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## **"Underage Marriage: The Global Cultural Paradigm"**

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Fordham University

# **Underage Marriage: The Global Cultural Paradigm**

An analysis of underage marriage comparatively in Morocco,  
Bangladesh and the United States

Alexandra Murphy

11 December 2019

## **Abstract**

Underage marriage is a union where one or both parties is under the age of 18. Marriage before the age of 18 not only has severe health and developmental consequences for those that fall victim to the practice, but also economic consequences for regions where it is practiced. Many solutions have been proposed to eliminate underage practice, but with minimal results. The writing in this research explores the causes, effects and solutions of underage marriage comparatively between Morocco, Bangladesh, and the United States. Historical context, regional culture, and economic development are taken into consideration and analyzed to draw to the conclusion of a cultural paradigm.

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Dedicated to Nisreen

## **Introduction**

Underage marriage is a global issue that has persisted throughout history to modern day. In recent years, governments and organizations have begun addressing underage marriage with laws, reforms, and advocacy efforts. However underage marriage is far from extinguished. Why has the world not yet seen a radical downfall of the practice? Why is it practiced not only in developing countries, but in the progressive and ‘feminism forward’ west? Using research on Morocco, Bangladesh and the United States, the argument is made that underage marriage is a part of a cultural paradigm, and until there is a focus on culture shift, the phenomenon will continue. In this research the previous literature on the subject will be discussed, then historical context given. The countries are then analyzed separately, then comparatively to generate the underlying themes that direct to the final conclusion that underage marriage is, in fact, an issue of the culture.

## **Context**

I spent the first four months of 2019 living with a family in the old city of Rabat, Morocco. While there I spent the majority of my time interviewing women on their lives. Of the 30 women I questioned, about 20 of them had been married at or before 18. This includes my host mother, who was 22 (the same age as myself at the time) with a two-year-old son and had been married to a man 21 years her senior since she was 18. They had been courting since she was 17. A smaller portion of my time in Morocco was spent in a rural village outside of

Ouazzane with a population of only about 100 people. Over 90% of the women had been married before 18, with a large portion of them having had also given birth before or at 18. Within the family I stayed with, the mother was 37 with 3 children and had been married for 20 years. Her eldest daughter who no longer lived at home was 18 with a two-year-old child and had been married for 3 years to a man in his late 50's. the second eldest daughter, only 13, was 'on the market.' Her third child was a 9-year-old boy. One night in particular the eldest daughter and her 2-year-old joined us for dinner. There was a slight language barrier between us, considering I spoke only conversation levels of Moroccan Arabic and she was illiterate, but with the tools we had she divulged to me that her eldest daughter and her grandson visit them often because her daughter did not get along with her husband all the time and she missed her family. When I asked why then she got married, she told me that it was because she didn't want her daughter to end up like her. She grew up poor and was married young to a man in this rural farming village, which meant she did not get to go to school and learn how to read or write. She spent 12 hours of her day in a field on a mountain on her knees plowing peapods with a scythe, or herding sheep. In her spare time she would ride her donkey back home to prepare meals for her husband and children. The village had no running water, and the homes were built from scrap metal, mud and twigs with only basic lighting electricity had only just been added in 2005. Girls in the village were made allowed to attend secondary school just in the past five years. The mother told me that because her daughter was pretty, she was able to marry young to a wealthy man. It may not be what she wanted but in this arrangement her daughter at least would be able to continue her education and not have to work doing hard labor. It was seen as the lesser of two evils.

## **Methods and Limitations**

This research was conducted through an analytical framework. Having had a personal, vested interest in Morocco, and having seen underage marriage there first hand, the next step was to analyze the causes behind underage marriage. Bangladesh was chosen as a comparative base because of its high rate of underage marriage and its geographical distance to Morocco; The point of this essay is to prove the source of global perpetuation of underage marriage, so geographically diverse focal points were a necessity. The United States was chosen to analyze because of its vast economic and cultural differences to the two former countries- the point being to identify the still ongoing problem of underage marriage, even in a developed western country. To conduct this research, government documents, academic articles, books, news reports, national surveys, and NGO research were analyzed through a comparative lens.

