals to be married with their daughters (Henry *et al.*, 2015). The best proposals usually would be easily accepted despite the age of the daughters has not reached 18 (Nasrullah *et al.*, 2014). Families have matchmade their daughters since birth and would marry them off after they got their first menstruation (Hamid, Johansson and Rubenson, 2009).

Matchmaking was also often done with far relatives or close acquaintances of the families thus the daughters would not be able to refuse the marriage (Moreh and O'Lawrence, 2016). Refusals could destroy the good relationships that have been established among the families and embarrass the families thus the daughters

did not have the ability to refuse the proposals (Henry *et al.*, 2015). The daughters did not even know who the guys they would marry and did not even see the faces of the future husbands until the marriage day (Wahi *et al.*, 2019).

Regrets were often felt by the girls for having to marry strangers whose faces and characters were unbeknownst to them thus violence frequently occurred (Nasrullah *et al.*, 2014). Different from the previous cases, some girls mentioned they were happy and grateful that their parents matchmade them with good and attentive spouses (Kohno *et al.*, 2019). Their husbands helped the families' economy and encouraged them to still be able to live their teenage lives as usual (Wahi *et al.*, 2019).

#### Personal Desires of the Girls

Child marriage could also happen because of the desires of the girls themselves. Girls felt that it was their destiny to marry at the age that was considered young (Kohno *et al.*, 2020). Girls thought that marriage was a fun thing and it would bring them into maturity (Tirgari *et al.*, 2019). Marriage was also conducted as an expression of love to the spouses. The girls mentioned that when deciding to get married they did not think of the long-term impacts that would happen and only did it impulsively also did not think thoroughly (Kohno *et al.*, 2019).

Several girls said that they were disappointed by the decision to get married that they came up with by themselves as they have just realized that the guys they married were not the ones they loved (Segal-Engelchin, Huss and Massry, 2016). They only got carried away by the feelings of burning youth and decided to get married as a form of proof of love for the spouses at the moment. After marriage, a lot of things have changed including the behaviors of the spouses that made them seem like they were different people (Segal-Engelchin, Huss and Massry, 2016). The girls felt that getting married at an overly young age was a bad thing however some girls had a different experience.

Several cases mentioned that the girls thought of marriage as a way out to get love and attention that they lacked at home (Henry *et al.*, 2015). The girls expressed that getting married induced a comfortable feeling in them from having someone that would care for them. They felt loved and

treated nicely. They hoped by getting married early would fill the void and loneliness they felt all this time (Wahi *et al.*, 2019).

#### Married Lives of Girls Married at the Age Below 18

##### Self-Actualization

Girls married at the age below 18 felt the loss of opportunity to achieve success and self-achievements (Segal-Engelchin, Huss and Massry, 2016). Marriage indirectly buried their dreams away (Kohno *et al.*, 2019). The girls often lost the opportunity to get high education and a good career. The desire to go back to school was oftentimes blocked by the role switches after marriage (Mehrass *et al.*, 2017). Some cases mentioned that the husbands did not allow the girls to go back to school because of the desire to have children soon (Segal-Engelchin, Huss and Massry, 2016). Pregnancies and labors were also the causes of the married girls having difficulties going back to school (Al-Kloub *et al.*, 2019).

Not getting to go back to school caused the lack of skills and knowledge in them. They expressed that it was hard for them to look for proper jobs with the skills they possessed (Segal-Engelchin, Huss and Massry, 2016). They were not independent financially and relying their lives on their husbands. The girls usually were not confident to discuss decision-making in the families (Ketema and Erulkar, 2018). They did not think they had the sufficient capacities and experiences to solve problems. They were often thought to be too young and inexperienced thus their opinions were mostly ignored (Sedekia *et al.*, 2017).

