

**MENACE OF CHILD MARRIAGE IN PAKISTAN: AN  
EXPLORATORY STUDY FROM LEGISLATORS'  
PERSPECTIVE**



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A thesis submitted to the National University of Sciences and Technology, Islamabad,

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**Supervisor: Dr. Muhammad Ammad Khan**

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## ACRONYMS

CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
SDGS	Sustainable Development Goals
PDHS	Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CEDAW against Women	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
SDT	Social Dominance Theory
SDO	Social dominance orientation
MNAs	Members of National Assembly

## **ABSTRACT**

This research explores legislators' perspectives on child marriage and relevant legislation in Pakistan, aiming to understand the challenges associated with the implementation of child marriage laws from the perspective of legislators. This study employs a qualitative research approach, using Key Informant Interviews with 13 legislators from both the Houses of Parliament of Pakistan (National Assembly and Senate). The findings reveal diverse perspectives among legislators regarding child marriage, with some acknowledging it as a pressing issue requiring legislative intervention, while others emphasize the importance of social and cultural factors in addressing the issue. Challenges related to the implementation of existing laws, including patriarchal attitudes, poverty, and inadequate legal socialization, are identified as significant barriers. Child marriage in Pakistan is a complex topic that involves legal, social, cultural and religious aspects. By analysing the themes and ideas of respondents, the researcher has uncovered the obstacles and complexities involved in resolving this widespread occurrence. When legislation and social norms collide, it is clear that legal frameworks alone are not enough to address child marriage. This study contributes to the existing literature by providing insights into legislators' views on child marriage and legislation in Pakistan, which can inform evidence-based policy-making and intervention strategies to address this social issue effectively.

**Keywords:** Children's rights, Poverty, Child marriage, Legislation

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

This chapter will delve deeper into the specific cultural, socio-economic, and legislative factors that contribute to the prevalence of child marriage in Pakistan. Globally, children are made subject to violence in different ways. Every year, millions of children around the world suffer extreme poverty, homelessness, lack of education, exploitation, and forced labour. According to recent data from the United Nations (UN), there are around 250 million children residing on the streets, 115 million who have never had the privilege of an education, a heart-breaking number of children who are forced to participate in armed conflicts, and 211 million children who are employed in poor working conditions (UNICEF, 2020, p. 1). However, child marriage is one of the many violations of child rights rampant around the globe. The history of the practice of marrying children dates to ancient societies. It reveals that this custom is centuries old and is found in many other regions of the world (Mrabure, 2020). In the current age child marriage still exists around the globe, and underdeveloped countries follow the tradition of marrying off their children at a young age. The situation worsens, particularly in South Asian and African countries (Batyra, 2021; Huda, 2022). Data shows that globally, 650 million girls and women are married before they reach the age of majority (Wahhaj, 2022). Moreover, it is expected that another 150 million girls are expected to be married as children by 2030 (Samad et al., 2022).

According to (Malhotra, 2021), child marriage constitutes a violation of children's rights as it affects a child's right to education, health, security, life and choice to whom they would like to marry while attaining the age of majority. However, these rights are incorporated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979. Thus, every child is entitled to protection from this detrimental behaviour, which severely affects both people and society (Trask, 2021).

According to Brownlee (2020), the development of human life and society made people aware of the importance of human rights and how every gender needed access to fundamental human rights. It is essential for every human being to enjoy childhood without worries about the world. Marriage puts a sense of responsibility on an individual; recognising fundamental

rights among theorists and social protesters led the contemporary world to take certain phases to protect fundamental human rights. Protecting children from marriage in childhood is one of them.

The general perception towards child marriage is that it is a marriage held between two immature persons, male or female, where either or both of them are minors and have not attained the age of majority, i.e., less than 18 years of age. They live together as spouses after solemnizing the marriage. However, child marriage is usually considered to be involuntary as the spouses are mentally immature and do not understand the consequences of marriage. Additionally, they are unaware of the responsibilities imposed upon their shoulders because of that marriage. Therefore, child marriage is defined as a marriage held between two immature people, male or female, where one or both of the children, less than 18 years of age, live with the partner being married (UNICEF, 2011, p. 5).

Pakistan is one of the South Asian countries where the malpractice of child marriage is in galore. Most of the children in Pakistan have traditionally been underprivileged, underrepresented and overlooked in multiple aspects of life. This deprives them of the opportunity to use precious years of their adolescence. Lack of education and guidance leads to a life of poverty, dependency, and exploitation for these children. Especially immature girls are subject to child marriage. In a survey conducted (Chowdhury, 2021), 50 percent of women around the country were forced into marriage before the age of 18. The survey's findings suggest that 50 percent of women nationwide were coerced into marriage before turning 18 years old (Phiri et al., 2023). This worrisome number underscores the extensive occurrence of child marriage in the country, impacting women from many origins and areas.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to emphasize that the study does not provide information on whether the occurrence of child marriage differs across rural and urban regions. The research is necessary to comprehend the intricacies of child marriage prevalence in rural and urban areas, considering the socio-economic gaps and distinct cultural norms that exist between them. Policymakers may find difficulties in customizing initiatives to successfully address the distinct obstacles women and girls encounter in rural and urban areas without precise data on the differences between these contexts.

As the UN has designated 2020-2030 as a decade aimed at ending child marriages (Plesons, 2021) several international Human Rights Conventions on child rights have recognized the rights of children and also imposed an obligation on its signatory states to legislate at the state

level appropriate law to prohibit child marriages. Pakistan is also a signatory to the child rights conventions mentioned earlier.

In Pakistan, the laws on the issue of child marriage are:

1. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929
2. The Sindh Child Marriages Restraint Act, 2013
3. The Punjab Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 2015

Initially, there was ‘‘The Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 (Act XIX of 1929) and the Section 2(a) of ibid Act defines the term ‘‘Child’’ which is as follows:

‘‘Child means a person who, if a male, is under eighteen years of age, and if a female, is under sixteen.’’

Section 2(b) of the ibid Act defines the term ‘‘Child Marriage’’ which is as follows:

‘‘Child marriage means a marriage to which either of the contraction parties is a child.’’

Under international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a "child" is defined as "Every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier." (OHCHR, 1989, p. 1).

This definition is broadly accepted globally and emphasizes recognising individuals under 18 as children unless specified otherwise by local laws.

In Pakistan, the definition of a child can vary slightly depending on the specific context or the legislative framework being referenced. According to most Pakistani laws "A child is defined as any person under the age of 18."

This aligns with international norms. However, certain laws might have specific provisions; for example, the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act defines a child as anyone under the age of 18 and makes child marriage illegal for those under this age. Other provinces in Pakistan have similar legal frameworks, although the enforcement and specific definitions may vary slightly.



### **1.1.1 Defining the “Child” in Child Marriage**

International organizations (UNICEF and UNFPA, save the children, UN) define Child marriage occurs when one or both families involve in this matter are under the age of 18. This definition is best matched with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibits marriage under the age of 18 in international and many national laws. However, at the national level, definitions of child marriage vary, posing challenges to implementation. Many religious and cultural traditions mark adulthood at puberty or initiation rites, often leading to marriages shortly thereafter (Adolwa et al., 2012; Amin et al., 2011).

Defining child marriage is a fundamental step in addressing its prevalence and impact, particularly in regions like Pakistan where the practice is deeply rooted. The critical issue that is child marriage is not only a social and cultural practice but also a violation of human rights, affecting both genders, although it predominantly impacts young girls.

### **1.2 Problem Statement**

As we have established the historical and global context of child marriage, it is crucial to narrow our focus to specific challenges faced within Pakistan. This brings us to the core of the issue at hand—the persistence of child marriage despite existing laws and initiatives. Child marriage remains a deeply entrenched issue in Pakistan, marked by its complexity involving social, cultural, legal, and religious factors (Chowdhury, 2021). Despite legislative efforts, child marriage continues to persist, mainly affecting underprivileged young girls across various regions of the country (Phiri et al., 2023). This practice not only violates the fundamental human rights of children but also has severe implications for their health, education, and overall life trajectory.

Child brides in Pakistan frequently suffer from domestic violence, lack autonomy in family decisions, and bear an unequal burden of household responsibilities. They are pushed into proving their fertility at a tender age, leading to numerous health risks and social isolation (Rajwani, 2015). The psychological and physical repercussions of early marriage contribute to a cycle of poverty and dependence, trapping young women in roles that stifle their development and opportunities.

Child marriage remains a significant social problem in Pakistan with deep repercussions for the well-being and development of children, particularly young girls. Although there have been some recent advances, such as a decrease in the proportion of women getting married before the age of 18, child marriage is still common in rural areas of the country (Javed,

2021). Previous studies such as (Latifiani, 2019; Yaya, 2019) have thoroughly examined the complex difficulties linked to child marriage, such as negative impacts on health, education, and financial independence, especially for young girls (Raj, 2019). Much research has explored child marriage in Pakistan. However, there is a lack of understanding regarding politicians' views on this subject and the efficacy of present legislative actions (UNICEF, 2019).

Comprehending the perspectives of legislators is essential for developing evidence-based policies and intervention techniques to tackle intricate social problems such as child marriage (Pracha, 2016). Understanding the perspectives of legislators is crucial for developing effective policies and intervention strategies to address complex social issues such as child marriage. Legislators play a central role in formulating and implementing laws and regulations that impact society. By comprehending their viewpoints, policymakers and stakeholders can gain valuable insights into the challenges, barriers, and opportunities associated with addressing child marriage at the legislative level.

Legislators know their communities' and constituencies' socio-cultural, economic, and political dynamics. Their perspectives reflect individual beliefs and values and broader social norms and ideologies. Therefore, engaging with legislators allows policymakers to identify the underlying causes and drivers of child marriage within specific contexts, enabling the development of targeted and contextually appropriate interventions.

The current literature does not thoroughly examine parliamentarians' viewpoints on child marriage laws in Pakistan and the obstacles faced in enforcing them. This gap impedes the creation of focused treatments and efficient policy measures to address child marriage effectively. It is crucial to study legislators' views, beliefs, and experiences concerning child marriage laws to pinpoint obstacles to successful implementation and guide policy reform initiatives in Pakistan.

### **1.3 Significance of The Study**

The significance of this study lies in its concrete identification of theoretical, empirical, and methodological gaps within the existing research on child marriage in Pakistan. Theoretically, the study addresses a critical lack of understanding regarding the legislative mindset and its influence on the efficacy of laws against child marriage. It ventures beyond general discussions of legal frameworks to probe the attitudes and beliefs of legislators themselves, who play a pivotal role in shaping and implementing these laws (Granot, 2019).

This approach adds a crucial layer to our theoretical understanding of policy effectiveness in the context of deeply ingrained socio-cultural practices (Butler, 2021).

Empirically, the study fills a significant void by generating new data from legislators, a group that has been relatively underexplored in existing studies on child marriage. Most prior research has focused on community perceptions and the experiences of individuals directly affected by child marriage. By shifting the focus to legislators, the study provides insights into the challenges and barriers at the policy-making level, offering a new dimension to the data landscape that can inform more nuanced policy interventions (Sidanius, 2017).

Methodologically, this study innovates by employing qualitative methods to capture the nuanced views of legislators, a method underutilized in past research predominantly characterized by quantitative analyses of child marriage's prevalence and impacts. This qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the complex reasons behind the persistence of child marriage despite existing laws, highlighting the discrepancies between legislation and its implementation.

Having delineated the problem statement and identified the critical gaps in current research, we must now explore the significance of addressing these gaps. Understanding the importance of this study will highlight the potential impact of legislative insights on policy development and child welfare in Pakistan.

This study has the potential to contribute to the improvement of policies and interventions targeting the complicated issue of child marriage in Pakistan. The study aims to provide significant insights into the gaps and possibilities within the present legislative framework by examining legislators' viewpoints on child marriage laws and implementation issues. Comprehending legislators' perspectives can reveal obstacles to successful implementation and guide the creation of more thorough and focused measures to address child marriage in Pakistan. The study's results can stimulate discussions and advocacy initiatives to enhance legislative reforms and enforcement mechanisms to safeguard the rights and well-being of children, especially young girls, who are significantly impacted by child marriage practices.

The study's emphasis on Pakistan is crucial because of the country's high incidence of child marriage and its impact on the socio-economic progress and human rights of its people (Makino, 2019; Saleem, 2019). Pakistan encounters distinctive socio-cultural and structural obstacles that impact the continuation of child marriage practices, such as traditional norms,

poverty, restricted educational and healthcare opportunities, and gender disparities (Naveed, 2020; Nazneen, 2019; Raj, 2019). The study will offer insights into the variables that contribute to the continuation of child marriage in Pakistan and the challenges associated with resolving this issue within the country's socio-cultural and legal framework. A specific understanding is crucial for creating interventions and policies suitable for different populations in Pakistan. The study's results should guide evidence-based approaches and efforts to decrease the occurrence of child marriage and enhance the rights and welfare of children in Pakistan.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

This research aims to highlight possible gaps within the present legislative framework. To achieve this aim, this study sets the following objectives:

- I. To explore legislators' perspectives on child marriage and existing legislation in Pakistan.
- II. To explore the challenges associated with legislation and effective implementation of child marriage laws in Pakistan from the legislators' perspective.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

The research questions of the study are as follows:

- I. How do legislators perceive child marriage and relevant legislation in Pakistan?
- II. What are the challenges associated with legislation and effective implementation of child marriage laws in Pakistan from the legislators' perspective?

#### **1.6 Relevance to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Child marriage in Pakistan is intricately connected to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations, precisely Goal 5: Gender Equality and Goal 4: Quality Education. Ending child marriage is in line with achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, as outlined in Goal 5. Child marriage maintains gender inequalities by denying girls their rights to education, health, and independence, thereby impeding advancements in gender equality. Child marriage exacerbates poverty and sustains social and economic disparities, hindering progress towards achieving Goal 1: No Poverty and Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Pakistan has advanced in accomplishing SDGs, particularly in education, health, and gender equality. The country has shown dedication to enhancing education accessibility, especially

for girls, by implementing programmes to boost enrolment rates and minimise gender gaps in school attendance. Pakistan has also made attempts to tackle maternal and child health problems by enhancing healthcare accessibility and advocating for family planning.

Pakistan has recently made progress in promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. Legislative reforms have been implemented to enhance women's rights and safeguard them from detrimental practices like child marriage. Awareness campaigns and community-based initiatives have been put in place to alter cultural attitudes and norms regarding gender roles and to empower women to make well-informed decisions about their lives. Although there have been advances, there are still problems that require focused efforts to speed up progress in reaching the SDGs and putting an end to child marriage in Pakistan.

### **1.7 Organisation of the Thesis**

This thesis encompasses five main chapters, beginning with an introduction that elaborates on the study's central concepts and the theoretical and conceptual framework, along with the research questions and objectives that the study aims to achieve. The second part of the thesis constitutes the Literature Review, which refers to previous studies in a similar research area. Then, in the third chapter, the Research Methodology is discussed in detail, giving an account of the nature, approach, strategy, and design of the research, followed by sampling strategies, research methods, research instrument, and data analysis techniques. The fourth section is Results and Discussions, which are the significant findings of the research. All the themes derived from the data are discussed in this section, followed by the last part of the thesis, Conclusion and Way Forward, which sums up the study and includes recommendations, results, and scope of the study for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter serves as an essential pivot in understanding the breadth and depth of existing research on the issue of child marriage. This review will critically examine the global and local contexts, shedding light on how various regions have responded to the challenges posed by child marriage. By reviewing the literature, this chapter aims to uncover patterns, gaps, and opportunities for legislative and social intervention that have been previously outlined but perhaps not fully explored or implemented. This synthesis of global and regional insights sets the stage for a deeper understanding of the underlying dynamics and the efficacy of current interventions in combating child marriage.

