



EARLY MARRIAGE AMONG MUSLIM LEARNERS IN LAMBAYONG

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Abstract

The study aimed to explore the experiences of early marriage Muslim learners and their coping mechanisms. This research used qualitative research. The participants of the study are five (5) Muslim learners who are already married at Sigayan Integrated School for the school year 2022-2023. A researcher-made interview guide questionnaire was used to collect the necessary information and responses came from the participants of the study. Thematic analysis was used to process the responses of the participants. Ethical considerations were given priority while getting and extracting the necessary responses from the participants.

On their experiences, before getting married as a student there are three (3) generated themes of their experiences a. Selling and Studying, b. Household chores and c. Finding ways to feed my siblings. On the issue of who pushes them to get married in that early stage, three (3) themes were generated. Such as a. Arranged Marriage, b. Married for a living, and c. Poverty. On their experiences after getting married as a student two (2) themes were generated in this section such as a. Childs' priority and b. Overcoming bullying. On coping mechanisms as a mother and students two (2) themes were generated in this section such as a. Time management and b. Hard work due to responsibility.

That this study might be widely replicated to provide a more accurate picture of early marriage using a quantitative approach.

Keywords: *Early Marriage, Muslim Student, Coping Mechanism*

1.INTRODUCTION

As the school year begins in several districts across the country, many students are finding it difficult to study, particularly those who are already married. However, they continue to attend their classes. Early marriage, often known as child marriage, is defined by UNICEF as the marriage of a girl or a boy before the age of 18.

Early marriage has been practiced for generations, owing to custom as well as poverty (Ahmed, 2015). Parents used to arrange the betrothal of their infant children as a way to bring two families together in the past. In today's world, early marriage is frequent in rural areas or places where girls have few options. The would-be brides have no say in the matter because the marriages are agreed upon by guardians or other family members, and the girls have no decision-making power. Girls are frequently married young to give stability, safety, and the assistance of a male guardian. Parents and relatives consider the issue of "honor," since they may wish to ensure that their daughters marry young to grooms who are approved by their family

Muslims are not the only ones who marry young. However, according to the most recent research, it is most common among Muslims. The conservative Muslim voice is the most powerful factor of opposition to changing the age of marriage rules. As this resistance has grown in size and strength, Sisters in Islam have been forced to pay more attention to it. It is maintained that because a girl can marry once she reaches puberty in Islam, no regulation imposing a minimum age for marriage can be applied to Muslims. This is set at 16 years for girls and 18 years for boys under the Islamic Family Law (Federal Territory) Act 1984 (IFLA). However, with the consent of the Sharia Court, exceptions are permitted.

Early marriage is one of the social concerns affecting the integrity of some Muslim households in Lambayong I District nowadays because of the challenges and problems that immature boys and girls experience when they marry.

This study investigated early marriage difficulties in Lambayong I District, particularly in Sigayan Integrated School. The goal of this research is to give data based on documentary analysis and interviews with people who were involved and were available. It will rely largely on Islamic literature to back up or refute some of the arguments that support or refute some of the popular perceptions of child marriage in the community where it is practiced.

The theory that contributed to the development of this study was the Functionalist theory by Durkheim. He explained in his theoretical approach that society is held together by the shared beliefs, sentiments, and values of its members. That is to say, society exists because of the consensus (agreement) to follow the rules to keep society stable. Sociologists view society as a complex but orderly and stable system with interconnected structures and functions, or social patterns, that operate to meet the needs of individuals in a society (K. Bell, 2013). From a functionalist perspective, marriage is a social process of legitimizing the sexual relationship between a man and a woman that gives social recognition to their offspring. However, when marriage occurs at an early age, it rather becomes a problem.

Another theory associated with this study was the Social Exchange Theory by George Homans. It is a concept based on the notion that a relationship between two people is created through a process of cost-benefit analysis. Social exchange theory says that if the costs of the relationship are higher than the rewards, such as if a lot of effort or money were put into a relationship and not reciprocated, then the relationship may be terminated or abandoned (Nickerson, C, 2022).

This is the reason why the researcher needs to conduct an early marriage study to provide greater understanding and address the needs of learners who got early married.