Language played a limiting role in the research, as many government documents for Morocco and Bangladesh were written in French and Bengali, respectively. However many of the relevant documents had been translated professionally to English by scholars and the United Nations, so translation sites were not a necessity.

## **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **Wealth and Child Marriage**

Research has shown that as socio-economic standing in a household increases, rate of child marriage decreases. As can be seen in table 2.4 in the EICM Global Synthesis Report (pg.



27), marriage of women before the age of 18 occurs at a rate of 74.4% in the poorest level of well-being, while it is reduced to a rate of 43.6% within the richest households. While this is a significant decrease, it is still a persistent issue plaguing over half of the Bangladeshi population. So why is it still a problem even within the wealthiest percent? Women, in any economic standing are seen as a financial burden, as they are often not allowed or not educated enough to work. Families also attempt to marry their daughters as young as possible for fear the dowry price will increase with the girl's age. It is seen as more cost effective to marry a girl off young with a smaller dowry than to house the girl for additional years, pay for cost of living, and accumulate a larger dowry. (*International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Vol. 6 pg. 1-7*)

### **Economic Paradigm Large Scale: Impacts of Child Marriage on the Economy**

The level of economic impact brought on by underage marriage varies by economic levels within each country. While there is not a clear cut effect of child marriage within the labor force earnings in every country, there is definitely proof of economic betterment with it's end. With early marriage, few women are given the agency for employment, and even fewer to become educated and earn livable wages. However with its end, countries could generate billions of dollars in revenue per year (*EICM pg. 61*). A lack of education for girls due in part to child marriage may have other negative effects on productivity and investments. If young brides are seen by their husbands as unable to make financial decisions for the household, this may reduce their ability to do so. Lack of earnings may also have a negative effect on social capital and networks, further reducing earnings potential. In turn, lack of earnings for women in the

household may reduce household investments in human capital, for example in terms of investing in education and health care for children (*EICM* pg. 62). Figure 1 below shows the correlation between child marriage and economic participation:

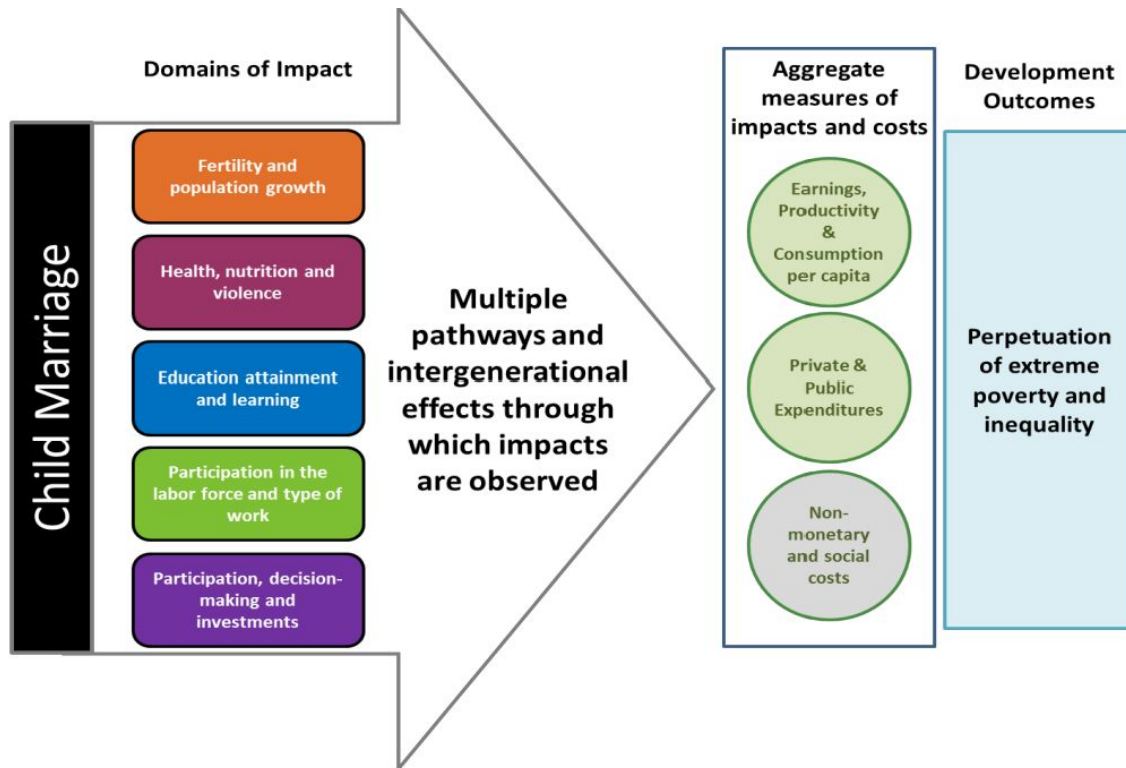


Figure 1. Impact of Child Marriage. (Source: *EICM* pg. 8)

### **Economic Paradigm Small Scale: Cost/ Benefit Analysis**

Ending child marriage would entail costs for households and governments due to higher educational attainment for girls, but these costs would be small in comparison to expected benefits. For households, both out-of-pocket and opportunity costs would need to be absorbed if girls are able to pursue their education further. For governments, budget allocations would need

to be provided in order to be able to absorb a higher number of girls in public secondary schools. At the same time, the magnitude of these costs would typically be small in comparison to the expected benefits from better educational attainment for girls, including through higher expected labor earnings and a range of other positive outcomes in adulthood, such as lower fertility rates and overall better health.

## **Historical Overview**

### **Global Background**

Girlsnotbrides.org defines underage marriage as “any formal or informal union where one or both of the parties is under the age of 18.” According to Unicef.org, 12 million girls are married under the age of 18 each year, accounting for 21% of women worldwide. 650 million women alive today are victims of this practice. More than 150 million more girls will be married before the age of 18 before the year 2030.

### **Consequences**

Marrying under the age of 18 has direct negative effects on the lives of those who are at the center of the issue. According to Equalitynow.org, complications relating to childbirth and pregnancy is the leading cause of death for girls ages 15-19 worldwide. A child born to a girl in that age range is 50% more likely to die in its first year of life. In the US, girls married before the age of 18 are 23% more likely to develop serious diseases such as cancer and heart disease. Girls married before 18 are also 50% more likely to experience physical or sexual violence in their

lives. Early marriage directly affects education levels among girls as well. According to [girlsnotbrides.org](http://girlsnotbrides.org), girls with no education are three times more likely to be married before 18 than those with at least secondary-level education, with 60% of women ages 20-24 with no education having reportedly been married before the age of 18. Girls who marry young more often than not drop out of school if they are still attending to take on a more domestic role as a wife.

### **Morocco**

Morocco gained independence from France in 1956. The Moroccan Family Code, or Moudawana, was written first in 1958 by male religious scholars. Unlike other newly independent countries who tend to base their original constitutional documents from those of the country who colonized them, Morocco instead based their family code largely on Islamic texts. Specifically, the Maliki school of jurisprudence, one of the four major schools of thought within Sunni Islam. Author Fatima Harrak explains the correlation between the code and Maliki jurisprudence and therefore describes the contents of the original iteration of the Moudawana:

While the form was new, the substance was not; the code clearly stipulated: “For everything not included in this text you should refer to the school of Malik.” Also indicating close adherence to the classical Maliki law are the main sections of the Moudawana dealing with topics such as: tutorship for marriage (*wilaya*), right to compel a daughter (*jabr*) to marry, minimum age for marriage set at 15 for girls and 18 for boys, the husband’s right to divorce by unilateral repudiation (*tatliq*) and to marry up to four

wives at any one time (*ta'addud al-zawjat*), judicial divorce (*talaq qada'i*) at the wife's request for specific reasons as determined by Maliki jurisprudence such as lack of maintenance (*nafaqa*), lack of harmony (*shiqaq*), or harm (*darar*), male supremacy invested in the husband as the head of the family and it's provider, the wife's right to maintenance (*al-qiwama*) and her obligation in return to obey her husband (*ta'a*). (Farrak 2)

Because of the reformist movement started in 1992 by l'Union de l'Action Féminine (a women's equality group) as well as several other groups, substantial reforms were made in 2004. Today it is widely considered one of the most progressive codes in the Arab World. In these reforms, the minimum legal marrying age for woman was raised to 18, specifically sexist and degrading language was removed, divorce could now be initiated by women, women may retain custody of children in divorce, men can no longer divorce a woman by unilateral repudiation, tighter restrictions were placed on polygamy, travel restrictions on women were revoked, updated children's rights to international standards, and made sexual harassment and assault punishable by law.