Girls felt that marriage would not be a good thing when it was done too early hence they hoped their children in the future would not experience the same thing as them (Segal-Engelchin, Huss and Massry, 2016). Some girls mentioned a different condition in their marriage despite it was done early. They explained that they got understanding husbands thus they could continue their education with encouragement from their husbands. They thought that their husbands were kind since they were willing to pay and give consent for the wives to continue their education so they felt much more respected as women (Engebretsen *et al.*, 2020).

### Role Pressures

Girls that got married at a young age tended to experience confusion in facing the married life (Segal-Engelchin et al., 2016). They did not possess sufficient knowledge to perform their responsibilities as wives, in-laws, even mothers (Tirgari et al., 2019). The girls thought that marriage was a way out of the problems they had but did not realize that after marriage there would be even more problems that had to be experienced (Wahi et al., 2019). They assumed marriage would be so fun like in fairytales without knowing the big responsibilities that lied within (Segal-Engelchin, Huss and Massry, 2016). They mentioned the feelings of stresses, depressions, worries, and confusions when faced with the condition of sexual fulfillments, pregnancies, and child care (Al-Kloub et al., 2019; Tirgari et al., 2019; Wahi et al., 2019). The unstable emotional condition at a young age caused the erratic feelings (ambivalent) when facing these conditions (Al-Kloub et al., 2019).

The girls mentioned that they were too young to experience pregnancies and labor (Shahabuddin et al., 2016). They no longer felt the teen life like their friends because of their duties and responsibilities as wives and mothers (Al-Kloub et al., 2019). Feelings of being pressured often appeared because they had to face all the new things that they have never even learned before (Segal-Engelchin et al., 2016). Some girls that were matchmade said that they did not know about the sexual needs that had to be done with the spouses. They found it difficult and terrifying to face the situations (John, Edmeades and Murithi, 2019). They thought intimate relationships with their spouses were inappropriate and still felt too young to experience them (Segal-Engelchin, Huss and Massry, 2016). They also could not refuse and express their feelings as the things they were scared about were supposed to be normal in married life (Tirgari et al., 2019).

Pressures also often came from the spouses' families. The married girls had a role as the daughter-in-laws in the families. Some girls mentioned a stereotype in the families that forced them to fulfill the expectations as ideal wives for the spouses (John, Edmeades and Murithi, 2019). The girls were pushed to be able to cook, clean the house, and gave birth to a child. The families thought that the success of girls as wives was when they succeeded to give

birth (Henry et al., 2015). This condition generally caused fear in the girls that had gone through a year of marriage but still had no child. The girls also usually chose not to use contraception or postponing pregnancies due to the fear of infertility (Sedekia et al., 2017).

Several girls expressed that during the pregnancy-labor processes they often experienced certain conditions like severe anemia, preeclampsia, bleeding, appetite loss, and difficulties in labor (Beredugo et al., 2020). They were more worried about not having a child than the risks that could happen in pregnancies with the age of the mother below 18. They thought that by giving birth, they would be much more respected and accepted in the families for having fulfilled their role as ideal wives (Sedgh et al., 2012).

### CONCLUSION

This review has summarized that there were poverty, prevention of premarital sex, solution for teen pregnancies, and desires of the girls to marry as factors of marriage at the age below 18. This condition was affected by the backgrounds of culture, social, religion, and belief, therefore child marriage could not be generalized as an act that was wrong or right. There was a need for a deep understanding and a comprehensive approach to assessing the reasons for child marriage. The child marriage phenomenon could not be seen from one perspective only, there should be a thorough study on all aspects that might affect the odds of child marriage.

This review has also summarized the conditions of the girls in child marriage on self-actualization and role pressures that they were facing. The girls assumed that their marriage caused the loss of opportunity to go back to school and get self-achievements thus they could not fulfill their need for self-actualization. They also experienced confusion facing the roles in marriage. They thought sexual needs in marriage were inappropriate and difficult to meet. They thought they were too young to marry and experience pregnancies also labor. They also often had pregnancy problems such as severe anemia, preeclampsia, bleeding, and appetite loss. The child marriage generally caused new problems in girls' lives hence

doing child marriage at the age below 18 needed to be evaluated.

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