### **2.1 Global Scenario**

In this section globally, child marriage remains a critical issue, especially in developing regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and parts of Latin America. The prevalence of child marriage is often intertwined with socio-cultural norms, economic pressures, and religious practices, which collectively encourage the perpetuation of this practice. Research indicates that child marriage is not merely a product of poverty or inadequate legal frameworks but is deeply rooted in the societal norms that influence gender roles and expectations. Studies from various countries have highlighted the complex interplay of factors contributing to child marriage, including the significant role of social norms that dictate the acceptability of such practices within communities. These insights emphasize the need for a multidimensional approach in policy-making and intervention strategies that address the underlying socio-cultural and economic factors contributing to child marriage.

The issue of child marriage has been common throughout human history. It continues to be widespread worldwide, specifically in developing countries: parts of Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, West Asia, Latin America, and Oceania.

(Taylor, 2019) conducted a research study to understand the roles of social norms in child marriages in the context of Latin America. The issue of child marriages arises in societies not just because of the lack or ineffective implementation of state laws. Still, social norms and agencies of societies also have a lot to do with the prevalence conceptualized in which ways social norms direct minor girls/ women and men to indirectly get influenced by those norms that lead to child marriages and unions. The findings of the study revealed that these social norms lead to the acceptability of girls towards the practice of early marriage.

Currently, almost 700 million girls worldwide are married before they turn 18. In Sub-Saharan African and South Asian nations, it is common for women aged 38 and 30 to have married before turning 18. Another reality is that women who marry early tend to have more children than those who marry later. They are younger when they give birth to their first kid and have children more closely spaced together.

The practice of child marriage is highest among girls in West and Central Africa; however, it occurs throughout the world. According to (UNICEF, 2017, p. 6), it is five times more common in girls than boys. The same report says that around 4 in 10 girls in Central and West Africa regions were married before reaching the age of 18. Moreover, 1 in 3 child brides were married before the age of 15. Nigeria is a country in West Africa. Early marriages are prevalent in this country, like other countries of this region. (Tchoukou, 2020) described the role of religion and feminisation of culture in Nigeria in nexus to child marriages. Repetition of this practice from generation to generation in this country talks a lot about the feminisation of culture and socially engrained male dominant norms of the Nigerian society. This study's findings discussed how conceptual practices of power and male dominance impact legal practices in a country. This study further expressed a need to see the issue of child marriages as a 'female sex' issue and not as a cultural or religious issue because the practice has a lot to do with power dynamics than with merely cultural, social or religious dynamics. It is a manifold ideology that works on so many parallel lines.

(Mwambene, 2018) conducted a research study in the context of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Malawi to analyse recent responses to child marriages in these countries. In these countries of Southern Africa, despite introducing many laws to end child marriages, the issue remains persistent. This research article examines the ways the selected countries of this study address the conflict between cultural practices that ultimately lead to child marriage. The author of this article also highlights the issues that the law reformers face in regulating such deeply rooted cultural practices. These countries, still, are to be lauded for various law reforms to counter child marriages. These laws seem to be paving the way to fight early marriages in these countries.

Melnikas and his associates conducted a research study on the dimensions of child marriages and the perceptions related to the minimum age to get married in Malawi (Melnikas, 2021). Child marriage is an important issue in Malawi. 2015 Marriage, Divorce, and Family Relations Bills effectively banned child marriage; however, the practice of child marriage has

not stopped in the country. The study's findings suggested that people have some knowledge about the existence of such a law that deals with a minimum age to get married. Contrarily, there exist ways around the law in which either girls or their parents want the girls to get married. There are issues in the enforcement of laws as well because sometimes parents marry off their girls due to early age pregnancy. On the other hand, girls blame their parents that they should play an effective and responsible role in the enforcement of laws.

South Asia is a highly populated region where child marriage is prevalent. Many South Asian nations have similar environments and circumstances, such as poverty, illiteracy, underdevelopment, and religious extremism, that are conducive to child marriages. Despite various attempts made by nations and development groups in South Asia to prevent child marriages, the elevated incidences in the region necessitate a thorough examination of the issue and more effective measures for its eradication (Naveed, 2020).

The socioeconomic indicators of the region, like illiteracy, abject poverty, religious fundamentalism, and patriarchal society leading to the marginalization of women, are what make the South Asian environment more or less the same for every country in the region. Many young girls are married in this region because of cultural, social, and religious traditions. It keeps them disadvantaged physically, psychologically, and economically. The rate of child marriage is the second highest in this region, only behind West Africa (Naveed, 2020). The research study (Naveed, 2020) states that Bangladesh has the highest rate of child marriages in the region (66 percent), followed by Afghanistan (57 percent), Nepal (51 percent) and India (46 percent). These four countries are the hotspots of this evil of marrying young girls. Behind the practice of child marriage, there is a strong interplay of social, economic and legal forces.

In another study on early marriages in the South Asian context (Scott, 2021), the findings were similar to those mentioned above. Pakistan was found to have a rate of 37 percent of early marriages in the country. The findings of this study revealed that the socio-economic indicators and state of laws signal that eliminating early marriages as a part of SDGs seems impossible by 2030.

Bangladesh has the highest rate of child marriages in the region of South Asia; therefore, this issue is considered to be a significant challenge to the socio-economic development of Bangladesh. This issue has remained persistent throughout the country's history (Akter, 2017). The government of Bangladesh has taken several initiatives on social and legal fronts



to combat the menace of early marriages. Still, the rate of early marriage has not been decreased to a satisfactory level. Eliminating this issue is crucial for the sustainable development of Bangladesh. (Shukrana, 2020) carried out a study to explore ramifications and solutions for the child marriage laws that exist in Bangladesh because, in recent years, it has taken into account many legal measures to counter the issue. However, the evil remains persistent in the country. Bangladesh recently reformed the previous Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929) to the new Child Marriage Restraint Act (2017).

In old colonial law, the marriage of minors was criminalized. In the new law, a girl under 18 years and a boy under 21 years (age criteria of the old law) are allowed in particular circumstances and have not been criminalized. The circumstances, with the parent or guardian's consent and with the court's permission – as per Section 19 of the law – are deemed “in the best interest of the underage female or male”. Special circumstances have not been specified in the law, and according to a research study (Shukrana, 2020), these will lead to another spike in the rate of early marriages in the country. The findings suggested that the new Act clearly violated national and international human rights standards. The government of Bangladesh justified this move as a move in alignment with the country's socio-economic indicators; this study's findings suggested that the new Act conflicts with the national and international human rights standards.

Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA), 1929, was a colonial act in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India (CMRA, 2016). It has been reformed in India and Bangladesh, two countries with higher child marriage rates in the region of South Asia. However, it remains toothless, mainly in Pakistan, another populous Asian country (Naveed, 2020). Pakistan is the fifth most populous country in the world, with a population growth rate of 2.8 percent. With a huge youth bulge and burgeoning population, the issue of child marriages is rampant in the country. Socio-economic indicators of the country, like illiteracy, poverty, gender gap, and lack of justice, are what act as catalysts in the prevalence of the menace of child marriages in the country. Deep-rooted social, cultural, patriarchal and religious elements in Pakistani society paired with legal challenges in the ways of effective implementation of child marriage laws at the federal and provincial levels are what worsens the situation in the country. (Arthur, 2018) did a research study on child marriage laws around the world. A close analysis of minimum age criteria in child marriage laws around the world suggests that marrying a child below the age of 18 years is considered to be a child marriage. This study reveals that

apart from age criteria, gender disparities have a lot to do with child marriage laws, not just in developing countries but also in developed countries all around the globe.

## **2.2 Child Marriage in Pakistan**

In this section discussed child marriage is both a social and legal challenge in Pakistan, exacerbated by the country's complex interplay of cultural norms, poverty, and gender disparities. Despite the existence of laws such as the Child Marriage Restraint Act, enforcement remains inconsistent, and the practice persists, particularly in rural areas where traditional beliefs are strongly entrenched. The legal framework in Pakistan sets different minimum ages of marriage for males and females, which reflects and reinforces gender inequalities. Moreover, the legislation varies across provinces, leading to a lack of uniformity in addressing the issue nationwide. Studies suggest that a significant proportion of child marriages in Pakistan are influenced by traditional customs and familial pressures, often underpinned by patriarchal values that undervalue the autonomy and rights of young girls. The persistence of child marriage in Pakistan not only violates the fundamental rights of children but also hinders efforts towards gender equality and socio-economic development.

Child marriages are considered a violation of the fundamental rights of the children. International conventions impose obligations on the signatory states to legislate on recognising and protecting human rights in their respective local/national laws. Pakistani Government complied with the international obligations and enacted the laws mentioned in the sections mentioned above to restraint child marriages in the country. Human rights are also recognized and guaranteed in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which contains a complete chapter on the fundamental rights of citizens. Chapter 1 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan deals with fundamental rights. Article 25 of the Constitution deals with equality before the law, and it is stated as follows:

“(1) All citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law.

(2) There shall be no discrimination based on sex.

(3) Nothing on the Articles shall prevent the state from making special provisions to protect women and children.”

Article 25 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan states that all citizens are equal before the law, and there shall be no discrimination against the citizens. The law shall

equally treat its subjects, but at the same time, the provisions of the said article shall not be a hurdle to making special provisions for the protection of the rights of women and children.

Moreover, Chapter 2 of the Constitution enunciates the principles of policy, which are guidelines for the policy makers of the Pakistan government. In this chapter, Article 35 deals with the Protection of Family, etc., which states as follows:

“The state shall protect the marriage, the family, the mother and the child.”

It depicts that the policymakers in Pakistan have a top priority in protecting the family structure. The Pakistani government shall not also make effect laws through legislation; instead, they will also make such policies to protect children and restrain child marriage and family.

Pakistani laws are specific on the instant issue as the marriage of a child in the case of a boy below the age of 18 years and in the case of a girl below 16 years is prohibited. It will, instead, not be recognized/legalized; moreover, arranging such marriage is a punishable act by Section 5 of The Punjab Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 2015. Besides this, another law titled The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961 (VIII of 1961) states that consent of the boy and girl is mandatory for contracting a marriage in Pakistan.

The laws mentioned in this section are fully implemented in Pakistan. The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 is enforced to the extent of Punjab and other provinces of Pakistan except the province of Sindh, which has its legislation on the same subject titled “The Sindh Child Marriages Restraint Act, 2013 (Act No. XV of 2014)”. Under section 2(a) of this Act, marriages between spouses under eighteen years are illegal.

Child marriage is prevalent in Pakistan due to its strong ties to tradition and rituals, poverty, limited schooling opportunities, and insecurity. Pakistan ranks sixth globally in the number of women who get married before the age of 18, which is considered a significant violation of girls' human rights according to the country's laws. According to the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) 2017-18, one out of every three girls in Pakistan is married before becoming 18 years old. The Federal Child Marriage Act of 1929 and the Punjab Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act of 2015 set the minimum age for females to marry at 16 years and for boys at 18 years in Pakistan. The Sindh Assembly passed the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act in April 2014, raising the minimum age for marriage to 18 for both girls and boys. Early-age marriage regulations in Pakistan have led to a decrease in early-age

weddings. However, achieving a society free of early marriages would be challenging. In 1990–91, 70% of women were married by 18. This number decreased to 67% in 2006–07, 63% in 2012–13, and 50% in 2017–18 (Malik, 2022).

**Table 2.1:** Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) data from 2017-18

<b>Age at Marriage</b>	<b>Percentage of Women</b>
Up to 16 years	27.79%
Up to 17 years	37.72%
Up to 18 years	49.27%
Up to 19 years	58.57%

Marriages at a young age have many social, physical, economic, and health consequences for teenage girls and their offspring. Child marriage is considered a criminal act and a breach of human rights. Early marriage of females is a significant problem in Pakistan. Social indicators like patriarchy, marginalization of women, poverty and illiteracy, and legal orientation are some of the factors that can be found at the back of the increasing child marriage rate in Pakistani societies.

According to the UNICEF Report (2022, p.24) titled-Pakistan Maternal Nutrition Strategy 2022-2027, women’s median age for first marriage in Pakistan is 20.4 years, and countrywide, 29% of women are married by 18 years of age. In most early marriages, the actual age of the child bride is concealed. Furthermore, child marriages increase the odds of experiencing early-age pregnancies. A survey by the Population Council of Pakistan (2022) shows that 35 percent of women in the country carry their first child before the age of 18 years. These elements have a close nexus with early-age marriages in every society where child marriages are common. South Asia, being one of the epicentral regions of child marriages, depicts deeply engraved roots of these social and legal indicators in the region.

It is mentioned in the preface of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan that the sovereignty of the whole universe belongs to Almighty Allah. Moreover, it is also expressly mentioned in the constitution (ibid) that the legislature shall not make any law in contravention of the injunctions of Islam. Islamic injunctions regarding marriage explicitly

mention that the sons and daughters must be married on time, meaning thereby that both the boy and girl must be mature and not minors. Moreover, it does not promote child marriages. It further insists that the consent of both contracting parties should be free and necessary for the solemnization of marriages. It strictly prohibits child marriages.

Islam places responsibility upon the shoulders of parents to treat both boys and girls equally and equitably. It does not allow the parents to give preference or priority to girls or boys to detriment the rights of others. Therefore, anything that undermines the rights of any child, either boy or girl, is discouraged and disallowed by the injunctions of the holy Quran and Sunnah. According to Islamic provisions, women have the right to express their consent freely in the context of their marriage. No one can arrange their marriage against their consent (El Alami, 2023). It is made crystal clear in Sunnah through the saying of the Holy Prophet (SAWW) that the consent of a woman for her marriage is mandatory, and her parents cannot force that consent. These Islamic injunctions expressly emphasize that child marriages are disallowed.

According to The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929, a marriage that occurs before the legal age, which is 18 years for men and 16 years for females, is considered child marriage in Pakistan. Before April 2010, the "Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929" was the sole valid tool to prevent early weddings until the 18th Amendment. The law on underage weddings is outlined in Sections 4, 5, and 6, and it has corresponding legal repercussions similar to other offences. The revised Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 (XIX of 1929) defines a "child" as a male under 18 years of age and a young girl under 16 years of age. Child marriage is now defined as a marriage when both parties consent to marriage while being underage, and its violation is a punishable infraction that can result in fines. This practice is commonly observed among young females (Zia, 2018).

Child marriage is associated with a variety of health-related problems (John, 2019). Young girls have tiny pelvises and are not physically prepared for childbirth, leading to either premature or delayed delivery, both of which pose risks and can result in numerous complications. It asserts that there is an 88% risk of developing an obstetric fistula between the ages of 10 and 15 in young girls with tiny pelvises. Additionally, females aged 10 to 14 are five to seven times more likely to die after childbirth. High mortality rates are attributed to postpartum haemorrhage, infection, and obstructed labour. Additionally, they are also at risk of contracting venereal disease or cancer (Rajwani, 2015).

