Child Marriage
- The underlying reasons and possible solutions

Author: Nathalie Johansson
Tutor: Lennart Wohlgemuth
Examiner: Heiko Fritz
Semester: Spring 2015
Field: Peace and Development work
Level: Bachelor’s thesis
Course code: 2FU31E
Abstract

In despite of all attention drawn to child marriage across the world, there is a lack of improvement. The object of this research is to look into under what circumstances child marriage does exist and how girls’ living conditions can be improved. Focus shall be put on child marriage in general exemplified in particular by two countries in Africa, namely Niger and Chad, who both are countries with an extremely high rate of child marriage. This is a desk study based on various reports regarding the subject in the different countries and also in general. As the theoretical framework, the sex role theory is applied in order to analyze the phenomenon. Studies indicate a great difference in the number of young married girls in comparison to boys across the globe. Even though boys can be victims of child marriage, the consequences are less severe and therefore, focus shall be put on girls only in this thesis. The number of girls entering early marriage has not been found to stagnate everywhere, but the age of when entering marriage tends to increase. In fact, child marriage has become more common in some areas. From the research it is concluded that one cannot generalize all underlying causes of child marriage, but one must be aware of the specific circumstances in the particular areas. Conclusions regarding underlying factors and correlations are further to be found and presented in the text.

Keywords: Child marriage, Niger, Chad, Social norms
Acknowledgements

I wish to give a special thanks to my tutor Lennart Wohlgemuth, who has during the process given me important opinions regarding the thesis and helped me to complete my work. My gratitude also goes to Anders Nilsson, who helped me with all the pre-work of the thesis, guiding me on to the right path with a positive attitude. I would also like to give a thank you to my family and all of my friends for always supporting and encouraging me, even when I was in doubt. To all above mentioned, thank you!
Table of Contents

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 6
  1.1. Research topic ........................................................................................................... 6
  1.2. Research problem ..................................................................................................... 6
  1.3. Research objective ................................................................................................... 7
  1.4. Research questions .................................................................................................. 8
  1.5. Limitations and delimitations .................................................................................. 8
  1.6. Methods .................................................................................................................... 9
  1.7. Ethical considerations .............................................................................................. 9
  1.8. Thesis structure ...................................................................................................... 9

2. Background .................................................................................................................... 10
  2.1. Definition of child marriage .................................................................................... 10
  2.2. Definition of extreme poverty .................................................................................. 10
  2.3. Definition of social norms ....................................................................................... 10
  2.4. The possible causes of child marriage ..................................................................... 10
    2.4.1. Religion .............................................................................................................. 11
    2.4.2. Tradition and culture ......................................................................................... 11
    2.4.3. Gender inequalities ............................................................................................ 12
    2.4.4. Poverty ............................................................................................................... 12
    2.4.5. Power and keeping the family from disgrace ...................................................... 13
    2.4.6. Protection of the girl .......................................................................................... 13
    2.4.7. Rural and urban areas ....................................................................................... 14

3. Methodology ................................................................................................................. 14
  3.1. Desk-study ............................................................................................................... 14
  3.2. Qualitative approach .............................................................................................. 14
  3.3. Limitations of the method chosen .......................................................................... 15
  3.4. Reliability and validity .......................................................................................... 15
  3.5. Hermeneutic analysis ............................................................................................. 15

4. Theoretical framework ................................................................................................. 17
  4.1. The Sex role theory ............................................................................................... 17
  4.2. Literature review .................................................................................................... 17

5. Findings ......................................................................................................................... 19
  5.1. The prevalence of child marriage ............................................................................ 19
  5.2. The effects from child marriage ............................................................................. 19
    5.2.1. Fatality ............................................................................................................... 19
    5.2.2. Various possible infections ................................................................................. 20
    5.2.3. Domestic Violence .............................................................................................. 20
    5.2.4. Lack of education .............................................................................................. 21
  5.3. The Millennium Development Goals and child marriage .................................... 21
    5.3.1. Positive effects when delaying marriage ............................................................ 21
  5.4. Child marriage in Africa ......................................................................................... 22
  5.5. Child marriage; a violation of the human rights ..................................................... 24
5.5.1. African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child ........................................... 24
5.5.2. African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights ......................................................... 25
5.6. Child marriage in Niger ................................................................................................. 25
   5.6.1. Efforts being made so far in Niger to prevent child marriage .................................... 27
5.7. Child marriage in Chad ................................................................................................. 27
   5.7.1. Efforts being made so far in Chad to prevent child marriage ................................. 28
5.8. Examples of general programs for prevention of child marriage ................................. 28
   5.8.1. Evaluation of general programs by the ICRW ......................................................... 30
   5.8.2. Best and worst results ............................................................................................ 31
6. Analysis .............................................................................................................................. 32
   6.1. Sex role theory analysis on child marriage ................................................................. 32
   6.2. Causes of child marriage ............................................................................................ 34
      6.2.1. Religion ................................................................................................................ 34
      6.2.2. Tradition and culture .......................................................................................... 35
      6.2.3. Gender inequalities ............................................................................................. 35
      6.2.4. Poverty ................................................................................................................ 35
      6.2.5. Power and keeping the family from disgrace ....................................................... 36
      6.2.6. Protection ............................................................................................................. 36
      6.2.7. Rural and urban areas ......................................................................................... 36
   6.3. The negative cycle of child marriage in Niger ............................................................ 37
   6.4. The negative cycle of child marriage in Chad ............................................................ 37
   6.5. The characteristics of a country with a high rate of child marriage ............................ 38
   6.6. How to combat child marriage ................................................................................... 39
      6.6.1. Suggestions for further research ......................................................................... 41
7. Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 42