This study aimed to explore issues of early marriage among Muslim learners in Sigayan Integrated School.

The study focuses on the experiences of their life before and after getting married. There are five (5), student-mother parents, from Grades VII to X at Sigayan Integrated School as participants in the study for the School-Year 2022-2023.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used qualitative research which is a research approach that allows the researcher to interpret the life of people to understand their problems better and deeper. A multiple-case study includes two or more cases or replications across the cases to investigate the same phenomena. The difference between the single- and multiple-case studies is the research design; however, they are within the same methodological framework (Yin, 2017).

The multiple case study design is a valuable qualitative research tool in studying the links between the personal, social, behavioral, psychological, organizational, cultural, and environmental factors that guide organizational and leadership development. Case study research is essential for the in-depth study of participants' perspectives on the phenomenon within its natural context. Rigorously designed management and leadership case studies in the extant literature have a central focus on individual managers' and leaders' stories and their perceptions of the broader forces operating within and outside their organizations, (Thurman,2016).

A researcher-made interview guide questionnaire was used to collect the necessary information and responses come from the participants of the study.

This study was conducted at Sigayan Integrated School in the municipality of Lambayong school year 2022-2023. The researcher preferred this school in Lambayong because it has students identified who got early married.

The participants of the study were five (5) Grade VII to Grade X student-mothers at Sigayan Integrated School. Wa-Ambaleka (2018) proposed several participants with a minimum number of participants so that a researcher can get to a data saturation level, and a phenomenological research design has a minimum of five (5) participants. The criteria for choosing participants for the study were the early married students only in Sigayan Integrated School since they are the ones who face or personally experience challenges and can provide reliable data. The participants in the study used pseudonyms to protect their privacy. The research setting is only one school. It is very important to fully describe the research setting because it helps the readers visualize and decide on their own whether or not the findings of your study apply to them (Lune & Berg, 2017).

Total enumeration used in identifying the participants of the study.

Total population sampling is a type of purposive sampling technique where you choose to examine the **entire population** (i.e., the **total population**) that have a particular set of **characteristics**. In sampling, **units** are the things that make up the population. Units can be **people, cases** (e.g., organizations, institutions, countries, etc.), **pieces of data**, and so forth. When using total population sampling, it is most likely that these **units** will be **people**, (Cali 2016).

A researcher-made interview guide questionnaire was used and was based on experiences and challenges encountered by the student participants of the study. It was validated by a panel of evaluators as to the content and grammar using the Good and Scates Validation Instrument, suggestions and recommendations from the panel of evaluators were incorporated. It was pilot-tested among selected parents in Grades I to Grades III

The instrument for data collection was a 3-Part interview guide survey questionnaire.

Part I has elicited the experiences they encountered before they got married.

Part II was on the experiences they encountered after they got married.

Part III was on their coping mechanism as a mother and students.

In the gathering of the data, the researcher asked permission with notification from her research adviser and the Graduate School Dean, and the Schools Division Superintendent of Sultan Kudarat Division. Upon approval, the researcher coordinated with the principal to schedule the in-depth interview and focus group discussion with the participants. Audio recordings will also be implemented to transcript their responses.

After those processes, the ethical consideration was followed, inform or seek consent from the participants of the study that they voluntarily present themselves as the participants of the study. Lastly, all gathered responses were used for academic purposes and were not used against the participants and the organization.

After the in-depth interview and focus group, discussion the responses of the participants processed by Coding, which is the process of assigning meaning to different parts of the data (Miles et al., 2014).

The researchers used the following approach to analyze the data collected: (1) thoroughly read the narratives of each participant; (2) extract substantial statements; (3) formulate meanings; (4) organize the collection of meanings into themes; (5) interpret the themes and; and (6) give recommendations. The researchers interpreted the stories shared in everyday life in the same way that narrative analysis is done (Magulod et al., 2021).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Described their experiences before getting married as a student

There are various factors contributing to the existence of early marriage including male dominancy, parents' ignorance, and social forces. Early marriage is most likely to occur

among girls who are poor, have low education levels, and live in rural areas. It denies girls opportunities to educate and to build life skills, separates them from family and friends, compromises their ability to assume health promotion practices and seek timely care, and enhances their vulnerability to considerable health and social problems (Montazeri 2016).