They exhibit their fertility by engaging in frequent and risky sexual activity with their older polygamous partner. When a young woman produces less breast milk, it might make her kid more susceptible to diseases. When a girl gets married in adolescence and moves to her husband's house, she is expected to take on the roles of a spouse, homemaker, and eventually a mother at a young age. Alternatively, her spouse could also practice polygamy, leading to their relationship facing challenges such as her feeling alone, ignored, and disheartened (Rajwani, 2015). In Pakistan, the prevalence of early marriage has decreased over the past thirty years (Javed, 2021). In 2017 and 2018, 39% of married women aged 15 to 49 got married before turning 18. Although still elevated, the current incidence is lower than the 54 percent reported in 1990 to 1991. 65.65 percent of women who married before 1980 were 18 or younger. The proportion has decreased to 25.31 percent among women who were married in the last decade compared to women who got married previously (Javed, 2021).

Many people believe in marrying their daughters before they reach the age of 18 if a suitable marriage proposal is received, as Islamic teachings encourage parents to marry off their daughters once they reach puberty. Religious leaders have a crucial role in Pakistan, exerting a strong influence on their communities. The strong influence of religious leaders might alter the willingness of parents to marry off their child at a much younger age. Varied interpretations of religion may also have a role in the persistence of child marriage traditions in Pakistan (Wilcox, 2018).

Shariah Law defines puberty as the stage at which young females reach menstruation and young men develop facial hair, indicating they are eligible for marriage. However, due to a lack of awareness and limited knowledge, especially in rural areas where many people are uninformed, the mandatory requirement in Shariah for mutual consent of both marriage partners is often disregarded, leading to frequent occurrences of child marriage. Some religious authorities believe that it is essential for both the boy and girl to grow physically and psychologically before marriage (Wilcox, 2018). Marriage requires the approval of both parties, including the girl, personally or through her guardian. Disregarding the girl's consent goes against Islamic teachings. Parliament has passed laws declaring social practices like Vanni and Ghag unlawful and against Islamic injunctions (Pracha, 2016).

Pakistan is a federation with four provinces, which have – as federating units – autonomy in terms of legislation and policy. Under such autonomy, child protection is a provincial subject. Therefore, Sindh has enacted the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013, and Punjab has

its own Punjab Child Marriage Restraint Act 2014. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is about to bring its Child Marriage Restraint Act in 2021. The Bill to amend the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, with the Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 2019 was presented by Senator Sherry Rehman in the National Assembly in August 2021. It has been proposed that this bill be enforced in Islamabad Capital territory.

A critical analysis of the child marriage issue in the socio-legal context of Pakistan shows that merely the presence of laws like the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 and amendments made in it at the provincial levels will not resolve the issue (Razi, 2021). CMRA 1929 was a colonial legacy Pakistan got and applied to date. However, provinces got provincial autonomy after the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Punjab Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 2015 and Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2014 are products of the 18<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment. The severity of punishment in both acts and the increase in the age of girls from 18 years to 16 years in the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013 are the hallmarks of both provincial acts. However, a study (Nations, 14 February 2019) depicted that more than 140 million minor girls (below the age of 18) got married during 2011-2020 in Pakistan. The same study states that both the existent laws in Punjab and Sindh have failed to bring any considerable decline in the rate of child marriages in the country. The rate is even higher in rural areas where the patriarchal dominance is deeply rooted in the society.

In Pakistani culture, marriage is viewed as a union of family groupings rather than just two individuals. Most weddings are planned with a family member, friend, or outsider, facilitating the couple's union, even if they have never met. Many marital partnerships in Pakistan are characterized by early age or forced marriages. In Sindh province, a young woman usually relocates to her husband's residence following the Nikah ceremony. In Punjab, they don't need to move in with their in-laws immediately after marriage, which often delays the consummation of the marriage and reduces the risk of early pregnancy. Socially, parents are expected to protect their daughter until she moves to her husband's house. However, if she becomes pregnant while living with her parents, it risks dishonouring the family. Bartering commodities, jewellery, furniture, or other assets as part of a marriage is often associated with familial honour (Makino, 2019; Saleem, 2019).

In Punjab, the bride's family often presents wedding presents to the husband as money or other household items. Marriage customs in Sindh involve both families contributing

financially, with the bride's family receiving a larger share of the monetary benefits. The financial implications of a young woman's marriage might influence family decisions on the timing, partner, and manner in which the marriage is conducted (Veen, 2018).

Early marriage is more prevalent in rural regions than in metropolitan places. There are differences across regions, with the lowest levels observed in Islamabad (The Capital City) and the highest levels noted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Child marriage is less prevalent in Punjab. The locations' positions regarding the activities allowed for individuals aged 15 and 18 will often be similar. Child marriage is associated with lower levels of educational attainment and reduced likelihood of attending school. Child marriage hinders educational attainment as young girls usually drop out of school when they get married. Adversity or hardship can also lead to a delay in marriage by enabling individuals to further their education. The correlation between early marriage and education is evident since early marriage tends to be more prevalent among girls with lower levels of education. Getting married between the ages of 15 and 17 often significantly impacts completing secondary education rather than elementary education. However, being married at a young age might also prevent girls from completing their primary schooling. In Pakistan, a significant number of girls are married before turning 18, with some even marrying before the age of 15. However, there are differences in the likelihood of child marriage between the two groups. This suggests that child marriage may have decreased over time (Male, 2016).

In Pakistan, several economic, social, and cultural issues contribute significantly to the challenges experienced by young girls in accessing education. Early marriage appears to be the primary obstacle preventing young girls from pursuing education. In both urban and rural areas, the situation is not ideal, with young women marrying in their early teens and giving birth to babies, which negatively impacts the health of both the mother and the kid. The maternal mortality rate is alarmingly high, putting the lives of these girls at risk. Getting married at a young age can significantly hinder educational opportunities. Education provides knowledge and skills to enhance well-being and careers and empowers women to take their rightful place in society and the development process. In Punjab, female education is not considered a priority, resulting in many girls not being able to complete their studies beyond the fifth grade. After being married, the young lady lost interest. In the Multan district, girls in sixth to tenth grade dropped out of school owing to marriage and financial difficulties. An important observation made in both rural and urban settings was the early engagement of



females. Girls aged 10 to 16 and 10 to 13 were married before completing their school education, as noted (Saeed, 2018).

Traditional rural weddings can cause pressure for specific individuals, while others are calmer in making decisions. Kidnapping also plays a key role in these situations. This particular configuration is needlessly present in developing countries. Pakistan is strongly associated with a high prevalence of child marriages and its negative consequences. Although some cases indicate that girls and boys reach a suitable age for marriage, statistics show that 13% of females in rural areas in Pakistan marry at 15 years old, and nearly 66% marry before turning 18. In Pakistan, 57% of the population was married before the age of 15 due to harmful traditional customs.

## 2.2 Child Marriage constraint Act, 1929

<b>Features</b>	<b>Gaps</b>
Child defined as male of 18 years and girl of 16 years	Discrimination in age of marriage for boys and girls.
Child marriage means a marriage to which either of the contracting parties is a child	Age cannot be determined/ ensured without CNIC compulsion.
An adult male marrying a child liable upto 1 month imprisonment or fine upto Rs.1,000/- or with both.	Insignificant punishment, 1 month or fine of Rs.1,000/-.
Punishment for solemnizing a child marriage is imprisonment upto 1 month or fine upto Rs.1,000/- or with both.	Offences are no cognisable, bail able and compoundable.
Punishment for parents/guardians child marriage is imprisonment upto 1 month or fine upto Rs.1,000/- or with both	Complex complaint procedure at UC
Judicial magistrate 1st class has power takes cognisance on a complaint by Union Council.	No protection and rehabilitation mechanism
Court can issue injunction for stopping a child marriage.	Government has no express power to make rules of business under the law.

### *2.2.1 Child Marriage: A Violation of Human Rights*

Child marriage has gained global attention in recent years. It is now recognized as a violation of human rights. This increased awareness has led to a strong push for girls to have better access to education. Additionally, there is a growing demand for laws that protect girls from being married off at a young age. Despite the progress that has been made, there is still much work to be done to ensure that all girls worldwide have access to the same rights and opportunities as their male counterparts. Child marriages are violations of human rights, and the international community has recognized child rights in UDHR, CRC, CEDAW and many other international treaties and conventions. Since 1924, the League of Nations has approved the 'Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child', leading to increased worldwide attention and the passing of declarations to safeguard children's well-being, education, and existence. The UDHR is considered a landmark declaration by the international community regarding the recognition of human rights. The international community unanimously promised to protect human rights without any discrimination based on caste, creed, sex, or other distinctions. The UDHR was accepted universally by the states. The Article 16 of UDHR states as follows:

“Those men and women of full age have the right to marry and find a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.”

In light of the article mentioned above, it is declared that every human has the right to marry and find a family. Words like ‘men’ and ‘women’ were used; moreover, it was made clear that they must be of full age, meaning thereby that child marriage is prohibited. This was not deemed sufficient, and the international community wanted to conclude a specific convention on women's rights; therefore, they proclaimed CEDAW in 1979. CEDAW is a convention that emphasises the elimination of discrimination against women. Child marriage was considered as discrimination against the rights of the child.

The Article 16 of CEDAW 1979 states:

“The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect.”

With time, human rights proponents wanted to have a separate convention on the rights of a child; therefore, the CRC was concluded in 1989, which has pretty clear intentions, as its preamble states as follows. Moreover, the preamble of CRC 1989 states that:

“Because of physical and mental immaturity, a child needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth.”

Article 1 of this Convention states the term ‘child’ as:

“Every human being below the age of eighteen years.”

The CRC also prohibits state parties from recognizing or validating marriages involving individuals who have not reached adulthood. Since then, early-age marriage has been viewed as a violation of children's rights and a hindrance to their physical and mental development. Moreover, the CRC requires governments that have signed it to take appropriate action through various institutions such as public or private social welfare organizations, courts, administrative bodies, or legislative entities to protect the child's best interests. The modern world considers child marriage a severe danger to children's fundamental rights due to its complex and damaging consequences (Raj, 2019).

### 2.2.2 Patriarchy

Gender equality is a crucial foundation for fostering the growth process. Equality allows women to cultivate their potential across different areas. The disregard for the significance of gender equality in women's roles and rights is a factor that hinders a country's success.

Women's resistance to men's authority is closely linked to an unfair patriarchal structure. From the outset, a society ingrained with a patriarchal culture operated on the assumption that males had greater strength than women in personal, familial, communal, and governmental affairs. Patriarchal culture continues to persist in Indonesian society. This culture is present in several areas and extents, including economics, law, education, and politics. Patriarchal ideals are ingrained and sustained by societal institutions, including political systems, education, and beliefs, making women's subordination feel like a subtle and indirect suppression (Wayan, 2020).

Patriarchy, in simple language, is controlled by men of a disproportionately large share of power. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines patriarchy as follows:

*“Social organization marked by the father's supremacy in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line.”*

Patriarchy has always been prevalent in world history in one form or another. Men have always tried to maintain their hegemony around women and their bodies to satiate their feelings of supremacy. South Asia is a region where inequalities arise due to caste, religion,

and ethnicity. Gender-based discriminations exacerbate these inequalities as the region is largely patriarchal. Roots of male dominance are profound and strong in South Asian societies. Patriarchal ideals and social norms in the region often favour males and boys in terms of accessing opportunities and controlling resources. Gender disparities are evident throughout women's whole life span, starting at conception and continuing through birth, adolescence, childhood, and adulthood. Marrying children at a young age is also a manifestation of patriarchy in South Asian countries' culture.

(Nazneen, 2019) conducted a study on women empowerment in South Asia and its contentious connotations. Women empowerment is a controversial word in South Asia that is often considered a 'buzzword'.

The situation of male dominance remains the same in Pakistan and other South Asian countries. Since its inception, the country's women have been working diligently to remove gender discrimination. However, patriarchy does not let it happen. Therefore, it exists in different manifestations. In 2021, Pakistan ranked 153<sup>rd</sup> out of 156 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index; it was just one spot higher than its war-torn neighbour country, Afghanistan, among all eight South Asian countries.

It is only due to deeply rooted patriarchy that Pakistani women and girls have to bargain with men of their clans for their freedom. The regressive elements of the Pakistani society are adamant to retain their control over women. Marrying girl children is an example of men trying hard to maintain their hegemony over women's lives and bodies.

### *2.2.3 Marginalization of Women*

Confining women behind the boundary walls of the home is a worldwide phenomenon adopted to marginalize them in economic development and social and political spaces. Contrarily, it is rampant in the developing world. It does have economic and social implications on the society that tends to marginalize its women. It is also a manifestation of patriarchy.

It is an act of discrimination against a specific particular group in formal as well as informal settings, such as discrimination in job recruitment, behavioural discrimination based on gendered stereotypes, and confining women to reproductive roles merely (Collins, 2015). (Bako, 2018) their research study conducted on the subjugation of women in the Nigerian context explored the presence of gender inequality in all spheres of Nigerian society. Women

in Nigeria remain under-represented in socio-economic development and politics. Socio-economic inequalities, traditional laws and practices, patriarchal culture, ethnic sub-cultures, religious laws and beliefs, politics, and media are some of the areas where women are portrayed as marginalized stratum of Nigerian society. Pakistani society also has the same manifestations of female subjugation via politics, culture, patriarchy, religious laws, traditional laws and media.

#### *2.2.4 Poverty and Illiteracy*

The poverty level and socioeconomic position of a home significantly influence the occurrence of early child marriage among females in any nation. Afghanistan, considered one of the poorest countries, has been grappling with various socioeconomic issues for almost 40 years due to civil conflict and international terrorism. (Birchall, 2020) assert that early child marriage in Afghanistan significantly impacts children's lives by removing them from school and education. Most marriages occur without the children's consent, particularly among female youngsters. Poverty significantly impacts the prevalence of female child marriage in Afghanistan. The Afghan Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) recorded a poverty rate of 51.7% in 2016-2017 (NSIA, 2019), The GDP per capita in 2018 was \$550, according to the World Bank's 2019 report. Urban poverty is currently at 18.1%, while rural poverty stands at 61.1%. The poverty rate varies significantly from province to province in Afghanistan, with impoverished individuals residing in various regions. Over a quarter of impoverished individuals reside in four specific provinces: Herat has around 8% of the country's impoverished population, while Nangarhar, Kandahar, and Kunduz have 7%, 6%, and 6%, respectively (NSIA, 2019).

In 2017, over 24% of the 8.478 million active work force aged 15-24 were unemployed (CIA, 2018). Between 2001 and 2019, the United States spent almost \$750 billion on military operations and around \$133 billion on rehabilitation following the terrorist assault. Despite extensive efforts, a large portion of the population is experiencing a lack of employment opportunities, access to clean drinking water, adequate housing, poverty, child mortality, gender inequality, international terrorism, instability, poor governance, and early child marriage. Child marriages are prohibited in all developed and many developing nations under child protection legislation. Before 2019, the Afghanistan government did not have official legislation for protecting children. The government began implementing a children's safety law and rights after it was published in the official gazette on March 11, 2019. According to this legislation, anyone under 18, regardless of gender, is considered children.