Bibliography .......................................................................................................................... 43

Appendix 1. Map ....................................................................................................................... 43

Figure 1 .................................................................................................................................. 30
Figure 2 .................................................................................................................................. 31
Figure 3 .................................................................................................................................. 38
## List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACHPR</td>
<td>African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICRW</td>
<td>International Centre for Research on Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STI</td>
<td>Sexually Transmitted Infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNA</td>
<td>United Nations Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Introduction

1.1. Research topic
Knowledge regarding child marriage has been attained throughout the years of my volunteer work for the United Nations Association of Sweden (Sweden UNA) and the local association in Växjö (Växjö UNA). The many reasons for child marriage have been brought to my attention and have become an important matter to understand further. Child marriage is a complex issue in need of more research, in order to combat the problems following and also prevent the occurrence. The international definition of child marriage, which is also to be used in the thesis, is either when one or both spouses entering marriage before the age of 18 (OHCHR, 1989). Today, about 14.2 million of child marriages occur every year. If the trend continues, there will be 140 million underage girls entering marriage between the years of 2011 and 2020 (WHO, 2013).

There are many physical and psychological consequences of child marriage. Child brides are likely to suffer from anxiety, which in some cases leads to suicide (Soylu, Ayaz and Yüksel, 2014:1553). When marrying young, early intercourse and pregnancy usually follow with complications that can be fatal due to the undeveloped body (UNFPA, 2012:6). The young bride is also often isolated from family and friends and forced to stay home instead of attending school (UNFPA, 2006:14). Child marriage is globally spread and very common in Africa and particularly in Niger and Chad, which have the highest rate of underage spouses in the world (UNICEF, 2013).

1.2. Research problem
Therefore, I find it of highest importance to further investigate the phenomenon of child marriage in order to improve the living conditions mainly for girls, who are as mentioned, the ones mostly affected. Child marriage is affecting the global welfare since young women’s capabilities are not taken into account. As one can see, child marriage is a problem affecting mostly girls across the world and the decline is a too slow process, which indicates that the programs of prevention available so far are insufficient. Therefore, the paper includes actions taken so far to end child marriage, and evaluations of programs in order to gain a deeper understanding of why those programs are deficient. Through this, I wish to gain understanding for under what
circumstances child marriage can exist and how to improve girls’ living conditions. The spread of child marriage is an issue and further research is important to combat the problem. Developing programs that are applicable on the areas affected is necessary. The most important element to take into consideration is the various underlying factors causing child marriage in the different areas.

The aim of the thesis is to gain knowledge regarding the underlying causes of child marriage in general, with help from looking into Africa, by using the countries Niger and Chad as case examples. Both these countries are characterized by child marriage to a large extent. The topic in question can be associated with development studies due to costly repercussions coming from carrying a child and giving birth before adulthood. Therefore, further understanding of child marriage is important for the global welfare and social development.

The literature review is found in chapter four, where the research gap is further presented. If there is no decline in child marriage prevalence, health issues and social disposition of women and their children will continue to be obstacles for development.

1.3. Research objective

The objective of the thesis is to attain a deeper understanding of child marriage, of how such a phenomenon can exist and how to improve the living conditions of girls. The purpose is therefore to understand the phenomenon of child marriage in general and exemplify Niger and Chad. The focus shall be put on girls under the age of 18 entering marriage. The age-limit of 18 is applicable to Africa due to the ratification of the “African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights” and the “African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child” (ACHPR, 1987), which is prohibiting child marriage. Even though in some cases, boys are victims of child marriage, they only represent a small part (UNICEF, 2001:2). The negative outcomes of child marriage tend to be larger for girls. With that said, this research will focus on impact on girls. Also, whether or not the marriage is forceful will not be taken into account due to the complexity of establishing if child marriage is extorted or not. Also, marriages arranged when the girl is underage but occurring when the girl is adult, is not taken
into consideration either since this is a different type of marriage, even if, still problematic.