There are four (4) categories and three (3) generated themes on their experiences before getting married such as **a. Selling and Studying**, **b. Household chores** and **c. Finding ways to feed my siblings**.

Selling and Studying is the first themes that were generated. As the participant shared their thought:

*"Nagtitinda po ako noon habang nag-aaral ng module para makatulong sa aking mga magulang, sa mga gastusin sa bahay". (I used to sell while studying my module to help my parents with household expenses). **Participant 1 (Baimanot)***

Doing Household chores is the second theme that was generated and the participants shared their experiences.

*Noong wala pa akong asawa tumutulong po ako sa tindahan ng aking nanay at tumutulong din po ako sa mga gawaing bahay. (I used to help in my mother's store while doing household chores when I was single). **Participants 2 (Sarifa)***

*Mahirap lang po kami. Pag sasaka ang trabaho ng aking mga magulang. Tumutulong po ako sa mga gawaing bahay at inaalagaan ko rin ang mga kapatid ko. (My family belongs to low income and my parents are farmers only. I help in our household chores and took care of my siblings). **Participant 5 (Laga)***

The third and last theme generated was **Finding ways to feed my siblings**. The participants shared their experiences as.

*Mahirap lang po kami at marami kaming magkakapatid at ako pa ang panganay. Pinagsasabay ko po ang pagmomodule at paghahanap ng paraan para makakain kami araw-araw. (Since I am the eldest, I need to find ways to feed my siblings while I am doing my modules). **Participant 4 (Ipaw)***

Early marriage has a wide-ranging negative effect on girls beyond education. Girls who are married young are more likely to suffer from psychological disadvantages (Ahmed et al., 2013) (e.g., lack of self-esteem and depression) and sexual abuse with increasing risks of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV (Clark, 2004, Clark et al., 2006). Young married girls also start child-bearing soon after marriage with increased health risks from complications in pregnancy and death during delivery, low-birth weight, and high risk of infant mortality (UNICEF, 2005, Godha et al., 2013, Raj et al., 2010). Young married girls are victims of long-term violence (Santhya et al., 2010).

On the issue of who pushes them to get married in that early stage

Early marriage and parenthood are encouraged by Iranian culture. In Iran, puberty and menarche are considered as time of transition to adulthood. Girls reaching this biological threshold means becoming eligible for marriage, regardless of age. According to Iranian civil law, the legal age of marriage is set at thirteen for girls and fifteen for boys (Montazeri, 2016).

On these issues on the who pushes them to get married in that early stage. There are five (5) categories generated and three (3) themes where generated. Such as a.

Arranged Marriage, b. Married for living, and c. Poverty

Early arranged marriage was very common in the past, and mate selection was mostly determined by parents and confirmed by kinship system. In the recent decades, early arranged marriage has still remained common in certain parts of the country regardless of the wide acceptance of modern familial values, norms, and attitudes toward marriage. In Iran as a multi ethnic society, marriage patterns are different among ethnic groups. Torabi and Escherichia illustrated that socioeconomic characteristics of ethnic groups differently influence the timing and probability of Iranian women's marriage.

The first theme that was generated were **Arranged Marriage**, as the participants shared their supposed on this issue. *“Ang aking mga magulang po kasi ipinagkasundo nila ko sa aking napangasawa ngayon. (My parents agreed to an arranged marriage for me)”*. **Participant 1 (Baimanot)** *“Ang aming mga magulang po kasi nahuli nila kaming nagadate. Bawal po sa Islam ang magboyfriend kaya kinasal kami agad. In Islamic rites, it is forbidden to date, someone. (So, when my parents caught me dating my boyfriend they agreed to get us married)”*. **Participant 3 (Kikay)**

The second theme that was generated was, **married for living**, as the participants shared them though on this. *“Mga magulang ko po kasi mahirap kami matutulungan daw kami ng aking mapapangasawa sa pagtatrabaho upang mabuhay kami. (It’s my parents who decided to get me married to the man who will help us in our living)”*. **Participant 4 (Ipaw)**.