Even though the minimum age for marriage for girls was raised to 18, there was a clause written into the code by the older men who oversaw it that allowed underage marriages to still take place with approval of a judge. This was written in supposedly for girls to marry if they fall pregnant underage so that their children can maintain legitimacy, or if the family cannot afford to provide for her and the husband to be can financially support her instead of her family. However, this clause has ended up acting as an opening for marrying underage. And while districts vary in their local laws, some places and particular judges are more prone to the

allowance of underage marriage. Under this clause, there is no age requirement for marriage approval. This clause also allows for the rape ratification marriages, saying that a rapist can escape persecution if they marry their victim.

Morocco committed to ending forced and early marriage by 2030, among several other countries, in accordance with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Morocco also co-sponsored the UN General Assembly on resolutions for early and forced marriage in 2013, 2014 and 2016. In 2017 Morocco agreed to the reexamination and possible reform of the Moudawana. A law criminalizing acts of harassment and violence against women was enacted in 2018, however neither underage marriage nor spousal abuse were addressed. As of 2019, no additional reforms to the Moudawana have been made.

## **Bangladesh**

The constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh was written and enacted in 1972, and as it is a single codified constitution, there is no family code similar to that in Morocco, nor is there any code specifying the laws of women or the family. Instead, women's rights are addressed in the general tenets of equality and human rights.

There are however several amendments to the constitution specifically addressing women's issues. The Cruelty to Women act of 1983 amends the constitution's penal code to include life in prison for the trafficking, abduction, or dowry-related abuse of women. The Dowry Prohibition Amendment of 1986 made the exchange of dowry punishable by law. In 1993 two trafficking-related amendments were added specifically addressing the penalty for forced

prostitution. In 2000 the Prevention of Women and Children Repression Act was implemented which eases the court process for cases regarding violence against women. The Bangladeshi government signed the UN Sustainable Development Goals and has committed to ending all underage and forced marriage by 2030. However, in 2017 a new law was enacted that added 'extenuating circumstances' to the minimum marriageable age, meaning that allowance of underage marriage will be determined case-by-case, with no minimum age for approval. Punishment for underage marriage is virtually nonexistent, with maximum sentencing being up to one month in prison or a fine equivalent to \$13.

In 1982 Myanmar declared that the Rohingya Muslim minority was one of several ethnic groups that could not claim Burmese citizenship, virtually rendering them all displaced. Since this declaration the Rohingya people have been consistently persecuted. In 2017 the Arkan Rohingya Salvation army carried out several attacks, leading to violence on the part of Myanmar security forces, and culminating in 600,000 mass-emigration to Bangladesh.

## USA

The Great Depression of 1920s America brought declining rates of marriage and childbirth overall, as many people could not afford to marry. However in the 1930s, the US went through a widely publicised 'child marriage scare', as more and more cases of radically early marriages became highlighted by the American media. The average age of first marriage had in fact gone up since the 1920s, however, a focus on this phenomenon acted as a unifier for American citizens. The majority of these marriages took place in poverty-stricken rural southern

communities, giving middle-class white people a good vantage point for looking down upon those in poverty, with many publications comparing the ‘incivility’ of the south and India. The Chicago Tribune published an article titled: “Evil of India Repeated Here,” (Syrett, 221). Because of this readily available explanation, people did not bother to ask why underage marriage was persistent in the rural south. In reality, childhood was not treated with a widely differing outlook to adulthood, as children would often work and participate more as functioning society members in order to assist their families and make money. Because of poverty and isolation, the cultural acceptance of early marriage was much more lax.