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in the report *The power of 1.8 billion adolescents, youth, and the transformation of the future* (2014), an increase in the trend of child marriage is to be found. Since the issue is becoming more common, more research is needed in order to find new ways to combat the problem (UNFPA, 2014:9). When looking deeper into the problems of child marriage, there are still issues to be solved and further explored for future research. There is an abundance of accessible information regarding the causes of child marriage is to be found, however, many are generalizing and some are contradictory.

Through looking into causes, occurrence and effects one can explain a possible reality of child marriage. Consequently this shall be done from my perspective upon child marriage. Therefore, the research wishes to provide a future research and to contribute to the debate of child marriage by presenting a different view on the subject. I find these research questions to be broad enough to target effectively, therefore no further questions are found to be necessary for the purpose of the thesis. In order to successfully attain the knowledge, the following research questions are presented.

### 1.4. Research questions

1. What are the underlying reasons for child marriage?
2. How can these underlying reasons for child marriage be combated?

### 1.5. Limitations and delimitations

Potential limitations for a successful desk study might be time restriction and lack of access to adequate sources. There are lots of accessible information to be found online, yet, one must take precaution and avoid political and unreliable sources. By avoiding these kinds of sources one can prevent the research from being too subjective and keeping it as objective as possible. This can be made through looking into the authors’ background to see if there are any political connections that might keep the author from being objective. While doing research, these sources are easy to come across; therefore one shall primarily focus on scientific articles and reports. However, one must still be critical and compare different sources in order to maintain a reliable thesis. Also, the thesis is limited to only focus on girls under the age of 18.
since they are the most affected and in order to narrow the focus for more specific results. However, this means loss of use of some data, but will make the study more efficient. Additionally, several of the reports that can be found on the specific subject are not only focusing on the age limit of 18, but are often taken a greater age span into account as well. However, this will not be included in the thesis, due to the intension of avoiding confusion for the reader.

1.6. Methods
Focus shall be put on child marriage in general, but exemplified with Niger and Chad, due to the large amount of child brides existing within the countries. The data collected is interpreted through assistance from the hermeneutic circle. In order to analyze the findings, the sex role theory will be applied and thereby gain further understanding in the matter. The theory is of use when analyzing the girl’s position in society and how the issue of child marriage can be explained and prevented.

1.7. Ethical considerations
A desk study does not necessarily have to reflect upon ethical considerations to a larger extent as if interviews were conducted due to requested anonymity etc. However, one can still be aware of ethical considerations while in the progress of writing. Being aware of both cultural and religious beliefs and be humble, not negatively generalize or discriminate shall be done. Religions are brought up in the thesis, Islam and Christianity to be specific, but in a respectable way in order to avoid any misunderstandings. Since child marriage and matters associated with the subject such as sexual relations can be sensitive to discuss, this will also be taken into consideration.

1.8. Thesis structure
The thesis is divided into seven chapters, starting with an introduction of the topic. The introduction includes the research questions, the objective and purpose of the paper and advocates reasons for further research in the area. Also, limitations, delimitations and ethical considerations are brought up. To give a further presentation of the topic, the second chapter contains the background of child marriage, where relevant definitions and possible causes are presented. The third chapter of methodology is highlighting how the collected data was gathered and analyzed. The fourth chapter includes the theoretical framework that will be used to analyze the
gathered information and also a literature review. Following comes the fifth chapter of findings, where the examples of Niger and Chad are presented. Next, the sixth chapter is the analysis of the collected information where the theory is applied and analyzed. Lastly, there is a conclusion summarizing all findings presented through the thesis.

2. Background

2.1. Definition of child marriage
The center of the thesis is child marriage, also to be known as early marriage or early family formation; a subject of high complexity that may be interpreted differently by different people. Therefore it is of high importance to specifically define what is regarded as child marriage in this context. I have here applied most non-governmental organizations (NGOs) use of the age limit of 18 when referring to a “child”. This is based on the UN’s “Convention on the Rights of the Child”, Article 1, (OHCHR, 1989). However, one must be aware of that the legal age of marriage can differ depending on country, which will be further discussed.