Poverty is the last theme that was generated based on the responses of the participants. As they described. *Ang aking mga magulang po. Siguro po kasi mahirap ang buhay namin at hindi na nila kami kayang buhayin. (It’s my parents who pushed me to get married early because we are poor and they cannot sustain our living)*. **Participant 5 (Laga)**

The themes that was generated was similarly to the finding os Montazeri 2016, Socioeconomic and cultural factors are the main determinants of age at marriage in Iran. Poverty that compels parents to marry off their daughters, parents’ tendency for the bride price (mahrieh), social and political ties, women’s low socioeconomic status, and religious beliefs prohibiting extramarital sex have been identified as reasons for girls’ early marriage in Iran.

A study by Matlabi 2016 et al. also revealed that the most important factors of early marriage in rural areas were traditional issues and cultural poverty, low awareness of girls and their parents about the risk of child marriage, negative attitude towards the continuation of education, freedom from undesirable and rigid rules of parents, and low authority of girls and lack of power to make decision.

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On their experiences after getting married as a student.

Predominant kinship system still continues to follow bilateral lines and spousal choice is widely considered to be up to those getting married (Jones, 2010) note the many influences on the marriage and system tend to operate differently among members of different social classes.

There are five (5) categories and two (2) themes where generated on this section such as **a. Child’s priority** and **b. Overcoming bullying**.

Times have changed. Every year, fewer millennial are choosing to get married. Such a choice stems from a negative attitude towards marriage. Since religion is less present in young people’s lives, they see marriage as merely a piece of paper and nothing else (Dillon, 2021).

Childs’ priority was the first themes generated based on the responses of the participants.

As the participants shared their thoughts that they gave priority on the needs of their child.

“Dati sarili ko lang ang aking problema ngayon nadagdagan ang aking iniisip. Noon nakakapasyal pa ako kasama ang mga kaibigan ko ngayon hindi na puwede kasi inaalagaan ko na ang mga anak ko. (I used to think of myself only before but not now. Before I can go around with my friends but now I cannot because I need to take care of my child first)”. **Participants 2 (Sarifa)**

“Mahirap po pagsabayin ang aking pag-aaral at buhay may asawa dahil magluto, maglaba at kung ano-ano pa ang gagawin mo sa bahay. Mas mahirap po noong

nagkaanak ako kasi mas busy na po ako at minsan po hindi na po ako nakakapasok sa school pero pinipilit ko pa rin mag-aral. It's hard to study When you are married because you do all the household chores. (It is harder when I bear a child, sometimes I can't go to school but I'm trying my best to go in school". **Participant 4 (Ipaw)**

According to National Center Against Bullying, defines Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behavior that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening. Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records). Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

Thus, the second and last theme generated was, **Overcoming Bullying**. As the participants shared their thoughts on this matter. *"Muntik na ako mag stop mag-aral kasi may ibang nagatukso sa akin na malandi daw ako hindi daw ako makatapos mag-aral pero hinayaan ko nalang sila at iniisip ko na dapat akong makatapos at makamit ang aking pangarap kahit may asawa na ako. (I almost stopped studying because some people teased me for being flirt and cannot finish my studies. I ignored them and continued my studies so that I can reach my dreams even if I am married)".* **Participant 3 (Kikay)**

May mga tao po na sinabihan ako na ang bata ko pa pero nag-asawa na daw ako, malandi daw ako ma'am pero hindi ko sila pinapansin, ang importante nag-aaral pa rin ako dahil gusto kong matuto at makapag tapos ng pag-aaral ko. (Some people told me that I'm still young but I'm already married. I heard some negative words but I ignored them because I want to finish my studies). **Participant 5 (Laga)**

On coping mechanism as a mother and students

Coping is defined as the thoughts and behaviors mobilized to manage internal and external stressful situations. It is a term used distinctively for conscious and voluntary mobilization of acts, different from 'defense mechanisms' that are subconscious or unconscious adaptive responses, both of which aim to reduce or tolerate stress (Folkman 2022).

There are five (5) categories and two (2) themes were generated on this section such as **a. Time management and b. Hard work due to responsibility**.