In the 20 years post World War II, the amount of high school-aged marriages spiked. In 1956 the average age for first marriage for women was 20.1, and the average age for men was 22.5, with the vast majority of girls being married at 18. In the book *American Child Bride: A History of Minors and Marriage in the United States*, author Nicholas Syrett points out the correlation between marriage and war, stating “The uptick in marriage and the decline in age at first marriage both began in the 1940s as the United States entered what would come to be known as World War II. As one Sociologist explained at the time, the increase in marriages tracked consistently with events overseas, even before the US had entered the war.” With men being shipped off to war, many highschool-aged couples rushed to get married pre-deployment. Later the author delves further into the ‘teenage marriage crisis’ of the post-war years:

The explanation for why so many people married is threefold: as other scholars have noted, there was an intense preoccupation with domesticity from the end of WWII through the early 1960’s. This glorification of nuclear family life placed pressures on all Americans, including those in the teen years, to marry and raise families. Spinsterhood



and Bachelorhood were newly stigmatized... secondly, from the early twentieth century, standards of permissiveness around premarital sex had gradually been loosening, especially for middle-class girls. As the century wore on, it became increasingly acceptable for middle-class girls to experiment sexually with their dates, especially if they were 'going steady' or engaged. That said, in an era before the pill was widely available and when being prepared for sex with contraceptives might mark a girl as promiscuous, sex was often spontaneous and unprotected, and that resulted in unplanned pregnancy... one result of this, in addition to unwed motherhood and secretive adoptions and abortions, was what some people called 'forced marriage, so named because the pregnancy necessitated a shotgun wedding. That marriage was still seen as the solution to premarital sex and pregnancy is also telling. (Syrett, 228-229)

In the 1940's and 50's the US saw a trend of portrayal of teenagers as miniature adults in media alluding to teens that as they were basically adults, they could do everything that adults could, which included marriage- the ultimate adult act. During this time the nation was specifically concerned for the wellbeing of white middle-class teenage girls, because they were the ones thought to have promising futures. Not that marriage would ruin their potential, as marriage and domesticity was their inevitable future, but that 'children raising children' would have a bad outcome on society. Meanwhile, rates of underage marriage in minority groups in the United States for the most part stayed consistent from 1900s-1970s.

In the United States the national minimum age for marriage is 18. However, all states except for New Jersey and Delaware have younger age requirements for extenuating circumstances. Of those 48 states, Idaho, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, New

Mexico, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Washington, West Virginia, and Wyoming have no minimum age with extenuating circumstances. There are 10 states with a minimum age of 17, 20 states with a minimum of 16, 4 with a minimum of 15 and 2 with a minimum of 14.

## **Case Studies**

### **Morocco**

Girlsnotbrides.org reports that in 2017, 3% of girls were married by 15 and 16% were married by 18. However, the actual numbers of underage marriage are much higher, as many cases of early marriage go unreported. According to research done by Droits & Justice, a non-profit based in the capital city of Rabat aiming to promote the Rule of Law, the frequency of underage marriage has actually increased since the 2004 Moudawana reforms. At almost a 50% increase, 2004 had a reported 18,341 cases of underage marriage, while 2013 had 35,152. In 2015 41,669 requests were submitted to courts for the permittance of underage marriage. Of those, 99% were for underage girls to marry older men. Of those requests, 85% were approved. In 2012, sixteen-year-old Amina Filali committed suicide after being forced to marry her rapist (Amnesty International). This brought to light the common occurrence of rape-ratification forced marriages in the country, allowed by the clause in the minimum age for marriage law in the Moudawana.

### **Cultural Ideology Context**

Women in Morocco are constricted with narrow gender norms. Because of this, women experience a certain amount of pressure to marry. Women are expected to marry young and

perfect the art of domesticity: cleaning the entire house every day, taking care of children, cooking meals, grocery shopping, etc. Those with money often continue their education, however rarely put their degree to use as their job is seen to be motherhood. In poverty, the women do the hard labor-mostly farming and ranching- as this is included in their expected domestic checklist. Early marriage is often considered an escape from this laborious lifestyle. As sex outside of marriage is illegal in Morocco, marriage is seen as a legitimizer for those who are sexually active or fall pregnant outside of wedlock. This is also seen as a solution in cases of rape. Divorce is very taboo in Morocco, to the point that a large portion of women are unaware of their divorce rights. Those in poverty and illiterate are often manipulated into marriage and kept purposefully unaware of their rights so divorce is not a consideration.