2.2. Definition of extreme poverty
Poverty can be defined differently; however, the definition internationally used is a person surviving on less than $1.25 per day. (World Bank, 2010)

2.3. Definition of social norms
Social norms are strong informal regulations on what to believe in and how to behave. The social norms are strengthened by sanctions from either social groups in society or the state. Different behavior is expected depending on age and sex etc. that in turn establishes gender roles. (World Bank, 2014:15)

2.4. The possible causes of child marriage
There are not only one, but many different factors influencing child marriage and these may vary from place to place. According to UNFPA, poverty and child marriage are connected, where poverty exists, child marriage is likely to also be present. The girl is often considered as an economic burden, where families are often eased when finding a spouse for the girl. This tends to take place when the child is still very young (UNFPA, 2006:18). Along similar lines, the World Health Organization (WHO)
argues that poverty is one of the main reasons for child marriage. Other factors being referred to are the inequality between men and women and the stigmatization of women across the globe (WHO, 2013). According to the World Bank, the underlying continuation of the trend despite restrictions is due to social standards and what is expected behavior from girls (World Bank, 2012:102). Furthermore, there are additional factors that tend to affect the existence of child marriage. These will be furthered explained below.

2.4.1. Religion
The association between religion and child marriage varies in the reports. According to the ICRW, there is no correlation between a specific religion and child marriage across the world. But various religions can have an impact on child marriage in different countries (ICRW, 2007:25). UNFPA (2012) states in the report Marrying too Young: End child marriage that religion does in fact have an impact on the prevalence of child marriage, but is not further and deeper discussed in the report (UNFPA, 2012:18). Religion is not mentioned in the majority of the reports regarding the subject. Whether or not religion and child marriage is correlated will be further discussed in the analysis.

2.4.2. Tradition and culture
Child marriage is an old tradition in many regions and continues being practiced. In Sub-Saharan Africa the husband or the family of the husband usually offers the young girl’s family cattle as compensation for the marriage, which is tempting for a poor family. Virginity is also an important part of marriage and the younger the girl, the greater chance of being a virgin. Therefore, the age of marriage tends to be lower among communities where these forms of religious traditions are represented. The man usually prefers virginity and a non-virgin is likely to be left with no spouse. Menstruation is also a part of child marriage in some communities since the girl is then considered being ready for carrying a child and is therefore considered an adult (UNICEF, 2001:6). The girl often enters marriage early to please the family. This is important for the family to keep the relationship with the rest of society and not breaking the social norms. Also different myths encouraging child marriage are to be found in Africa, which are still influencing practice in some areas (UNFPA, 2006:19).
2.4.3. Gender inequalities

Gender inequalities are found across the world. As for example, the laws regarding the legal age of marriage can differ depending on sex in Africa. This is to be found in both Niger and until recently also in Chad, where boys are by law prohibited to marry before the age of 18, while girls are allowed to enter marriage at 15 (UNFPA, 2012:62-63). In most cases, girls located in the developing world are at a higher risk of unequal treatment. When being neglected from such rights as the right to education and health, this will cause further disempowerment and the trend is likely to be transferred to future generations, causing the phenomenon of child marriage to carry on. Not only inequalities between boys and girls are to be found, but also between rich and poor. In combination, a poor girl is often the most vulnerable and exposed (UNICEF, 2011:7). Moreover, inequalities between the developed and the developing world shall also be noted. The developing world is struggling with attaining access to knowledge and also adequate medical treatment. The deaths or life-long difficulties of young mothers and their children are not always unavoidable, but lack of medical resources is occasionally preventing improvements (UNFPA, 2006:11).

2.4.4. Poverty

The typical family in Africa often consists of a large number of children. The reason for this is due to the lack of safety net available for poor families. Instead, parents are often relying on their children for support when growing old, and through child marriage, there is a greater chance of more children. Due to poor conditions (UNFPA, 2006:18) and insufficient medical care (UNFPA, 2006:11), not all children are likely to survive, therefore is the need of having a large number of children an essential measurement. To reduce the cost of having girls, child marriage is often an option when dealing with financial deficits. One tradition associated with child marriage is the fact that the girl's family will receive a form of "payment" for the girl - either an amount of money or other form of support from the spouse to be and his family. For that reason, it can be more profitable for the family when girls enter marriage very young in order to get rid of the cost of the girl and possibly receive an amount of money in exchange. (UNFPA, 2006:18-19)

There is a foregoing discussion regarding the correlation between gender equality and poverty. Women are found to be key actors when striving for development. It is
therefore of high importance to use resources of all people, also women since they are representing 50 per cent of the resources available, and if not achieved, economic and social development will stagnate. When women are allotted with more capital, education is usually prioritized which further contributes to development. (Witcher Jackson, 2009:1-2)