West Bengal ranks high among the 15 largest states in India, with a significant prevalence of teenage marriage among girls, resulting in early motherhood. This essay proposes that the lack of new job prospects for women and girls in both rural and urban regions of the state is a significant factor leading to their vulnerability to early marriages beyond poverty and illiteracy. The lack of fresh job prospects is directly or indirectly related to poverty and illiterate. It establishes a harmful loop of poverty and lack of education (Chakravarty, 2018).

Child marriages occur in Pakistan due to poverty, illiteracy, and gender inequity. Parents in impoverished households lack the means to educate their daughters, leading them to seek early marriages to alleviate their burden. They envision their future solely as being sent to their husband's residences. Poverty is a significant contributing factor to child marriages. A disadvantaged family may view their daughter as a financial liability that may be alleviated by early marriage. In several nations, marrying daughters at a younger age is economically advantageous due to the reduced costs associated with marriage. Younger females in certain regions may have lesser dowry expenses (Naveed, 2020)

Poverty, lack of economic opportunity, and illiteracy are the primary factors for child marriages in Pakistan. For many parents, especially in rural areas with low resources, child marriage is often seen as a way to reduce their responsibility for their daughters. Additionally, due to a restricted skill set and lack of self-confidence, many females have limited options to be economically productive, leading to an increased likelihood of early marriages. In rural areas, girls and women are typically involved in the informal sector or home-based labour with minimal income. These jobs mainly include seasonal tasks in the agricultural industry that demand minimal or no expertise, such as cotton picking and planting. Additional sources of income include home-based hobbies such as sewing, embroidery, and handicrafts. Families often link poor 'economic worth' with girls or women since they are perceived as unable to generate revenue and support the family financially. In rural settings, they are considered "non-earning" persons in economic terms. Child marriage, often viewed as a means to break free from poverty, is instead shown to exacerbate the cycle of intergenerational poverty based on findings from other developing nations. In contrast, in metropolitan regions, women's income production is viewed as a solution to alleviate poverty, which might lead to delaying early marriage due to the cash they bring in.

Early marriage is associated with low levels of education, especially for girls. Parents are reluctant to spend money on their daughters' education because they believe any investment

in her is futile since she would leave her parents' house upon marriage. Furthermore, a woman's opportunities for education post-marriage are severely limited by her restricted movement, household responsibilities, child-rearing duties, and societal expectations that consider marriage and education to be incompatible. Early marriage hinders a girl's acquisition of skills, money, knowledge, social support, and mobility, hence restricting her ability to negotiate with her spouse or in-laws. As a result, heightened vulnerability makes females more likely to experience violence, abuse, divorce, or abandonment.

Illiteracy and lack of education among parents contribute to the practice, which is exacerbated by poverty and restricted economic opportunities. Additionally, the lack of information about the implications of child marriage on teenage females further reinforces the tendency. Illiteracy or lack of knowledge among parents hinders the educational opportunities for their children, especially girls. Girls are frequently excluded from school due to the lack of perceived importance placed on their education in comparison to males. Child marriages are seen as the preferred method to initiate girls into household duties, which are considered their future obligations. Several studies indicate that many females who had the chance to attend school end up leaving before reaching 8th grade. Parents sometimes do not consider investing in girls' education because they anticipate that the girls will get married and assume duties in their marriage. Social constraints also become a significant obstacle to females' education at this time. These goals seem to rely on the family's capacity and resources to back the girls' education, which is influenced by school proximity and safe school transportation (UNICEF, 2011).

#### *2.2.5 Legal Socialisation*

Legal socialization develops individuals' connection with the law by acquiring values, attitudes, and reasoning abilities relevant to the law. Development is crucial for individuals to comprehend the rules of society, the organizations responsible for creating those laws, and the personnel tasked with enforcing them. The procedural justice model is a significant method for examining ideas' formation. It emphasizes individual interactions with authority people and their behaviours (Trinkner, 2020). This method hinges on how authorities are seen regarding their fairness towards individuals. Authorities perceived as fair, polite, and unbiased are more likely to be considered procedurally just. Unfavourable, harsh, or unjust contacts with authorities diminish the respect they get (Granot, 2019). These actions and experiences significantly impact the credibility of authority and the personal adoption of the standards, regulations, and laws linked to social establishments. Both individual and indirect

experiences are significant; personal experiences are more intense, while vicarious experiences influence relationships and perspectives (Trinkner, 2020).

Legitimacy is the belief that the law and its representatives have the authority to hold power and deserve respect and compliance. Procedural fairness is an essential factor in determining legitimacy. When institutional actors, like the police, perform pretty and equitably, they and the institutions they represent are seen as more legitimate. Legitimacy growth depends on contacts with legal authorities and can also be impacted by neighbourhood-level circumstances. Residents in communities with elevated levels of physical and social disorder are more inclined to view the police as illegitimate in comparison to those residing in safer and more organized neighbourhoods (Leverentz, 2018). Increased legitimacy leads to higher levels of voluntary collaboration with authority demands, improved compliance with regulations and directions, and a greater acceptance of police discretion in their tasks.

Individuals also form opinions about the suitability of the norms, rules, and regulations that regulate social interactions alongside their perceived legitimacy (Etter, 2018). Cynicism against regulations and statutes arises from adverse experiences and societal circumstances (Gifford, 2019).

(Gifford, 2019; McCarthy, 2020) Legal cynicism is the perception that rules and regulations do not significantly impact an individual's daily life. It is similar to ideas of anomie and normlessness since cynical people refuse to accept the ideals that support the law and legal system. Cynicism is usually measured by how much an individual believes the law does not pertain to them (Alward, 2020; Nivette, 2020). When authorities act unfairly or unjustly against individuals, they contribute to the development of cynicism towards laws and norms (Geller, 2019). These experiences are influenced by the environments in which individuals are placed. Living in economically impoverished or socially disordered communities serves as concrete and enduring evidence of being marginalized from mainstream society (Cavanagh, 2020). Consequently, people show increased cynicism.

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

The most suited theoretical framework for this research study is social dominance theory (SDT), which is correlated to the context of this study. According to this theory, societies are structured as systems of group-based social hierarchies (Pracha, 2016). (Batyra, 2021) state that group-based hierarchies are inevitable in societies where one group is more dominant. One dominant group discriminates against the other subordinate group; this discrimination



also occurs at the institutional level in societies. For instance, one significant form of institutional discrimination is the use of coercion and violence in a systematic manner. This coercion is done by the hegemonic group (dominant group) against the subordinate group by using legal or extra-legal means. For instance, people of lower strata and people with low incomes in society face the brunt of the legal system in the form of delayed or denied justice and regressive punishments.

Social Dominance Theory (SDT) explains the pervasive nature of intergroup conflict and oppression within societies. Developed by (Sidanius, 2017), SDT posits that human societies are inherently structured by group-based hierarchies, with certain social groups maintaining dominance over others. At the core of SDT is social dominance orientation (SDO), which refers to an individual's psychological predisposition to endorse and support hierarchical systems where some groups are inherently superior to others.

SDT identifies several key factors contributing to perpetuating social hierarchies and intergroup inequality. These factors include institutionalized discrimination, societal norms and ideologies that justify inequality, and individual-level attitudes and behaviours that reinforce dominance and subordination. According to SDT, social hierarchies are maintained through various means, such as economic exploitation, political power dynamics, and cultural practices reinforcing group-based stereotypes and prejudice (Sidanius, 2017).

In the context of child marriage in Pakistan, SDT can provide valuable insights into the underlying social structures and power dynamics that perpetuate this harmful practice. For example, the patriarchal nature of Pakistani society, where men hold greater social, economic, and political power than women, can be understood through the lens of SDT. Additionally, the marginalization of women and girls within Pakistani communities, stemming from deeply ingrained gender norms and stereotypes, can be analyzed within the framework of SDT (Butler, 2021).

Furthermore, SDT emphasizes the role of socialization processes in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviours towards intergroup relations. Children in Pakistan are socialized into accepting and perpetuating gender-based inequalities from a young age through familial, educational, and cultural institutions. This socialization process reinforces the existing social hierarchy, making it difficult to challenge entrenched norms and practices such as child marriage (Rose, 2023).

By incorporating SDT into the theoretical framework of our study, we can gain a deeper understanding of the structural and psychological factors contributing to child marriage in Pakistan. This perspective will inform our analysis of legislators' perspectives on child marriage legislation and implementation challenges, shedding light on the broader societal forces at play in perpetuating this harmful practice (Sidanius, 2017).

According to this theory of social dominance, social practices like gender differences in access to education, deeply rooted patriarchy in politics, domestic violence, taking away the choice to make their life decisions from women and unequal distribution of pay are some factors that strengthen the existing hierarchical system in a society. Pakistan is a country where these factors are prevalent at every tier of society. These factors shape the hierarchy of Pakistani society: male-dominant society (Rose, 2023).

## **2.4 Literature Gap**

A close analysis of the above literature shows that the issue of child marriage exists in every country of the world. However, in South Asia, it is prevalent mainly in Pakistan. Research studies look at the issue solely from a social or legal perspective. The existing literature in this field looks at the problem from the lens of researchers and people.

This research study will fill the literature gap in the context of Pakistan by looking at the issue of child marriages from the perspective of legislators and how they assume the issue. Pakistan has existing child marriage laws; the problem lies in the effective implementation of the existing rules, along with the introduction and consensus of legislators on new laws. A close analysis of all the amendments in the original CMRA, 1929, reveals that socio-cultural and religious differences of the legislators are a hindrance in effective legislation on the evil of child marriage in Pakistan.

The Researcher discussed earlier that the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973, has been incorporated with specific provisions related to the fundamental rights of the citizens. Moreover, the state promised to make special provisions regarding the safety and protection of women and children. Apart from that, chapter 2 of the *ibid* Constitution lays down principles of policy for the governments, either federal or provincial, to make policies in light of the said principles, which also contains provisions for the protection of the family. The literature discussed above states the reasons and justifications behind child marriages, but the existing literature tells the social, cultural, and religious aspects of the issue in question. The Researchers are here to discuss the legislator's perspective regarding the

matter. How do they see this malpractice in the country. Despite the existing laws, which are tried to be implemented effectively by the government, child marriages are still in practice. Therefore, this study will help to find out the existing challenges associated with the effective implementation of child marriage laws in the country because if the law is not effectively implemented and the objectives of the law are not achieved, then the law should be amended to meet its goals. The ones sitting in the power corridors are the most suitable ones to give a deeper insight into the socio-legal challenges of child marriage laws. Therefore, the current study will highlight the existing challenges and pave the way for legislators to propose effective amendments in the legal framework.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

Chapter three outlines the research methodology that underpins this study. It delves into the research design and methodology, crucial for understanding how the data was collected, analysed, and interpreted. This chapter aims to present a clear and systematic approach to conducting the research, ensuring that the study's findings are robust, reliable, and capable of contributing significantly to the ongoing discourse on child marriage in Pakistan. By detailing the methodological framework, this chapter sets the groundwork for investigating legislators' perspectives on child marriage, a pivotal aspect of this research.

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employs an exploratory research design using a qualitative research approach that relies on concepts from interpretive social science. Qualitative research studies primarily focus on the social and cultural context of the study area. Therefore, data analysis takes place in natural circumstances. The qualitative approach has a wide margin of flexibility, which helps the researcher focus on data best suited for the study throughout the process (Maher, 2018). In addition, qualitative research incorporates the employment of research questions, identification of research data, data collection and writing of findings of collected data (Eyisi, 2016).

The reason was to get a holistic insight into the legal aspects of the child marriage issue before collecting data from legislators. The need for qualitative research design is due to this study's requirements. A quantitative research design is insufficient to extract vital information because legislators, as research respondents, do not find it easy to engage in quantitative analysis. Moreover, their experience in the study area for this research is more than that of common citizens. Lastly, qualitative design was a precondition for answering the research questions of this study that demanded the adoption of qualitative research design.

### **3.2 Sampling and Sample Size**

The Respondents for this research study were sampled using a purposive sampling strategy. It is when the researcher does not sample randomly; but uses a strategic pattern to sample Respondents relevant to the research questions. The reason is to ensure variety in the final sample (Bryman, 2012). The basis of purposive sampling was the researcher's intent to look at the field of study from male and female legislators' perspectives. Therefore, five male legislators were interviewed.

Furthermore, the researcher wanted to consider the representation of provinces and different parties. Before data collection, the researcher intended to sample 14 legislators - most women Parliamentarians. A sample of 14 was considered sufficient because it has formerly been endorsed that qualitative research requires a sample size of a minimum of 12 Respondents to reach saturation point (Braun, 2016; Fugard, 2015). However, the researcher reached saturation point on a sample of 13 Respondents. They considered that legislators' approach towards an issue is entirely different from that of a layman.

Moreover, the legislators the researcher approached were authorities on the subject of this research study, and the researcher ensured that a diverse sample was included. The sample size was thirteen legislators. Five of them were male, and eight were female legislators. Every province was represented in the sample size. In the context of this study, Senators and Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) were the right people to collect data from as they belong to the supreme legislative body of Pakistan, the Parliament, where laws are brought and amended. They are representative of their respective provinces in the supreme legislative body of Pakistan.

**Table 3.1:** Sample Size

<b>Province</b>	<b>Male Legislators</b>	<b>Female Legislators</b>	<b>MNA</b>	<b>Senator</b>	<b>Total</b>
Punjab	1(R5)	4(R2,R4,R9, R13)	1 (male) 2 (females)	2 (females)	5
Sindh	1(R7)	2 (R1,R3)	1 (female)	1 (male) 1 (female)	3
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	1(R8)	1(R6)	1 (male)	1(female)	2
Balochistan	0	1(R10)	0	1 (female)	1

Islamabad Capital Territory	2 (R11, R12)	0	2 (males)	0	2
Total	5	8			13

Additionally, ensuring representation from each province, inclusion of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) reflects the geographical and cultural diversity within the legislative sample. This geographical spread is significant as it captures the regional variations in the perception and implementation of laws against child marriage.

The choice of legislators as respondents, given their authoritative role in shaping and amending laws in Parliament, was strategic to garner insights directly from policymakers. Their responses are not merely personal opinions but are reflective of broader legislative and political ideologies, making them particularly relevant for a study aimed at exploring legislative perspectives on child marriage. This deliberate and thoughtfully composed sample contributes significantly to the depth and relevance of the research, justifying the decision to limit the sample size to thirteen participants despite initial plans for fourteen.

### 3.3 Data Collection

Interviews are the most extensively used method in qualitative research. The research method employed for this study was in-depth semi-structured interviews. This flexible methodology is preferred to collect data from a controlled number of respondents to explore specific situations and ideas regarding a research problem (Bryman, 2012). The respondents of this research study were legislators; therefore, extracting information from a confined research method – for instance, a structured questionnaire or close-ended interviews – could not yield comprehensive and multidimensional results. In-depth interviews are a method where the researcher keeps prompts for personal assistance during the dialogue process, followed by questions arising from the interviewee’s responses. A few researchers believe that in-depth interviews are synonymous with normal conversation but one that is more meaningful and profound (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, an in-depth semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to gain insight into the sampled legislators’ perceptions about child marriage issues and the challenges associated with legislation and effective implementation of related laws in Pakistan from their perspective. Moreover, the reason behind opting for this data

collection method was the sensitivity of the issue of child marriages and legislation on it. This makes in-depth interviews the best option for data collection tools for this study.