### **Bangladesh**

Bangladesh has the fourth highest rate of underage marriage in the world, with 59% of girls married before 18, and 22% married by 15. Location plays a factor in probability of early marriage, with 54% of women in urban areas being married before 18, and 71% of women in rural areas. 88% of women with little-to-no education were married before 18, in contrast to 26% of educated women. Only between 45-55% of women in Bangladesh are actually aware of the legal age minimum for marriage. A survey shows that the average age for marriage for Bangladeshi women is about 16.4 years (plan-international.org). Natural disasters play contributing roll in early marriage, and as the country experiences frequent flooding, this means many families live in unsafe conditions and will often marry off their daughters as a safety tactic in hopes the daughter will move to a more secure location. Displacement plays a large role in the frequency of underage marriage. A total of around 809,000 Rohingya immigrants have fled to

Bangladesh since 2017. Within the refugee camps, rates of rape, harassment, assault and other forms of violence are higher than in integrated communities. Refugees will often participate in underage marriage in exchange for security food rations.

### **Cultural Ideology Context**

A high level of importance is placed on the virginity of girls in Bangladesh, so child marriage is used as a way of policing sexuality in the country. More often than not it is the decision of the father who their daughter will marry and when, so the decision is made early on in order to be positive of the girls virginity, therefore keeping the family honour. Dowry practice, though illegal in Bangladesh, is still a contributing factor in early marriage. This is because the younger the bride, the lower her dowry price needs to be as she is still 'pure' and has her youthful beauty. As a girl gets older, the price goes up with her age and 'unattractiveness.' Sexual inequality is largely a driving force, as women tend to be used as tools to strengthen bonds and boost wealth and honor.

### **USA**

Rates of underage Marriage in the US have been declining, however the issue has hardly been eradicated. The number of early marriages dropped about 61% from 2000 to 2010, with the later having a reported 9,247 underage marriages occur. At least 250,000 children were married in the US between 200-2015, with a higher actual number expected if the nation had full statistics publicly available. 85% of those marriages were young girls, and 77% of those were to older adult men. Of the states with available statistics, Idaho has the highest prevalence of underage

marriage, occurring at a rate of about .29%. Underage Marriages occur more frequently in southern states, and in communities that have higher rates of poverty and religious conservatism. Marriage in the US is occurring with less frequency in general in the past decade, with more and more millennials opting to wait until their late 20's to early 30's to get married, if at all.

### **In the Media**

In 1994, 27-year-old R&B musician R Kelly married 15-year-old singer Aaliyah. It has since become public information that he bribed a government employee to get Aaliyah a fake ID stating that she was 18. At the time the news hit, her real age was not publicly knowledge, as her and producer Kelly purposefully kept it a secret. The marriage was annulled in 1995. The public had suspected a relationship between the two, however with curiosity more so than concern. Kelly seemed to even taunt the public with their indiscretions, titling Aaliyah's first album "Age Ain't Nothing But a Number" wherein which a young girl tries to seduce an older man. Kelly wrote the song. The two would always interview as a pair, even wearing matching clothes. When asked her age, Aaliyah's usual response was a deflection, and when asked of the relationship between them, the pair would always just describe themselves as really close friends. Even after the death of Aaliyah in 2001, and the release of a sex tape that included R Kelly and an underage girl, the public seemed to turn a blind eye. Several of R Kelly's songs and albums went platinum, and he continued to release popular music until 2018. Kelly was taken to court six times between 1996-2004 for production of child pornography and sexual harrassment, among other things. However, none of these cases were widely publicised, and his music still played nationally. It wasn't until victims started approaching the press in 2017 and the documentary series *Surviving R Kelly* aired in 2019 that people seemed to reevaluate the past and recognize the problems with

what had been going on and why the US as a country allowed it to happen. After the airing of the series, Kelly was dropped by his record label, charges of sexual assault were filed against him, and he was hit with federal indictments in Brooklyn and Illinois. In December 2019 he was finally charged for bribery of a government official in regards to his marriage license with Aaliyah.