2.4.5. Power and keeping the family from disgrace
As already mentioned, child marriage is an old tradition in many societies and if not keeping to the traditions, it can disgrace the whole family. If the girl does not follow the social norm of entering an early marriage, the whole family can risk being excluded from their community. Also, decreasing the risk of shaming the family through the daughter having a child out of wedlock or other inappropriate behavior for girls are important factors in the matter. In the countryside, where many of the young female spouses are located, girls are often pulled out of school at the time of their first menstruation in order to safeguard their sexuality. Education for the girl can also be seen as unfavorable when the central point is being a spouse and mother in the future, not focusing on attaining more knowledge. This trend is continued through generations and is maintaining the legitimatization of child marriage. (UNFPA, 2006:19)

2.4.6. Protection of the girl
Since the HIV and AIDS epidemic was brought to our attention, the number of child marriages has increased significantly. The most plausible reason for the encounter is the families attempting to protect the girls from such infections and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) by child marriage. In some unsecure warfare areas are young girls in hazard of being captured by “freedom fighters” and forced into the sex industry or slavery. In these possible scenarios, having a spouse is considered the best option to keep the girl safe. In areas where sexual assaults are common, marrying a man with a higher position is desirable for safeguarding the young girls. Therefore, entering an early marriage can be seen as protection of the girl for various reasons. (UNFPA, 2006:20)
2.4.7. Rural and urban areas
There is usually a great difference depending on where the girl is located. The prevalence of child marriage is found to be higher in the rural areas in the developing world. According to UNFPA, 44 per cent of the women between the ages of 20-24 in rural areas are entering marriage before they reach adulthood, in contrast to the urban areas, where only 22 per cent of women in the same age are being exposed to child marriage. (UNFPA, 2012:34)

3. Methodology

3.1. Desk study
Due to the complexity of the phenomenon of child marriage, only a qualitative research will enable me to attain a more in-depth understanding of the issue. Through a desk-study of reading and comparing different academic articles, books, official reports and their additional studies, this will contribute to a desirable way to a greater understanding. When all data is collected, comparing the gatherings will make the thesis more reliable and help coming up with a reasonable conclusion, yet never factual. The reasoning in choosing Niger and Chad to exemplify the phenomenon is partly since the prevalence of child marriage is highest in these countries. Through choosing countries with a high prevalence, the characteristics are more likely to be distinguishable. Another reason of the choice is the information available. Details on specific countries about child marriage are limited, and it is therefore not possible to choose any country. There is however information to be found regarding child marriage in both countries chosen, which is necessary when writing the thesis. For more information regarding child marriage in specific countries, field studies are necessary, however, this is a desk study, so this has not been done.

3.2. Qualitative approach
In this thesis I have chosen to use a qualitative study to go deeper into the issue in order to gain further understanding of the problem. John W. Creswell identifies three different approaches in his book *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (2009). Quantitative research is used when testing unbiased theories, while “qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”. After gathering
the facts, interpreting and analyzing the findings, the text ends up being adaptable (Creswell, 2009:4). Furthermore the abductive reasoning can be suitable when trying to understand a phenomenon. Abduction, unlike deduction, does not have to be factual. Instead, it offers the opportunity to give a possible explanation of how a certain phenomenon could be. The purpose of this thesis is not either to test an existing theory or creating a new one, hence abduction is the most reasonable choice (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen and Karlsson, 2002:90-91). Also, in order to effectively answer the research questions, studying theories as well as making use of additional studies are necessary. As one can see when reflecting upon the research problem, the purpose is to examine what a society characterized by child marriage must look like. With a qualitative abductive point of departure, the aim of this thesis is to introduce a different way of understanding the phenomenon.

3.3. Limitations of the method chosen
There are always limitations with methods such as the authors being less communicative than others. There can also be difficult finding adequate documents and some may no longer be valid (Creswell, 2009:180). However, I have found the qualitative method to be the best choice since it enables me for more in-depth understanding. Yet, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the method chosen in order to avoid making these mistakes.