Thus, thirteen in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the respondents against four themes identified from primary data. As research respondents, legislators are tricky to handle since they have an in-depth knowledge of such issues and are the representatives of the people who elect them. Therefore, creating an atmosphere of trust was mandatory before getting into a formal research-related conversation. Interview data was collected in Urdu and English to comprehend the issue better. However, the interview responses are translated and quoted in the research study. The locale of this research study was the Parliament of Pakistan. It was the most convenient place to collect data from legislators since it is Pakistan's federal and supreme legislative body.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was selected for analysing the interviews in this study because of its flexibility, accessibility, and capacity to offer profound insights into qualitative data. Thematic analysis is the process of recognising patterns or themes in data to investigate the deeper meanings and interpretations of Respondents' replies (Braun, 2016).

Thematic analysis is chosen primarily because it aligns well with the study's research objectives and exploratory aspect. The research explored legislators' viewpoints on child marriage and the obstacles to creating and enforcing laws. Thematic analysis was used to identify the main themes and patterns in the interview material. Organising data into themes allows academics to comprehend the topics better and delve into the intricacies of the Respondents' perspectives (Kanando, 2019).

The thematic analysis allows researchers to customise the approach to fit the particular research setting and aims. Thematic analysis differs from other qualitative analysis methods, like phenomenological analysis, because it does not apply a specific theoretical framework or predetermined ideas to the data. It enables themes to naturally arise from the data, ensuring that the analysis is rooted in the Respondents' viewpoints and experiences (Wiltshire, 2021). Thematic analysis is particularly suitable for research projects with a substantial amount of data, as it allows researchers to examine a significant volume of qualitative data effectively and methodically. Thematic analysis was used to organise and evaluate comments from 13 Respondents in a study on legislators' perspectives regarding child marriage legislation in Pakistan.

Thematic analysis improves the reliability and credibility of qualitative research by offering a precise and repeatable method for analysing data. Researchers can enhance the overall validity of their study by documenting the coding and theme-creation procedures, ensuring the reliability and dependability of their findings. Codes are identified from the interview responses in this mode of data analysis (Bryman, 2012).

The coding and theme generation process in qualitative research involves several steps to analyse data collected from interviews or other sources systematically. Here is a detailed explanation of the complete process:

- **Transcription:** The first step is to transcribe the audio recordings of interviews into written text. This involves listening to the recordings carefully and typing out the dialogue verbatim. Transcription ensures that the data is in a format that can be easily analysed.
- **Data Familiarization:** Once the transcripts are ready, researchers familiarize themselves with the data by reading them multiple times. This helps in understanding the content and context of the interviews.
- **Initial Coding:** During initial coding, researchers identify and label specific phrases, sentences, or paragraphs in the transcripts representing concepts or ideas related to the research objectives. This process involves assigning descriptive codes to segments of text.
- **Open Coding:** In open coding, researchers analyse the data line by line and generate initial codes without preconceived categories. This allows for exploring various themes and concepts that emerge from the data.
- **Axial Coding:** After generating initial codes, researchers organize them into broader categories or themes through axial coding. This involves identifying relationships between codes and grouping them based on similarities and patterns.
- **Selective Coding:** In selective coding, researchers further refine and consolidate the themes identified during axial coding. They focus on the most significant themes that best represent the data and the research objectives.
- **Theme Generation:** Finally, researchers generate overarching themes that encapsulate the study's main findings. These themes are based on the patterns and insights derived from the coded data and provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

**Table 3.2:** The signifying codes, subthemes, and main themes



<b>Code</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Main Themes</b>
Male dominance	Decision-making power	Patriarchy
Gender norms	Early marriage expectations	
Power differentials	Gender-based disparities	
Limited access to education	Educational opportunities	Marginalization of Women
Limited economic opportunities	Employment prospects	
Social and cultural norms	Gender roles	
Economic constraints	Financial struggles	Poverty and Illiteracy
Lack of awareness	Legal knowledge	
Inadequate enforcement	Implementation shortcomings	Legal Socialization
Cultural acceptance	Norms and values	

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

When conducting sensitive research such as exploring the perspectives of legislators on child marriage in Pakistan, ethical approval is crucial to ensure that the study adheres to established ethical standards and guidelines. The study obtained ethical approval from a committee at School of Social Sciences and Humanities (S3H), the process involved submitting a detailed research proposal for review. This proposal outlined the research objectives, methods, potential risks, and how the privacy and anonymity of the participants will be safeguarded. Additionally, the proposal detailed the process for obtaining informed consent, including how participants would be informed about the purpose of the research, their right to withdraw at any time without penalty, and how their data would be used and protected.

The researcher sought ethical approval regarding data collection tools (interview questionnaire). The reason behind it was that failure to seek ethical approval in such studies can raise concerns about the integrity of the research and the protection of participants,

especially in a study involving high-profile subjects like legislators where the risk of repercussions is significant. Ensuring ethical oversight not only protects participants but also enhances the credibility and acceptability of the research within the academic community and beyond.

This study was conducted keeping the necessary ethical considerations in mind. The study was done with complete transparency and honesty by acknowledging the works of every author mentioned in this study using the APA citation method given by the Dissertation Handbook. The different sections of this study do not contain inappropriate content or any illegal proceedings. The data findings have been represented in a way to avoid bias and misrepresentation of facts.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter four delves into the results of the qualitative interviews and explores the themes that emerged from the data. This chapter aims to unpack the complex interplay of cultural, social, and legal factors that contribute to the persistence of child marriage in Pakistan. By examining the significant findings and discussing their implications, this chapter provides a deeper understanding of the challenges and potential pathways for addressing this critical issue.

### 4.1 Major Findings

**Table 4.1:** Themes and Major Findings

No.	Themes	Major Findings
1.	Patriarchy	The theme of patriarchy is found to have a direct or indirect correlation with every other theme of the research study. Men in leadership roles, women are trapped in a vicious cycle of financial dependence on men, and men make decisions for where and when the girl child is to be married.
2.	Marginalisation of women	A theme in nexus to patriarchy is found in societies where patriarchy is deeply rooted in the society. Confinement of women to reproductive roles merely in marriage and their objectification. Household responsibilities of women and talking about only these roles performed by women in a marriage.
3.	Poverty and illiteracy	A theme that focuses on the fact that the practice of marrying off girls in childhood is rampant in poor and illiterate families. The theme showcases a lack of awareness regarding the catastrophic impact of early-age marriages on girls. It also depicts the direct nexus between poverty and girls lagging in education, which ultimately leads to their early-age marriages.
4.	Legal socialisation	This theme focuses on the legal orientation of a law. It talks about the social acceptability of a law in a society for which it is made. This theme brings the importance of awareness, consent, and due process under which the law was made and delegated legislation. It looks at marriage as a legal

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relationship.

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#### 4.1.1 Theme 1: Patriarchy

Patriarchy is profoundly rooted in the social structure of Pakistan and contributes significantly to the continuation of traditions such as child marriage. This theme analysis investigates how patriarchy and child marriage intersect by examining legislative viewpoints and cultural norms. It is based on interviews with legislators from different backgrounds in Pakistan.

Respondents 1 and 3 describe the first question response as that

*“Definitely, its negative impacts on a human's mental and physical well-being.  
Would you stop the act?”*

The interviews depict a dominant patriarchal attitude in which male sources of power control decisions about marriage. Respondent 1 believes that boys should marry around the age of 30 because they are expected to take on the role of the head of the home, demonstrating the belief in male dominance and authority in family matters. This reflects the patriarchal belief that males are the primary providers and decision-makers in the household.

(Agha, 2021) states that patriarchal systems in Pakistan uphold gender hierarchies, allowing males to dominate women's lives, including choices about marriage. This regulation pertains to the age at which individuals are considered suitable for marriage, frequently emphasizing financial security and cultural norms above personal independence.

Respondent 3 describes in response of fourth question that:

*“If we look at the future of boys, then unless you are mentally capable enough to get married and financially capable enough to support yourself and your future family, then you should not get married. I feel the same.”*

The interviews highlight the disproportionate societal expectations imposed on men and women concerning marriage. Respondent 3 stressed that guys must be psychologically and financially prepared before thinking about marriage. Respondent 5 underlined the cultural expectations of boys to assume duties and support their families. These expectations uphold

gender inequalities by strengthening conventional gender norms and restricting chances for women's advancement.

Gender inequality is well-established in Pakistani society, leading to traditions such as child marriage. (Madut, 2020) suggest that cultural expectations of gender roles might result in the early marriage of girls, who are predominantly viewed as wives and mothers, thereby strengthening the patriarchal system.

Respondent 6 describes in the first question response that.

*“I will keep it according to the point in which I will race, and that is that if a man has not defined any further in your day, he has not talked about family planning. Regarding family planning, they have not told that when you give milk to a child for two years, then an automatic system of your family planning runs, that is, as many as one woman is fitting the child, one woman will not get pregnant, So Allah creates family planning And after what you are talking about, the age of 18 years should be defined. The government should first give priority to those parents who are poor and their family members are mostly poor. And if they have more daughters in their house, take care of them and then take care of those daughters as one takes care of God.”*

Religious and cultural standards have a substantial impact on influencing perspectives on marriage and gender roles. Respondent 6's mention of religious teachings about the optimal age for marriage demonstrates the effects of religious beliefs on cultural norms. Respondent 2 also highlighted the traditional view of marriage as a crucial institution based on cultural and spiritual values.

Religious interpretations and cultural practices frequently combine to uphold patriarchal standards and rationalize customs such as child marriage. (Maina, 2020) observed that religious explanations are commonly employed to maintain patriarchal systems, which marginalize women and sustain detrimental practices like early marriage that impact their well-being.

Although patriarchy is widespread, there are examples of opposition and support for ending child marriage. Respondent 8's recognition of different viewpoints and the need for personal preparedness demonstrated an increasing understanding of the necessity for independence

and agreement in decisions regarding marriage. This opposition indicates a changing paradigm towards gender equality and women's rights in Pakistani society.

Advocacy and legislative changes are essential for confronting patriarchal norms and addressing child marriage. Organizations such as Girls Not Brides Pakistan work to promote legislative reforms and community initiatives to tackle the underlying issues of child marriage and empower women and girls.

Respondent 1 describes in Question 4 response is that

*“You consider the marriageable age of boys to be 30 years because he has to work, he is the head of the house, and he is also given the responsibility because he has to bear the responsibility of the house and the woman.”*

Respondents consistently shared opinions that emphasized conventional gender roles in marriage. Many respondents highlighted the importance of the man being the head of the family and the main provider in a marriage, indicating that financial stability and maturity are necessary for a successful marriage.

Respondent 5 describes in fourth question response that

*“There are other types of responsibilities on boys, like running the house, and a lot is expected from them. Now, this is a trend, and I think it is natural. When a boy grows so much that he starts taking responsibility for someone else, he is ready for the marriage.”*

Respondent 5 also emphasized the cultural expectations for guys to assume duties and provide for their families. The viewpoints agree with patriarchal principles that highlight male authority and obligations in the context of marriage (Akurugu, 2022).

Respondent 1 describes in the third question response that.

*“I think that the ideal age for girls to get married is before the age of 25 because by that time, their education has been completed, and they also become physically strong, which is necessary for them to become mothers in the future. Unfortunately, early marriages are threatened by Islam. Whereas in Islam, it is said that when the world heritage is being passed away, then the*

*devotee of the owner must get married. It is also necessary for him to be the owner.”*

Responses on the suitable age for marriage reflect gendered expectations shaped by patriarchal standards. Respondent 1 recommends that males should get married at about 30 years old, highlighting the need for maturity and financial security. This perspective suggests that males must achieve professional and economic stability before committing to marital duties (Dewitt, 2023). Respondent 3 proposes that males should marry when they possess the mental and financial capacity, suggesting that preparedness for marriage is influenced by personal aspects more than just age.

Respondent 11 describes in the third question response that

*“It's true that some individuals choose to marry early and prioritize their family life, it's important to consider that early marriage can also have certain challenges. But if partners are supportive in my opinion early marriage is an opportunity to pursue their education, career, and personal growth committing towards goals together. Finding a balance between personal goals and building a strong foundation for a successful marriage is key.”*

Respondent 11 discussed early marriage is acknowledged as a complex issue with potential advantages and disadvantages from a research standpoint. While some people might decide to get married young in order to put their family and common objectives first, it's important to recognize the difficulties that come with it. The goal of research is to comprehend how early marriage affects people's educational, professional, and personal growth paths as well as how it interacts with larger society structures like patriarchal standards. Through a research lens, scientists investigate the dynamics of early marriage in order to identify the factors that influence its occurrence, the impacts it has on individuals and communities, and methods for fostering healthy relationships and personal empowerment in the setting of early marriage.

Although patriarchal norms dictate gender-specific responsibilities and expectations in marriage, other respondents mentioned individual agency and decision-making. Respondent 7 highlighted the significance of personal preparedness and self-assurance in determining the appropriate time for marriage, indicating that age alone may not be the definitive factor in being ready for marriage. This viewpoint recognizes the independence and ability of people to make decisions about marriage, questioning strict gender expectations that prescribe specific roles and schedules for getting married (Carreiro, 2021).

Patriarchal ideas influence marriage dynamics by strengthening power imbalances and traditional gender roles in heterosexual partnerships (Conroy, 2020). Traditional marital patterns typically emphasize male dominance and control, relegating women to subservient positions as caregivers and homemakers. Patriarchal attitudes influence marriage expectations and timing, reinforcing gender norms that uphold male dominance and female submission in married partnerships, as indicated by the respondents' viewpoints.

Deciding the suitable age for marriage demonstrates patriarchal influence on people's independence and decisions, especially regarding gender and socioeconomic standing (Biswas, 2020). Patriarchal countries often enforce strict age standards for marriage, which are shaped by cultural, religious, and social influences. Age can indicate preparedness for marriage, but patriarchal beliefs may limit freedom and maintain inequities by dictating gender-specific schedules and duties in married partnerships.

Individuals exhibit agency and resistance by rejecting established gender roles and negotiating autonomy within marriage circumstances despite the widespread prevalence of patriarchal norms (Gui, 2023). Some respondents emphasize personal preparation and decision-making to demonstrate independence and oppose patriarchal limits on marriage choices. These actions demonstrate the challenges of negotiating patriarchal systems while seeking personal strength and autonomy within marriage.

#### *4.1.2 Theme 2: Marginalization of Women*

Marginalization of women is evident in the perspectives shared by respondents regarding child labour and child marriage. Through their responses, the perpetuation of gender inequalities, social norms, and systemic injustices that disadvantage women become apparent. This thematic analysis aims to explore how societal attitudes and practices contribute to the marginalization of women, particularly in the contexts of child labour and child marriage.

Respondents' perspectives on child labour reflect deep-seated gender disparities and societal norms that devalue the labour and rights of girls. While some respondents expressed opposition to child labour, others acknowledged its prevalence and justified it under certain circumstances.