According to Corporate Finance Institute, define **Time management** is the process of planning and controlling how much time to spend on specific activities. Good time management enables an individual to complete more in a shorter period of time, lowers stress, and leads to [career success](#).

The first theme was generated on the experiences of the pupils after getting married was **Time management**.

As the participants shared their thoughts on these matters.

"Gumigising po ako ng maaga para maasikaso ang aming kailangan sa bahay, pagkatapos ay papasok na po ako sa paaralan. Ginagawa ko po ito araw-araw".(My daily routine is to wake up early to prepare for our needs at home, then go to school). **Participant 5 (Laga).**

The second and the last theme generated was **Hard work due to responsibility**.

Successful people commit to taking personal responsibility for their lives, careers and success. Hard work and self-confidence are an important part of committing to personal responsibility. So is realizing that none of us are entitled to anything. We have to earn what we get. Ruben Navarrette (2023) makes a great point to native born Americans when he suggests we pay attention to recent immigrants and emulate their work ethic. He made me

think about my immigrant grandparents and how hard they worked to build a better life for themselves and their families. I like to think that I have a lot of them in me – and that my hard work accounts for a lot of my success.

As the participants shared their feeling on the hard work they made due to their responsibilities. *“Kailangan po akong mag doble kayod para magampanan ko ang pagiging nanay at pag-aaral ko. Kailangan ko lagi gumising ng maaga para sa aking anak pagkatapos mag-aaral na ako. (I need to work hard to do my responsibilities as a mother and a student. I need also to wake up early for my child’s necessities and after that, I’ll go to school)”*. **Participants 2 (Sarifa)**. *“Gumigising po ako ng maaga para maasikaso ang mga kailangan sa aming bahay at makapasok ng maaga sa paaralan. Late na po ako matulog minsan para matapos ang mga Gawain sa bahay. (I need to wake up early to do my tasks and provide for my family’s necessities at home before going to school. Sometimes, at night, I sleep late doing household chores)”*. **Participant 4 (Ipaw)**

4. MAJOR FINDINGS

The study aimed to explore the experiences of early marriage Muslim learners and their coping mechanisms.

This research used qualitative research which is a research approach that allows the researcher to interpret the life of people to understand their problems better and deeper to generate solutions that are relevant to their situations. The participants of the study are 5 Muslim learners who are already married at Sigayan Integrated School for the school year 2022-2023. A researcher-made interview guide questionnaire was used to collect the necessary information and responses come from the participants of the study. Thematic analysis was used to process the responses of the participants. Ethical considerations were given priority while getting and extracting the necessary responses from the participants.

The salient findings of the study are:

On their experiences, before getting married as a student there are three (3) generated themes of their experiences before getting married a. Selling and Studying, b. Household chores and c. Finding ways to feed my siblings.

On the issue of who pushes them to get married in that early stage, three (3) themes were generated. Such as a. Arranged Marriage, b. Married for a living, and c. Poverty.

On their experiences after getting married as a student two (2) themes were generated in this section such as a. Child’s priority and b. Overcoming bullying.

On coping mechanisms as a mother and students two (2) themes were generated in this section such as a. Time management and b. Hard work due to responsibility.

5. CONCLUSION

Early marriage affects the learners’ whole being and their education. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that before the student-mothers got married, they had experienced selling and studying, household chores, and finding ways to feed their siblings. And the reasons why they got married were because of arranged marriage, married for a living, and poverty. Further, it was concluded that after getting married, they decided to continue their studies, and the unforgettable experiences they’ve faced were child’s priority and overcoming bullying. Finally, the researcher concluded that student mothers need to address the challenges they have encountered. There are ways to cope with and overcome these challenges. Time management and hard work due to responsibility help them to continue their studies amidst adversity as a mother and student and to pursue their dreams someday.

From the salient findings of this study and the conclusion reached, the following recommendations are presented;

1. The students may continue their studies amidst adversities as a mother and students.
2. The school may sustain the anti-bullying policies in school to have zero bullying incidents in school.
3. The school may conduct yearly parents' orientation about early marriage under GAD program.
4. The schools that have Muslim learners will adopt the Bangsamoro Fatwa about early marriage.
5. That this study might be widely replicated to provide a more accurate picture of early marriage using a quantitative approach.

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