3.4 Reliability and validity
In order to attain a valid thesis, one should use different sources and verify if these are corresponding and look upon different points of views. Different points of views create a more reasonable conclusion of the subject. Furthermore, offering contradictory findings is also important in this matter for a both reliable and valid thesis. (Creswell, 2009:191-192)

3.5. Hermeneutic analysis
Furthermore, it is of importance to consider the credibility of the collected data, in order to increase the validity of the thesis. The Hermeneutic circle is therefore going to be used in the thesis while also comparing different sources in order to formulate a trustworthy thesis. With the pre-understanding through data, a reconceptualization is made possible through a dialogue with the content (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen and Karlsson, 2002:59-60). This sort of text analysis is necessary when reading and
interpreting the data in a more structured and efficient way. Patterson and Williams (2002) introduce hermeneutics in five different steps when making use of the methodology and presenting the findings. First step is adopting a forestructure of understanding. This is of high importance in order to gather the facts in the most efficient way possible. When making use of hermeneutics, one shall not have too many opinions on the matter, and still be open to the subject. The pre-understanding of the topic is here to be seen as something positive rather than negative. Therefore, this methodology fits well due to the pre-understanding of the subject when writing which helps me to interpret the findings. The second step; Decisions about data representation, there are different ways one can present the gathered findings, such as using numeric facts or to sum up the empirical data. In this case, summing up the empirical data is the most suitable since this is a qualitative and not a quantitative study. (Patterson and Williams 2002:38-40)

The whole thesis can be seen as a literature review through summing up and analyzing the findings. The third step; Choosing a sampling principle, the importance of this step is to later on gather and present the most important findings, since if there is an abundance of previous studies, one cannot present everything, but must narrow down. This step of sampling is helpful through easier determine exactly what data to collect. The fourth step; Data collection, is mainly regarding how to manage an interview in the hermeneutic sense. Besides from interviews, there are no specific hermeneutic directions on how to gather the empirical data. Therefore, this step will not be taken into consideration since there will be no interviews in the study. The fifth and last step; Data analysis, is how to analyze the findings. Primarily, one must conduct an organizing system, which is made through the actual analysis. The data collected is construed and organized in an inefficient feature. The last step also includes analyzing and assessing the data (Patterson and Williams 2002:41-46).
4. Theoretical framework

4.1. The Sex role theory
As for the theoretical framework, I have used a gender theory that I believe is suitable for the thesis due to the inequalities between men and women regarding child marriage. The Sex role theory will be applied as from the interpretation of the book *Gender and Power* written by R.W. Connell (1987). The role concept has been used since the 1930s and is suitable to virtually all sorts of human conducts, both broadly and limited. The fundamental concept of sex role is the two different sexes, to be a male or a female. The man and woman are taught the meaning of their role, what is accepted behavior and what is not. Women are more often viewed upon as submissive instead of being contributory. When acting accordingly to the role given, they are rewarded. When not, corrections are in place instead. If and When moving away from the roles, one must make alterations to the anticipations and for example enforce new laws prohibiting discrimination due to sex. The differences between men and women are significant in this matter; therefore is the sex role theory a good choice to apply on the subject.

The sex role theory refers to five different aims, namely; 1) analyzing and differentiating the person and the societal position attained and 2) The actions allotted to the position. 3) The proper and anticipated behavior accepted by society. 4) Involving people set in contrast. 5) Resulting in advantages and disadvantages depending on one’s action. Applying the theory on child marriage in reality is suitable, quoting: “The result of using the role framework, then, is an abstract view of the differences between the sexes, and between their situations, not a concrete account of the relations between them.” (Connell, 1987:47-50).

4.2. Literature review
Programs on how to end child marriage are common and usually generalizing the causes and possible solutions with one program to be applied everywhere. There are lots of different reports on the subject to be found, attempting to understand and combat the phenomenon. Multiple researchers have made an effort to deal with the issue of young spouses, however due to the complexity of the subject, the phenomenon remains a widely-spread problem as the United Nations Children’s Fund
(UNICEF) stated in the report *Early Marriage, Child Spouses* (2001). Yet, UNICEF specifically defines child marriage as one or both spouses under age 18. However, UNICEF is using this age limit while simultaneously mixing other ages such as 19 or 20. An example of this is the “Married Adolescents, percentage of 15-19 year-olds married” and also the level of education where the age limit looked upon is 20 (UNICEF, 2001:4-5). Entering a marriage at age 19 or 20 is therefore not taken into consideration in this thesis due to the age definition of 18. Even though the report was written in 2001, the social construction child marriage is slowly changing and therefore the report is still useful.

The most recent report *Voice and Agency: Empowering women and girls for shared prosperity* (2014) written by The World Bank does acknowledge the fact that the causes of child marriage are found to vary between regions. Similar conclusions are also found in the UNFPA report concerning child marriage: *Marrying too young: End child marriage* from 2012. In the report, a gathering of different influences of child marriage within different regions is brought to surface. Also, a description of the differences within the areas of the prevalence of child marriage is presented, showing the disparities between different areas.