Respondent 7 describes in fifth question response is that



*“If you're addressing work at age 18, two key questions emerge: what is defined as work and what is the nature of that work? Nowadays, many children are engaging in coding and programming, which is not physical labor but is mentally stimulating. Therefore, when discussing digital work, children should be encouraged to participate. In the arts, their fresh perspectives are valuable. However, physical bonded labor should certainly be avoided due to its potential harm to their physical health. It is crucial to consider the motivations behind the work. If children are compelled or forced into labor, this is clearly negative. Conversely, if they are exploring interests, volunteering, or participating in activities willingly, then involvement in such work can be appropriate for those aged 14 to 18, in certain contexts where it is permitted.”*

Respondent 7, for example, highlighted the importance of distinguishing between physical and mental labour, suggesting that digital and artistic work may be acceptable for children. However, underlying these distinctions is a societal bias that devalues traditional forms of female labour, perpetuating the marginalization of girls and women in economic spheres (Brooks, 2023).

Respondent 8 describes in the fifth question response that.

*“Well, this is a very controversial topic depending on what the child is; if he is a child who has no parents and has to survive in society, if he is working, then his situation is completely different. Perhaps we think it is wrong to make a child do the work for whom everything is moist. But it also depends on what kind of work you are getting done. This will ensure that the child starts begging or it will be abused, like how many cases of child trafficking are happening in our society. Because of all this, I say that our children should be allowed to work along with their studies.”*

The intersection of gender and class further exacerbates the marginalization of women in discussions of child labour. Respondent 8 alludes to the complexities faced by marginalized children, particularly those without parental support, who may be compelled to work for survival. However, the acceptance of child labour as a means of survival overlooks the systemic inequalities that deny children, especially girls, access to education and opportunities for upward mobility (Weber, 2023). The exploitation of children, particularly

girls, in labour reinforces patterns of gender-based discrimination and perpetuates cycles of poverty and marginalization.

Perspectives on child marriage reveal entrenched gender norms and power dynamics that perpetuate the marginalization of girls and women. Respondents unanimously acknowledge that girls bear the brunt of child marriage, citing societal preferences for younger brides and the commodification of girls' bodies. Respondent 6 identifies the devaluation of girls within families as a driving factor behind child marriage, highlighting the entrenched patriarchal attitudes that prioritize male empowerment and control over female autonomy (Yakub, 2020).

Respondent 8 describes in the sixth question response that

*“These two do not have exact data on it, but both boys have it. Even if it is there, it is hidden. It depends on which area you are in. If you see it in Singh, then it is very much; if you see it in your PC, then it is also very much in male people because we do not have a reporting system.”*

Respondent 8 acknowledges the lack of reliable data on child marriage rates for boys, underscoring the invisibility of certain forms of gender-based violence and marginalization. The absence of reporting mechanisms and societal taboos surrounding male victimization perpetuate the marginalization of boys and obscure the prevalence of child marriage among them. Such structural inequities contribute to the perpetuation of gender-based violence and the normalization of harmful practices that disproportionately affect girls and women (UNICEF, 2020).

Gendered norms and expectations shape the division of labour, relegating women and girls to domestic and caregiving roles while men and boys engage in economic and productive activities (Booi, 2021). Child labour reflects and reinforces these gendered divisions, as girls are often tasked with household chores and caregiving responsibilities from a young age, limiting their educational opportunities and economic prospects.

Child labour and child marriage are forms of structural violence that perpetuate the marginalization of girls and women by denying them autonomy, agency, and fundamental human rights (Blakely, 2022). Child marriage, in particular, exposes girls to heightened risks of exploitation, gender-based violence, and limited life opportunities. The normalization of child marriage reflects broader patterns of gender inequality and social control that prioritize male authority and power over female bodies and sexuality (Ghomeshi, 2020).

The invisibility of certain forms of gender-based violence, such as child marriage among boys, underscores the limitations of existing data collection methods and reporting mechanisms (UNICEF, 2020). Gender biases in data collection and reporting perpetuate the marginalization of boys and obscure the prevalence and impact of gender-based violence on male victims, further reinforcing patriarchal structures and inequalities.

The responses provided by the Respondents shed light on the systemic marginalization of women in Pakistani society, particularly concerning child labour and child marriage. These issues underscore deep-rooted gender disparities and discriminatory practices that perpetuate the subjugation of women and girls. The thematic analysis explores how patriarchal structures and societal norms contribute to the marginalization of women, particularly in the context of child labour and child marriage.

Respondents' views on child labour reveal entrenched gender biases and societal expectations regarding the roles and responsibilities of girls. While some Respondents expressed outright opposition to child labour, others acknowledged the complexities of the issue. Respondent 7 highlighted the importance of distinguishing between different forms of labour, emphasizing the need to prioritize education and skill development over exploitative work. However, the underlying assumption that certain forms of labour are more suitable for girls reflects pervasive gender stereotypes that limit their opportunities for advancement (Ellemers, 2018).

The discussion on child marriage underscores the disproportionate impact of patriarchal norms on girls' rights and well-being. Respondents unanimously agreed that girls bear the brunt of child marriage, citing cultural practices and societal expectations that prioritize male preferences and family honour over girls' autonomy and agency (Kerr, 2021). Respondent 6 aptly pointed out that girls are often perceived as liabilities rather than assets, contributing to their vulnerability to early and forced marriages. This systemic devaluation of girls perpetuates cycles of poverty and inequality, depriving them of opportunities for education, empowerment, and self-determination (UNICEF, 2018).

Respondents' responses regarding the prevalence of child marriage further highlight perceptions of gender disparities and inequities. While some respondents acknowledged the high prevalence of child marriage among girls, others emphasized the hidden nature of boys' experiences. Respondent 8 underscored the lack of reliable data on boys' experiences of child marriage, suggesting that societal norms and reporting mechanisms may obscure their vulnerabilities (Greene, 2019). This disparity in recognition and response perpetuates the

invisibility of boys' experiences and undermines efforts to address the root causes of child marriage comprehensively.

Child labour disproportionately affects girls, who are often relegated to domestic work and informal sectors characterized by exploitation and abuse (Azevedo, 2023). Gender disparities in access to education and economic opportunities perpetuate girls' vulnerability to labour exploitation, limiting their prospects for social mobility and empowerment. Patriarchal norms and societal expectations dictate girls' roles within the household, reinforcing traditional gender divisions that prioritize boys' education and career prospects (Zaman, 2020).

Child marriage is rooted in patriarchal structures and entrenched gender inequalities that devalue girls' rights and autonomy (Ghomeshi, 2020). Cultural norms, poverty, and lack of access to education contribute to the perpetuation of child marriage, which undermines girls' health, education, and overall well-being. The practice reflects broader patterns of gender discrimination and social exclusion, perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalization across generations (UNICEF, 2018).

While child marriage predominantly affects girls, boys' experiences are often overlooked or underreported in research and policy discourse (Mazurana, 2019). Societal norms and cultural expectations may discourage boys from disclosing their experiences of early and forced marriage, contributing to the invisibility of their vulnerabilities and needs. Addressing the gender disparities in recognition and response is essential for promoting gender-equitable approaches to child protection and ending the cycle of gender-based violence and discrimination.

#### *4.1.3 Theme 3: Poverty and Illiteracy*

The comments from the Respondents revealed the interconnectedness between poverty, illiteracy, and child marriage in Pakistan. The theme analysis investigates how poverty and illiteracy sustain the practice of child marriage and its related socio-economic consequences.

Respondent 8 describes in the question response that

*“We believe we marry the girl but cannot give her a business. If she cannot rust her with her inheritance, how can they trust her with our generation.”*

Respondents recognized poverty as a major factor in leading to child marriage. Financial instability in families frequently results in early marriages to deal with the situation.

Respondent 8 emphasized that families in economic distress may feel compelled to arrange marriages for their daughters without regard for their preparedness or welfare. Poverty leads families to see child marriage as a way to lessen financial pressures and form partnerships (Stark, 2018).

The absence of education, especially among females, was identified as a crucial factor contributing to child marriage. Respondents emphasized that illiteracy sustains gender inequalities and restricts females' access to education and economic autonomy. Respondent 9 highlighted the link between lack of education and child marriage, indicating that restricted educational access sustains poverty cycles and strengthens conventional gender roles. Lack of education limits girls' ability to make educated decisions, increasing their vulnerability to early marriage (Raj, 2019).

Respondent 7 describes in question 8 response that.

*“If the training of the mind is good, then the children's health will also be good because she can then become conscious and take care of the children's health and make proper decisions about their health. She can read about health, and she has knowledge related to child health, so she can make better decisions about the welfare of children. If we talk about child marriage, it would mean that she had fewer learning opportunities. When he gets a chance to attain Talib, his results can be seen in multiple folds regarding socio-economic development.”*

Respondents recognized the harmful effect of child marriage on socio-economic development. Getting married at a young age hinders academic progress, restricts job prospects, and sustains cycles of poverty. Respondent 7 emphasized that child marriage negatively impacts mother and child health, leads to increased maternal death rates, and hinders women's involvement in the labour force. Poverty, illiteracy, and child marriage interact to worsen social inequities and impede progress towards sustainable development (Fatima, 2023).

Poverty is a significant factor that leads to child marriage, especially in areas with limited resources where families find it challenging to fulfil necessities (Ahonsi, 2019). Families facing economic difficulties put short-term financial needs above the future welfare of their children, resulting in early marriages as a means of survival. Poverty maintains patterns of

susceptibility, constraining chances for education and financial independence and sustaining the tradition of child marriage as a way to ensure economic stability.

Question 4 answered by respondent:

*“Boys from low-income families marry early because they acquire a dowry—typically cash—when they get married. They put that money toward starting a business or helping their boys find employment.”*

All respondents, regardless of gender or region, acknowledged that poverty is a contributing factor to child marriage, but they also said that marriage offers a better means of achieving financial security. Respondent 12 demonstrated that one of the reasons for child marriage was the early age of marriage for boys in order to prevent their son from becoming involved in any romantic relationships. In situations where the groom's family was impoverished and there was little chance of collecting a dowry, some parents would marry off their children at a young age.

Illiteracy worsens gender inequalities and maintains cycles of poverty by restricting access to education and economic prospects, especially for girls (Cappella, 2018). Girls are often deprived of educational chances in many situations, which perpetuates conventional gender roles and expectations that emphasize household duties over individual growth. Illiteracy weakens girls' ability to act independently and make decisions, making them susceptible to early marriage and its related dangers, such as early childbearing and negative health consequences.

Child marriage presents notable socio-economic obstacles, such as negative impacts on the mother and child's health, educational achievement, and financial independence (Msuya, 2020). Early marriage hinders girls' academic progress, reducing their ability to make significant economic contributions and sustaining poverty cycles in communities. The practice hinders progress towards gender equality, human rights, and sustainable development, emphasizing the immediate necessity for thorough interventions to tackle its underlying origins and effects.

Respondent 12 describes in a question response that.

*“I think this should be banned because how can a small child with no intelligence build a house? As a mother, she has to make a society, and her*

*father also has to. If the child's parents do not have intelligence, what will they do to society? The second very important thing is to look at the girl's education and health factors. Girls have a lot of influence on their health.”*

Respondents emphasized poverty as a key factor contributing to underage marriage. Respondent 8 highlighted the economic vulnerabilities of families, stating that poverty forces them to arrange marriages for their children without thinking about the outcomes. Poverty leads families to lack the necessary resources and opportunities, prompting them to resort to extreme actions like child marriage to reduce financial strain (UNICEF, 2018). Families may see marriage as a way to lower family costs and provide financial security when they cannot meet fundamental demands.

Illiteracy has been identified as a major factor influencing the prevalence of child marriage. Respondents noted that insufficient education hinders individuals' knowledge and comprehension of the detrimental effects linked to child marriage. Respondent 10 pointed out the connection between illiteracy and early marriage, indicating that lack of education sustains poverty cycles and strengthens conventional gender roles. Illiteracy hinders critical thinking and decision-making abilities, increasing vulnerability to social influences and hazardous behaviours, including child marriage (UNICEF, 2016).

Respondent 13 demonstrates the answer of question about girl's age for marriage:

*“Typically, parents marry their daughters between the ages of fifteen and sixteen. It is the age at which they (the parents) believe marriage is appropriate. At this age, the majority of girls get married.”*

Poverty and child marriage are closely connected in a cycle of intergenerational hardship. Respondents observed that poverty frequently sustains the cycle of early marriage by restricting access to education and economic possibilities. Child brides are at a higher risk of encountering poverty and encountering obstacles to social and economic progress (Plan International, 2018). Poverty and illiteracy contribute to a harmful cycle where children from poor and uneducated families are more likely to become child brides or grooms, continuing the cycle of disadvantage for future generations.

Child marriage significantly impacts the health and school results of children. Respondents emphasized the negative impact of early marriage on children's physical and mental health, as well as their scholastic achievement. Early marriage frequently leads to disrupted education,

which hinders children's chances for personal and intellectual growth (UNICEF, 2018). Child brides are at a higher risk of health issues such as early pregnancy, maternal mortality, and reproductive health difficulties due to their physical immaturity (UNICEF, 2017).

Respondent 6 describes in the question 7 response as that.

*“What is the use of education? Then what is the no benefit? Neither is she working for herself, nor for the children, nor for the government, and she is wasting all the government's money. What is the use of education, and then what is the no benefit? Neither is she working for herself, nor is she working for the children, nor is she working for the government and is wasting all the government's money.”*

Gender dynamics and societal norms are crucial factors in sustaining child marriage practices. Respondent 6 emphasized that societal expectations and established gender norms play a significant role in making early marriage for girls seem acceptable. Traditional gender conventions typically require girls to prioritize family responsibilities over their own goals, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and gender disparity (Ngulube, 2018). The firmly ingrained societal standards help sustain the continuation of child marriage practices over successive generations.

Poverty is a key factor that leads to child marriage since families in financial difficulty may see early marriage as a way to cope with economic challenges (UNICEF, 2018). Financial vulnerabilities might lead families to turn to child marriage as a way to deal with economic challenges.

Illiteracy worsens social vulnerability and maintains cycles of poverty and early marriage (UNICEF, 2017). Restricted education access hinders individuals from making educated decisions, making them vulnerable to harmful practices like child marriage. Illiteracy hinders empowerment, especially for girls, and sustains gender inequalities in education and social progress.

Child marriage presents notable health and education obstacles for children, especially females. Early marriage hinders scholastic progress, restricting girls' chances for personal and intellectual development (UNFPA, 2018). Child brides are at a higher risk of maternal mortality, reproductive health issues, and lack of access to healthcare facilities, which negatively impacts their well-being and development (UNICEF, 2017).



Gender dynamics and cultural norms are key factors in sustaining child marriage practices. Patriarchal systems emphasize male dominance and power, placing females in inferior positions and restricting their ability to act independently and make decisions (Sharma, 2021). Encouraging young girls to marry early through societal conventions contributes to gender disparities and sustains patterns of poverty and social marginalization.

The theme analysis highlights the intricate relationship between poverty, illiteracy, and child marriage in Pakistan. Poverty and illiteracy contribute to early marriage, sustaining patterns of vulnerability and social inequality. Child marriage has extensive socio-economic ramifications that impede progress towards sustainable development and gender equality. To tackle the underlying reasons for child marriage, comprehensive strategies focusing on education, economic empowerment, and gender equality are needed to disrupt the cycle of poverty and safeguard the rights and welfare of girls and women.