In 2017 the #MeToo movement reached new heights in the US, acting as a catalyst for the progression of recognition of sexual assault and harrassment victims. hundreds of thousands of people voiced their support and shared their own experiences with abuse. however, even through the new progressive lense of the post-MeToo era, underage marriage still persists in the country.

## **Analysis**

There are commonalities between the causes and effects of underage marriage across the globe, indicating the phenomenon is merely a result of country development or socio-economic status. Historically underage marriage has been addressed by asking, “what are the direct causes?” But what needs to be asked instead, is “why does the culture allow for this to take place?”

## **Religion**

Many make the case that beliefs within Islam are not only accepting of the practice, but that Islam the root of the tradition. While more traditional interpretations of Islam are perpetuated in certain places, and misinterpretations are common among those with lower levels of education, the claim that the faith itself states it's acceptance of underage marriage is simply untrue. Islamic Relief explains the relation between marriage and Islam in their report titled *An Islamic Human Rights Perspective on Early and Forced Marriages*:

Marriage, in the Islamic worldview, is an important part of building healthy and protective relationships, families, and societies. In order for an Islamic marriage to be valid, it has to meet certain criteria, which ensures the health, security and wellbeing of the couple, their families and their communities. In Muslim communities around the world, marriage takes on many local customs and cultural forms. Islam allows this cultural diversity as long as the practices do not cause harm – specifically, as long as they do not contradict the principles of Islamic law that seek to protect human beings. (Islamic Relief, 3)

Underage marriage is a direct violation of the human rights that Islamic law protects in its teachings. Furthermore, it's occurrence outside the Islamic faith, is evidential that the national faith of Morocco and Bangladesh is not direct cause of underage marriage. In the United States, underage marriage is found in several religious communities including Orthodox Judaism, Mormon, Muslim, and Sikh, among others. The conclusive evidence to be found here is that it is not the particular religion that aids in the perpetuation of underage marriage, but the level of conservativity and traditionality in faith itself that gives way to permittance of the practice.

## **Solutions**

Several solutions have been promoted by the various NGO's and nonprofits that address underage marriage. Educating women and girls on their rights and better access to education is a main solution. Nevertheless, this has proven to only slightly reduce instances of child marriage. While it is true that the higher the level of education, the less likely to be victimized by underage marriage; however this does not help those in poverty who are most prone to becoming victims. In the small rural communities where early marriage is most commonly practiced, a full comprehension of mathematics is not necessarily helpful. The implementing and changing of laws in order to facilitate the decrease of underage marriage is commonly thought to be the most immediate solution, however though evidence seen in Morocco and Bangladesh, law changes are not always effective. Women's and girl's empowerment is another common solution. In practice, though, this has turned the issues at community-scale to view the problem from a more western global-scale. Teaching girls in Bangladesh or Morocco to be more like western feminists is a setup for failure, as the differences in countries are too vast. Educating men and community leaders on the trauma of early marriage is another solution, however the problem is deeper rooted than understanding the inappropriateness of the practice- it comes from a culture built on gender inequality. For progression to take place, the problem needs to be addressed at the community level with respect to the local culture, with a combination of the solutions mentioned above.

## **Conclusion**



Underage marriage still persists through the blocks placed in front of it and the restraints put on it worldwide. Through nonprofit outreach and education on the issue, it persists. Through law reform and leadership change, it persists. Through poverty in rural countrysides and wealth in urban cities, it persists. This is because of the cultural paradigm that supports the inhumanity of this practice. In all three of the countries used for research, the commonality is disrespect of women integrated deeply into each culture, not for any one reason. Several causes are behind this belief, such as traditionality and conservatism. Socio-economic standing and country development play a roll, as well as ethnicity and religion. However for a definitive end to come for underage marriage, an answer is needed as to why culture and sexism go hand-in-hand. Throughout history child brides have been used as pieces in a board game where men are the main players. The only real solution is found in a combination of all solutions used before, but with a focus on cultural shift.

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