Definitions of both child marriage and extreme poverty are presented in the thesis, beneficial to avoid misunderstandings and confusion. After careful research of different adequate theories, I have come across both the sex role theory as well as a feminist approach. Yet, a suitable theory for the research was difficult to find. However, in my opinion, one cannot make use of the feminist approach in an efficient way of the purpose. Therefore, a more gender-focused theory, such as the sex role theory is a better fit in order to see the issue from a more neutral point of view.
5. Findings

5.1. The prevalence of child marriage

Every day, 39,000 girls under age 18 get married, this equals more than 14.2 million child marriages each year. Yet, according to the WHO, the number of child marriages is estimated to increase due to the growing population (WHO, 2013). In 2014, the number of girls entering marriage before the age of 18 was discovered to have increased and the trend seems to remain in the youth characterized world of today (UNFPA, 2014:9). Even though child marriage is a global problem, certain areas are experiencing higher rates than others and large differences within countries are common. West Africa is the most troubled area accompanied by the southern region of Asia, northern Africa/Middle East and parts of Latin America (Svanemyr, Chandra-Mouli, Sigurdson Christiansen and Mbizvo, 2012:1).

5.2. The effects from child marriage

When entering an early marriage, there are negative outcomes further complicating the lives of young girls. Consequences coming from child marriage can be both physical as well as psychological. This is most often coming from sexual abuse, which is strikingly common. Other issues documented are deprived childhood, denied right of expression and being forced to stay home taking care of the housing instead of continuing school. From these consequences, girls are likely to experience psychological problems such as anxiousness, which can in worst case lead to suicide (Soylu, Ayaz and Yüksel, 2014:1553). Child marriage can even be the cause of death due to early pregnancy causing internal complications. (Svanemyr, Chandra-Mouli, Sigurdson Christiansen, and Mbizvo, 2012:1).

5.2.1. Fatality

Child marriage most often results in early pregnancies and many children. When being under the age of 18, the girl is more likely to have severe consequences while expecting and delivering a child. There is a risk of dying for both the girl and her child since the young mother’s body is not yet enough developed. The younger the mother, the higher risk of carrying and giving birth to a child. Studies have shown that the mother fatality in Western Africa is the highest across the world (Mutyaba, 2011:347-348). The young mother is not only risking her own life, but is also risking
at losing her child due to complications during pregnancy as well as during birth. Along similar lines, studies indicate that a child from an under-aged mother has 40 per cent less chance of surviving during the child’s first year (Svanemyr, Chandra-Mouli, Sigurdson Christiansen, and Mbizvo, 2012:1).

5.2.2. Various possible infections
The risk of infections such as HIV and other STIs has also proven to increase if marrying young. Such diseases can cause sterility and an HIV infection can be transferred to the fetus and lead to early death. Also in these cases, the risk of diseases expands the younger the girl is when starting sexual relations (UNICEF, 2001:10). According to research performed, the younger a girl is when entering marriage, the smaller the chance of her being able to refuse sex. If entering marriage after the age of 18, two per cent more of the women is likely to deny sexual relations with the spouse. Also, for each year of entering marriage after the age of 18, the higher chance of refusing sex for the girl (World Bank, 2014:103). Other consequences such as famine, fistula and underweight are also increased for the child of an under-aged mother (Raj and Boehmer, 2013:538). Obstetric fistula is a condition most prone to affect adolescent girls when giving birth to a child, causing leakages of urine and feces (UNFPA, 2006:11).

5.2.3. Domestic Violence
A common factor within child marriage is the great age difference between the girl and her husband. The husband often tends to be significantly older than his wife. Therefore, the girl is more likely to lose influence; this sometimes results in domestic violence (World Bank, 2014:102). The issue with child marriage and the proven increased risk of the child to experience domestic violence are often ongoing for a long amount of time and even the pregnant girl is frequently stricken. The assaults can be physical such as beatings, but can also be physiological. As mentioned earlier, psychological effects coming with child marriage such as anxiousness and suicide are possible consequences. Due to lack of family support, a way out of child marriage is difficult. If getting miserable enough, the girl might run away. However, if she was to be found, severe consequences such as “honor killings” when the family exterminates the girl to defend the honor is occurring (UNICEF, 2001:12).
5.2.4. Lack of education

According to the UNICEF (2011) report, lack of education has proven to be one important factor for the high number of child marriages, especially for girls who often are the most exposed. However, child marriage seems to be a great obstacle for girls to complete their education and improve their living conditions. Completing secondary school is crucial for girls since statistics have shown that when including more females in society a decrease of the risk of marriage before the age of 18 and therefore avoid the consequences following child marriage. When given a proper education, studies have not only proven that girls tend to enter marriage and deliver children later in life, but also to give birth to a fewer number of children (UNICEF, 2011:29). Families do in most cases not prioritize education for girls, since it is considered being an unnecessary cost for girls to be educated. Denying a girl education means she will be deprived from the opportunity of working professionally outside the house and being self-sufficient. Instead, taking care of the household and children tends to be the major task for young brides and the social norm in many communities (Mutyaba, 2011:352). When having a mother without a proper education, this in turn increases the difficulty of retaining her children in school, which causes further complications in a negative cycle (UNFPA, 2012:13).