#### *4.1.4 Theme 4: Legal Socialization*

Child marriage is a significant problem in Pakistan, firmly rooted in societal standards, cultural traditions, and religious beliefs. The respondents' viewpoints reveal the intricate relationship between legislation, societal approval, and the difficulties of tackling child marriage by legal methods. Using theme analysis, the researcher analysed the function of legal socialization in addressing child marriage and its connection to broader social dynamics.

Respondent 2 describes in the question response that

*“We have been unsuccessful in many things. Now, thankfully, things have started happening. The iron of Pakistan clears everything, and every person has the right to it. The day has given you the right to not marry without your consent.”*

Respondents recognized the significance of laws in combating child marriage. Respondent 4 emphasized the importance of legal frameworks in establishing age limitations for marriage and safeguarding children's rights. Several responders stressed that the law alone is not enough to eliminate child marriage. Respondent 2 stressed the need to enforce laws effectively, stating that simply passing them is insufficient to address deeply rooted societal customs.

Respondents noted many obstacles in enforcing current rules on underage marriage.

Respondent 7 describes in question 13 that.

*“In my opinion, the first thing is intention. What is our intention? Do we even want to do it or not? When we mix them with His refuge, many elements slip out of our hands. But overall, the second thing you will get will be the implementation capacity and how to implement it. Because it is a community participation and community behaviour, teaching this without engaging the community or taking them on board cannot happen. So, more social and community behaviour will change, and law may not be the best source to change. He has to be linked with a lot of education. There will have to be a link with a lot of awareness among the people until this city is put on its own. So the law's implementation will be weak even if it becomes built.”*

Respondent 7 identified the absence of resources, institutional ability, and community participation as obstacles to successful implementation. Furthermore, Respondent 10 emphasized the impact of Islamic traditions and cultural norms that frequently contradict legislative measures designed to deter underage marriage. The problems highlight the intricacy of implementing and upholding laws in a setting influenced by religious and cultural factors.

The replies highlighted how social acceptability and cultural standards contribute to the continuation of child marriage practices. Respondents emphasized the entrenched cultural views that make early marriage, especially for females, seem natural. Respondent 5 stressed the importance of tackling broader societal issues and questioning conventional gender norms to prevent child marriage successfully. Respondent 8 highlighted the interdependent connection between social acceptability and legal standards, indicating that society's views influence the creation and implementation of laws.

Respondents stressed the need for awareness and education in tackling child marriage. Many Respondents emphasized the necessity of thorough awareness initiatives to educate communities about the detrimental impacts of early marriage and the rights of children. Respondent 1 proposed using creative media strategies to increase awareness and promote a shift in attitudes against child marriage. Education became crucial in questioning ingrained views and enabling individuals to facilitate change.

Legal frameworks are essential in combating child marriage by setting age restrictions, safeguarding children's rights, and creating systems for enforcement (UNICEF, 2020). The efficacy of law relies on its conformity with cultural norms, public attitudes, and institutional ability for execution (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Enforcing laws against child marriage encounters several obstacles, such as insufficient resources, institutional capability, and cultural opposition (UNFPA, 2020). Religious and cultural traditions frequently impact how child marriage is seen and can impede the enforcement of laws designed to prohibit it.

Social acceptability and cultural dynamics influence the frequency of child marriage and the impact of legislative measures (Omidakhsh, 2020). Societal norms strongly support early marriage, especially for girls, which continues the patterns of gender inequality and social isolation (UNICEF, 2019).

It is crucial to have awareness and education initiatives to address harmful practices like child marriage and advocate for gender equality (UNESCO, 2018). Comprehensive programs involving communities, empowering individuals, and encouraging critical thinking are crucial for tackling the underlying reasons for child marriage and advocating social change (UNFPA, 2020).

Respondent 2 describes in fifteen question response that

*“Laws are there, everything is there, everything is there, and we need awareness, social acceptance and discussion.”*

Respondents stressed the significance of law and societal approval in tackling child marriage. Laws provide a necessary structure for control and protection, but social acceptability plays a significant role in shaping community views and actions around child marriage. Respondent 2 emphasized the need to raise awareness and engage in social discourse, stating that legal actions are not enough without simultaneous initiatives to encourage societal transformation. Respondent 5 stressed the need to tackle social issues to promote social acceptance of legislative initiatives.

Respondent 3 describes in question 13 that

*“I Think Awareness Is. The Biggest Issue Just Like Any Other Lo Awareness In Pakistan Is Not Related To Any Law. And people do not know their rights and where they can access information or justice, so I think that is the biggest issue.”*

Implementation issues were a common theme in the replies. Respondents pointed out the insufficient knowledge, structural mechanisms, and resources needed to enforce current laws against child marriage effectively. Respondent 3 highlighted the significance of awareness in promoting legal compliance, indicating that a lack of understanding leads to the continuation of child marriage practices. Respondent 4 emphasized the necessity of establishing institutional implementation mechanisms and allocating resources to facilitate the enforcement of child marriage regulations.

Respondent 4 describes in the question response that

*“This cannot be solved only by law and marriage. If we use love and law only in marriage, then this cannot happen. Any issue can never be solved by law unless there is an implementation plan, but law and marriage can be its first step.”*

Education has been identified as a crucial element in combating child marriage and promoting changes in behaviour within communities. Respondents emphasized the significance of education in empowering individuals, especially females, and questioning conventional norms and behaviours. Respondent 4 highlighted the importance of education in improving health outcomes and postponing the eligibility for marriage among females. Education acts as a catalyst for societal change by questioning deep-rooted ideas and attitudes around child marriage.

Respondent 6 describes the response in question twelve.

*“That's why right now we are failing, that friend, Islamic State, and according to the Quran and heard, there is no such thing written that you should not marry till this point or there is no such lecture that you should not marry a girl of younger age. If you see, our Hazoor (SAW) is married but did not maintain any physical contact till age 14, so he is also married.”*

Respondents recognized that religious and cultural influences have a significant role in forming views regarding child marriage. Some respondents linked child marriage to cultural practices and social standards, while others emphasized the connection between religious beliefs and legal systems. Respondent 6 analysed how Islamic teachings influence views on child marriage in the Pakistani community.

Gender dynamics became a focal point in discussions on child marriage. Respondents emphasized the need to empower females via education and awareness programs to address gender inequities and enhance agency in decision-making. Respondent 8 stressed the importance of societal acceptance and legal structures that prioritize the rights and welfare of girls, emphasizing the interconnectedness of gender, law, and social norms in tackling child marriage.

Legislation plays a crucial role in dealing with child marriage by establishing a legal structure for oversight and safeguarding, as stated by (UNICEF, 2018). The law's success depends on the broader social acceptability and understanding of legal rights and obligations within communities. Comprehensive social mobilization techniques are necessary to challenge current conventions and encourage behavioural change alongside legal measures.

Implementation issues present major obstacles to implementing child marriage regulations (UNFPA, 2018). The successful execution of legislative measures to prevent child marriage is hindered by limited resources, institutional competence, and awareness (Latifiani, 2019). Establishing structural procedures to monitor, report, and intervene is crucial for compliance with current laws and protecting children's rights (UNICEF, 2017).

Education is crucial in empowering individuals, especially girls, and combating harmful practices like child marriage (UNICEF, 2017). Access to high-quality education allows girls by providing them with information, skills, and the ability to make well-informed decisions about their lives. Education catalyses social change by empowering communities to challenge conventional beliefs and promote gender equality and human rights (USMAN, 2021).

Religious and cultural beliefs impact views on child marriage, affecting ideas about ethics, family reputation, and gender expectations (UNICEF, 2018). Religious interpretations can influence how laws on child marriage are created and enforced where religion and legal systems overlap. To tackle child marriage effectively, it is essential to use sophisticated

strategies that acknowledge cultural differences while upholding international human rights values.

Gender dynamics, legal norms, and social norms converge to sustain inequities and vulnerabilities that lead to child marriage (UNFPA, 2018). Empowering girls and opposing patriarchal institutions are crucial for fostering agency and autonomy in decision-making (UNICEF, 2017). Legal frameworks should prioritize gender-sensitive measures that target the underlying causes of child marriage and advocate for the rights and welfare of girls and women.

The theme analysis emphasizes the complex nature of tackling child marriage in Pakistan, focusing on the interrelation of legal frameworks, societal norms, and gender dynamics. The law's success in regulating and protecting depends on more significant initiatives to create societal acceptance, awareness, and empowerment. To tackle child marriage effectively, a comprehensive strategy is needed that combines legal, social, and educational measures to confront deep-rooted views and advance gender equality and human rights.

## **4.2 Challenges in Legislation and Implementation of Child Marriage Laws in Pakistan from Legislators' Perspective**

This section discusses the challenges associated with the legislation and effective implementation of child marriage laws from the legislators' perspective in light of the above-mentioned four themes identified from respondents' responses. These themes, discussed under the light of those responses, depict the challenges associated with the legislation and effective implementation of child marriage laws in Pakistan. This section discusses those challenges, segregating them into the areas mentioned below. These challenges are as identified by respondents of the study in their responses, which have been analyzed and discussed in the themes in detail. This section delves into the various hurdles identified through the responses of the study's respondents, highlighting both legislative and practical difficulties.

### *4.2.1 Legislative Challenges*

One of the primary challenges highlighted by respondents of this research study is the **inconsistency in laws** related to child marriage across different provinces in Pakistan. While Sindh has made significant strides in raising the legal marriage age and enforcing penalties, other provinces and federal level law lag behind due to varying interpretations of religious

and cultural norms. This inconsistency creates a fragmented legal framework that complicates nationwide efforts to combat child marriage effectively.

Additionally, **lack of comprehensive legal frameworks** that address all aspects of child marriage, including prevention, protection, and rehabilitation, is a significant concern. Legislators pointed out that existing laws often lack clarity and fail to cover all necessary areas, such as mandatory reporting of child marriages, support for victims, and stringent enforcement mechanisms.

#### *4.2.2 Social and Cultural Challenges*

The **deep-rooted patriarchal norms** prevalent in Pakistani society pose a significant barrier to the effective implementation of child marriage laws. As discussed in the theme of patriarchy, men typically hold decision-making power, often resulting in the perpetuation of child marriage practices. Respondents noted that even when laws are in place, the social acceptance of these laws remains low, leading to poor enforcement and compliance.

**Marginalisation of women** further complicates the situation. Respondents acknowledged that societal attitudes towards women, which confine them to reproductive roles and objectify them, hinder efforts to protect young girls from early marriages. These attitudes are entrenched in cultural norms and are resistant to change, making legal interventions less effective.

#### *4.2.3 Economic and Educational Barriers*

The nexus between **poverty and illiteracy** and child marriage, as highlighted in the study, underscores the economic challenges legislators face in addressing this issue. Many families marry off their daughters at a young age due to financial constraints and lack of educational opportunities. The respondents' responses highlighted the need for integrated policies that address economic empowerment and education for girls as part of the strategy to eradicate child marriage.

#### *4.2.4 Implementation and Enforcement Issues*

**Lack of awareness and training** among law enforcement officials and community leaders about child marriage laws was another challenge identified by legislators. The effectiveness of these laws is often undermined by insufficient knowledge and understanding among those responsible for their enforcement. Respondents of the study pointed out the need for

continuous training and awareness campaigns to ensure that the laws are properly implemented.

#### *4.2.5 Religious and Political Resistance*

Lastly, **religious and political resistance** plays a significant role in hindering the effective implementation of child marriage laws. Respondents noted that there are strong religious and political lobbies that oppose changes to child marriage laws, citing traditional and religious justifications. This resistance can stymie legislative efforts and make it difficult to pass and enforce more progressive laws aimed at protecting young girls.

In conclusion, the challenges associated with the effective legislation and implementation of child marriage laws in Pakistan are multifaceted, involving legal inconsistencies, deep-seated cultural norms, economic and educational barriers, implementation issues, and resistance from religious and political factions. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that encompasses legal reforms, societal change, economic empowerment, education, and continuous awareness and training efforts.

### **4.3 Discussion**

The discussion of the findings from this study provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities surrounding child marriage legislation and implementation in Pakistan. The identified themes, including patriarchy, marginalization of women, poverty and illiteracy, and legal socialization, offer a comprehensive understanding of the complex factors influencing the prevalence of child marriage in the country.

Patriarchy emerges as a dominant theme, reflecting the entrenched gender norms and power structures that perpetuate the practice of child marriage in Pakistan. The patriarchal system marginalizes women and girls, restricting their agency and decision-making power and perpetuating unequal power dynamics within families and communities. This aligns with SDT theory, which posits that gender inequality and power imbalances are central to understanding social phenomena such as child marriage (Agha, 2021). The theory of social dominance in the context of patriarchy looks at how views of group-based inequality and supremacy impact hierarchical social structures. Powerful males often hold positions of advantage, which leads to disparities that benefit men over women. Supporting the perspective of social dominance (SDO) upholds patriarchal standards and the idea that some groups are better than others, for instance men over women (Lantz et al., 2020). Men's support has a detrimental effect on the quality of marriage by affecting communication styles,



power dynamics, and feelings of manipulation in relationships. This illustrates how patriarchal ideas affect the dynamics between intimate partners (Ymamgulyyeva et al., 2023).

Marginalization of women emerges as another key theme, highlighting the systemic barriers faced by women and girls in accessing education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Poverty and illiteracy further exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls to child marriage, as families may view early marriage as a means of economic survival or to alleviate financial burdens. This echoes the social reproduction theory, emphasising how economic factors and social structures perpetuate inequalities and shape individual choices (Sharma, 2021). Understanding child marriage through the lens of SDT can help in developing interventions that target the root causes of marginalization and power imbalances (Paramitha, 2021).

Legal socialization emerges as a central theme, underscoring the role of legislation and legal frameworks in shaping societal attitudes and behaviours towards child marriage. However, the findings reveal gaps in implementing and enforcing existing laws, highlighting the need for more robust legal and enforcement mechanisms. This aligns with the social control theory, which emphasizes the role of formal and informal social controls, including laws and regulations, in shaping individuals' behaviour (Maina, 2020).

Theoretical framework of SDT provides valuable insights into the underlying dynamics of child marriage in Pakistan. By examining the interplay between patriarchy, gender inequality, poverty, legal frameworks, and social norms, policymakers and practitioners can develop more effective strategies to address child marriage and promote gender equality and women's rights in Pakistan (Rotter, 2019).

Furthermore, the findings underscore the importance of adopting a multi-sectoral approach that addresses the root causes of child marriage, including poverty, gender inequality, and lack of access to education and healthcare. By integrating theoretical insights with empirical evidence, policymakers can develop holistic interventions that empower women and girls, challenge patriarchal norms, and create an enabling environment for gender equality and human rights in Pakistan.

Legislators' perspectives on child marriage legislation in Pakistan reflect broader societal attitudes and norms. While some legislators acknowledge the detrimental impact of child marriage on the well-being and rights of children, others perceive it through the lens of

tradition and cultural norms. This aligns with existing literature, which suggests that entrenched socio-cultural beliefs often shape attitudes towards child marriage and hinder efforts to enact and enforce legislation aimed at its prevention (Ghomeshi, 2020). Moreover, the discussion surrounding the interpretation of religious texts and the perceived conflict between religious beliefs and legal frameworks mirrors debates highlighted in previous studies, emphasizing the need for nuanced approaches that reconcile religious and cultural values with human rights principles (Saeed, 2018).

Legislators in Pakistan have found obstacles in implementing child marriage laws that align with the results in the literature. Insufficient enforcement mechanisms, limited resources, and societal acceptability of child marriage are significant obstacles to successful implementation, along with previous research emphasising disparity between policy creation and execution in practice (Bayhantopçu, 2024). The conversation highlights the need to tackle these structural obstacles with thorough tactics, including law changes, community involvement, and awareness campaigns. The findings emphasize how legal frameworks, socio-cultural norms, and systemic disparities contribute to the persistence of child marriage, stressing the necessity of comprehensive and multi-sectoral strategies to address this problem (Deb, 2020).

The conversation also highlights the intricacies involved in interpreting and implementing child marriage laws within the legal framework of Pakistan. Legislators have different opinions on how religious beliefs influence marital customs, which mirrors more extensive social discussions regarding the connection between religion, culture, and human rights. This reiterates previous research emphasizing the difficulties of reconciling cultural and religious norms within legislative systems aimed at safeguarding adolescents from detrimental behaviours like early marriage. Furthermore, it emphasizes the significance of including religious and community leaders in conversations and advocacy initiatives to question deep-rooted views and endorse other understandings of religious scriptures that prioritize the rights and well-being of children (Fatima, 2023).

The analysis of interviews with legislators about child marriage legislation in Pakistan uncovered important data that provide insight into their viewpoints, obstacles, and suggestions for tackling this problem. The legislators demonstrated a sophisticated comprehension of the issue of child marriage in Pakistan. They identified it as a multifaceted problem with strong connections to societal norms, cultural practices, and economic influences. Most legislators recognised that child marriage negatively impacts the health,

education, and overall well-being of young girls, emphasising the need to address this issue promptly.

The investigation revealed obstacles that are impeding the successful enactment and enforcement of laws designed to prevent child marriage in Pakistan. Legislators noted a significant issue in the lack of awareness and education among the general people about the adverse effects of child marriage. Several lawmakers stressed the importance of thorough awareness initiatives to shift society's views and customs about early marriage.

The legislators emphasised that poverty and economic instability are major factors contributing to child marriage in Pakistan. Families in poverty often see early marriage as a method to achieve financial security or reduce economic hardships. Some lawmakers highlighted how cultural and religious views contribute to the continuation of child marriage, hindering the enforcement of legislative regulations.

The analysis found varying perspectives among legislators about the effectiveness of current child marriage legislation in Pakistan. Some legislators praised the government's attempts to pass laws to stop child marriage, but others condemned the absence of enforcement measures and funding for implementation. Several lawmakers highlighted the necessity of bolstering legal frameworks, improving enforcement mechanisms, and dedicating sufficient resources to address child marriage adequately.

The analysis emphasised the necessity of multi-sectoral collaboration and community participation to tackle the underlying causes of child marriage. Legislators emphasised the significance of engaging local communities, religious leaders, and civil society organisations in awareness campaigns and advocacy work. They stressed the need to advocate for girls' education and empower young women to make well-informed decisions.

The findings emphasize the necessity of implementing focused interventions to tackle the underlying reasons for child marriage in Pakistan. Legislative efforts are insufficient to address a deeply ingrained practice influenced by socioeconomic inequities, gender inequality, and restricted access to education and healthcare (Conroy, 2020). The debate emphasizes the need for a comprehensive strategy that tackles structural disparities and enables communities to confront detrimental habits. This aligns with the literature, highlighting the importance of education, economic empowerment, and social mobilization in

changing cultural views and norms related to child marriage. The debate highlights the interwoven relationship between child marriage and its underlying causes, underlining the importance of comprehensive tactics that tackle key issues and advocate for legislative reform and enforcement (Walters, 2019).

The thematic analysis of legislators' viewpoints on child marriage legislation in Pakistan highlights the intricate nature of this issue and the difficulties in effectively addressing it. Despite acknowledging the negative impacts of child marriage and a readiness to intervene, there are notable obstacles, such as cultural norms, economic constraints, and legal enforcement issues. In the future, governments, civil society organisations, and communities need to work together to create thorough plans to address child marriage and advance gender equality and social justice in Pakistan.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Building upon the extensive analysis of the research findings discussed in Chapter 4, and we now move to synthesize these insights into coherent conclusions and actionable policy recommendations. Chapter 5 aims to encapsulate the study's overall implications, drawing from the data to propose strategies for effectively addressing the issue of child marriage in Pakistan. This chapter will explore the findings' broader societal, cultural, and legal ramifications, offering a roadmap for policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders to forge a more equitable future. Through this synthesis, the study seeks to contribute meaningfully to ongoing efforts to eradicate child marriage and empower young girls and women in Pakistan.

### **5.1 Conclusion**

Child marriage in Pakistan is a complex topic that involves legal, social, cultural, and religious aspects. By analysing the themes and ideas of respondents, the researcher has uncovered the obstacles and complexities involved in resolving this widespread occurrence. When legislation and social norms collide, it is clear that legal frameworks alone are not enough to address child marriage. Legislative measures are essential for establishing norms and enforcing rules, but they should be supported by deliberate actions to promote social change and question ingrained cultural traditions.

The investigation emphasizes how cultural and religious beliefs impact opinions towards child marriage. Several respondents mentioned that religious interpretations and cultural standards are crucial in continuing this activity. Respondents highlighted the need to challenge established beliefs and promote alternative narratives that prioritize the rights and well-being of children, especially girls, as the key priority of "social acceptability." It highlights the significance of using religious leaders, community influencers, and grassroots groups to change cultural views and habits in advocacy campaigns.

The investigation shows conflicts between legal frameworks and sociocultural reality. Challenges in enforcing current laws against child marriage remain due to deficiencies in enforcement mechanisms, resource allocation, and institutional capability. Respondents emphasized the need for strong implementation measures, such as awareness campaigns, capacity building, and community involvement efforts, to ensure that laws are effectively enforced and vulnerable children are protected.

Education was a prominent topic in the discussion, with attendees highlighting its crucial role in questioning gender stereotypes, empowering girls, and breaking cycles of poverty and injustice. Access to high-quality education was recognized as an essential protective element against child marriage, empowering girls with the information, abilities, and autonomy to make well-informed decisions about their future. Respondents emphasized the significance of holistic strategies that include education, healthcare, economic empowerment, and psychosocial support to tackle the many reasons that lead to child marriage.

The study revealed the gendered aspects of child marriage, emphasizing differences in power dynamics, decision-making autonomy, and resource availability between boys and girls. Respondents stressed the need for gender-transformative strategies that question conventional ideas of masculinity and femininity, encourage fair interactions, and create circumstances that support the realization of children's rights.

Child marriage in Pakistan requires a comprehensive and rights-focused approach involving legislation changes, community engagement, and specific interventions across many levels. Legislative measures are essential for change but must be complemented by addressing the root causes of child marriage, such as poverty, gender inequality, and limited access to education and healthcare. Pakistan may make significant progress in eradicating child marriage and creating a fair and inclusive society by empowering impacted communities, including all stakeholders, and emphasizing the rights and autonomy of children.

Child marriage is a sensitive and complex issue to debate on. Especially within the context of different regions, it is treated differently due to the diversity of culture and social structure. This study was within the context of child marriages in Pakistan and relevant laws and existing mechanisms for its implementation. The international community has a consensus on the issue that it violates human rights and is against social norms and values. Therefore, it should be discouraged. Various global organizations have been working on eradicating the phenomenon of child marriages and attempting to combat the issue, but the results are inadequate. When it comes to child marriage, it isn't easy to make generalizations other than the level of education that applies to everyone.

Legislators' perspectives on the difficulties in enacting and enforcing child marriage legislation in Pakistan demonstrate the complexity of the situation. One major obstacle to passing or enforcing legislation prohibiting child marriage is cultural and religious standards. Furthermore, it is observed that lawmakers lack the political will to give this issue top

priority, maybe as a result of conflicting agendas or electoral considerations. The efficient application of current legislation is further complicated by inadequate legal foundations and enforcement procedures. There are systemic impediments that many girls who are at danger of child marriage face while trying to access justice and legal remedies.

As a result, one cannot create a program that is applicable everywhere; instead, one must conduct local research to identify the factors that affect the rate of child marriage because there are many different factors. The prevalence of child marriage may vary by community and may be influenced by local myths or norms. Once the root causes of child marriage in a given region have been identified, a suitable prevention strategy can be developed. The poverty rate is one example of a factor that may significantly impact some places while having little effect on others. Evaluations of current initiatives to prevent child marriage have been presented, and through these, I have offered recommendations for how to combat the problem.

## **5.2 Limitations**

The limitations of this research study are as follows:

1. The researcher opted for a sample size of 13 legislators from the Upper and Lower House of Parliament of Pakistan (Senate and National Assembly). Future studies in this study can increase the sample size for more generalised findings.
2. The researcher started collecting data in December 2021. There were days when she could not make a member sit for an interview. The researcher wanted face-to-face interviews; therefore, she had to wait for days to interview a legislator. Moreover, political uncertainty in the country in February 2022 hampered the researcher's data collection process for a few months. Legislators got busy with political engagements in their respective constituencies. The researcher resumed KIIs in July 2022.
3. The sensitive nature of child marriage is intertwined with cultural and religious beliefs. This may cause respondents to hesitate to fully disclose their true opinions. It may also influence their responses in complex ways. These complexities are difficult to fully capture through interviews alone. Therefore, the researcher solely focused on this multifaceted issue's sociocultural and sociolegal aspects.
4. The findings of this study are highly specific to the Pakistani legislative context and may not be directly applicable or transferable to other countries or regions with different legal, social, and cultural contexts regarding child marriage.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The issue of child marriages may be tackled by the government of Pakistan, NGOs, and political and religious leaders fulfilling their respective duties.

1. Officially approve the international human rights agreements to deter threats such as child marriage and underage labour, demonstrating the government's dedication to the global community.
2. Revise current legislation to prohibit marriage for people under 18 years old and impose strict penalties for anyone who violates this rule.
3. Make a mechanism to register all marriages without fail. Moreover, the nikah registrars should be trained on this behalf. Digital devices should be provided to the said nikah registrars for marriage registration so that the entries can be digitalized as soon as the marriage is solemnized.
4. Make a law to obtain the consent of both the individuals involved in marriage.
5. Child marriages cause huge damage to education and literacy; therefore, education itself can help eradicate this malpractice. The government should make policies to spread education in every nook and corner of the country and thereby protect the coming generation from the aftermaths of child marriages.
6. Attendance of pupils in elementary and intermediate schools run by the government or NGOs should be guaranteed.
7. Offer economic incentives to parents or guardians who enrol their daughters in school. These incentives promptly appeal to them, causing them to postpone their daughters' marriages perhaps.
8. The government should offer training to authorities and stakeholders to educate the public on the national laws against child marriage.
9. The media should inform parents and other stakeholders about the negative effects of child marriages.
10. Legislators fund and support research initiatives to gather data on child marriage prevalence, causes and consequences, informing evidence based policy decisions.

### **5.4 Policy Implications**

The important policy implications are the significance of increasing awareness and advocating for education at both the community and national levels. Efforts should prioritise teaching families, religious leaders, and community members about the adverse effects of



child marriage on the health, education, and overall well-being of girls. Public awareness initiatives should target negative cultural practices and attitudes that support early marriage.

Policymakers must provide sufficient resources and support for enforcing current child marriage regulations. This involves improving enforcement methods, boosting the capabilities of law enforcement organisations, and guaranteeing access to legal assistance and services for victims of child marriage. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation procedures are required to gauge the efficacy of laws and track advancements in addressing child marriage.

Policymakers should focus on investing in programmes and efforts that target the root causes of child marriage, such as poverty, gender inequality, and limited access to education and economic opportunities for girls, alongside legal actions. This involves enacting extensive poverty alleviation initiatives, advocating for girls' education, and enabling young women to make well-informed decisions about their lives.

Furthermore, it is essential to have multi-sectoral collaboration and coordination between government agencies, civil society organisations, and community stakeholders to create and execute comprehensive strategies to address child marriage. This involves involving religious leaders, community elders, and local influencers in advocacy and social mobilisation initiatives to alter attitudes and behaviours towards early marriage.

This centuries-old problem cannot be eliminated with short-term policy measures. Evidence-based legislation and policy interventions are necessary to bring the desired social change through legislation. Child marriage results from social, religious, cultural, economic, and political influences. A consistent, thorough, well-designed strategy with short- and long-term objectives must be implemented with great political determination. Otherwise, this threat will persist and subject the females concerned to a life resembling that of an enslaved person, continuously diminishing their youth. Lastly, there is a dire need to connect academia, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and think tanks with Parliament for research-backed policy interventions to curb this menace of child marriages in Pakistan.

## **5.5 Way Forward**

The findings of this study shed light on the complexities surrounding child marriage legislation and implementation in Pakistan, highlighting various challenges and barriers faced

by legislators. However, it is important to acknowledge the study's limitations and outline a way forward for future research and policy interventions.

One of the limitations of this study is the relatively small sample size of legislators interviewed. While efforts were made to ensure diversity in gender, political affiliation, and geographical representation, a more extensive sample could provide a more comprehensive understanding of legislators' perspectives on child marriage legislation. Future research should aim to expand the sample size and include a more comprehensive range of stakeholders, including policymakers, legal experts, civil society organizations, and community leaders, to capture a more nuanced understanding of the issue.

The study focused solely on legislators' perspectives, overlooking the viewpoints of other key stakeholders involved in child marriage prevention efforts. Future research should adopt a multi-stakeholder approach to explore the perspectives of individuals and organizations working directly with communities affected by child marriage, including health professionals, educators, social workers, and religious leaders. This holistic approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities for addressing child marriage in Pakistan.

Furthermore, the study primarily relied on qualitative data collected through interviews, limiting the scope for quantitative analysis and statistical generalization. Future research should consider employing mixed-methods approaches to triangulate findings and provide a more robust evidence base for policy and intervention development. Quantitative surveys could be conducted to assess the prevalence and determinants of child marriage in different regions of Pakistan, complementing qualitative insights with quantitative data.

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## APPENDICES

Question 1: Knowing that an action has negative impacts on the mental and physical well-being of a human being, would you stop the act?

Question 2: Why should an individual get married?

Question 3: What is the right age for girls to marry in your opinion and why?

Question 4: What is the right age for boys to marry in your opinion and why?

Question 5: Do you favour a child doing any form of labour?

Question 6: In your opinion, is the child marriage rate high in girls or boys?

Question 7: Does the child marriage issue have an impact on the socio-economic development of Pakistan?

Question 8: Does child marriage issue have an impact on the health of children?

Question 9: Does the child marriage issue have an impact on the education of children?

Question 10: In your opinion, can a child bride take the responsibility of home after marriage?

Question 11: Can a child bride play the role of a good mother in raising her kids efficiently?

Question 12: In your opinion, why has Pakistan remained unsuccessful in effective legislation on the child marriage issues to date?

Question 13: What are the challenges in the implementation of existing child marriage laws in Pakistan?

Question 14: Does the presence of more laws on an issue mean a solution to that issue?

Question 15: Can the issue of child marriages in Pakistan be resolved through legislation or is social acceptability also crucial?