5.3. The Millennium Development Goals and child marriage

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) can be directly linked to child marriage, since the issues related to child marriage fits into several of the goals presented by the UN. These eight goals are supposed to be achieved in 2015, yet most goals are far from reached and a new Post 2015 agenda is presently being discussed and presented for further development in the world (ECOSOC).

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger; Entering marriage after the age of 18 can increase the chance of completing primary education and through this, attain a skilled job and increase the income. This is related to Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education, which is most often obstructed by child marriage. Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women; a child bride, often married to a significantly older spouse, tends to be disempowered and left out from the decision-making in the household. Domestic violence and lack of education are also results from the inequality. Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality; an underage girl is likely to give
birth premature or miscarry her child. Also, this is associated with Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health; not only the girl’s child is prone to suffer due to having a young mother, but also the mother herself. The young mother is also likely to give birth to more children more frequently. Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases; an increased prevalence of HIV among other STIs have shown to be associated with child marriage. A young bride married to an older spouse, who is more likely to have had more sexual relations can often infect the bride with such diseases. Contraception’s and available access to information regarding sexual relations are often restricted for girls, which increase the risk of infections. Also, the difficulty for a child bride to deny her husband sex is a component. (UNFPA, 2012:11)

5.3.1. Positive effects when delaying marriage
Benefits from entering marriage later in life are found for everybody involved and gives girls a chance of avoiding all the possible consequences already mentioned. The girl is less likely to drop out of school and can therefore get a proper education and become self-sufficient (UNICEF, 2011:29). More schooling equals a higher income and also better health and empowerment for females. Other positive effects are that females tend to have fewer children when attaining a higher level of education and are therefore given a greater chance of entering the formal labor market and being self-sufficient. This in turn can contribute to better welfare and combating poverty in whole societies (World Bank, 2014). Also, studies have shown that when marrying later in life, benefits are not only found in the first generation but are passed on to the coming generations as well. In sum, more focus on children (particularly girls), their well-being and education will benefit whole societies.

5.4. Child marriage in Africa
Even though child marriage is to be found in different regions all over the world, statistics from UNICEF of child marriage are pointing at an extremely high rate in parts of Africa. Niger followed by Chad, are the countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world (UNICEF, 2013). The overall percentage today of the prevalence of child marriage in Africa is 21 per cent, but the percentage varies between and within the countries on the continent (World Bank, 2014:102). Therefore the object of the thesis is to focus on child marriage in general and exemplify by using
the countries Niger and Chad, since these two countries are found to have the highest rate of child marriage (UNFPA, 2012:23). In Sub-Saharan Africa, the risk of receiving an HIV infection and other STIs tends to increase if entering marriage at an early age. HIV infects a larger amount of married girls than the unmarried, even if the unwed is sexually active. Yet, an impact on child marriage in specifically Africa is the fear from getting infected by HIV. Therefore are men marrying young girls in order to avoid the infection, but might instead infect his wife/wives (World Bank, 2014:102).

The marriage can also be seen as “protection” of the girl and keeping her from having a child born out of wedlock, which is often not socially accepted by society. Due to gender inequalities, an African girl is often not able to refuse having intercourse with her spouse, even if believing he might suffer from an HIV infection (UNICEF, 2001:12-13). Yet, making use of contraceptives is found to be rare within especially Sub-Saharan Africa (UNFPA, 2012:27). This is probably the explanation for the increase in HIV infections among married girls in Africa. Africa is continuously supporting underage girls entering marriage during or shortly after puberty. The spouse of the young bride might be only a few years older, but can also be twice as old or more. The girl is in many cases as young as between the age of seven and eleven when entering marriage, yet, the age when marrying seems to be increasing. The girl may be the only wife in the household, but polygamy is also common, when the husband has more than one wife. (UNICEF, 2001:2-4). Furthermore, it is a problem to discuss sexual relationships in Africa as the topic in question is regarded taboo, which further complicates dealing with the issue. Educating people about sexual relations is therefore difficult since education is considered as a promotion of earlier sexual relations and consequently rejected (UNICEF, 2001:12-13).

Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the regions with the highest rate of child marriage; however, the trend is found to vary to a large extent even within regions (UNFPA, 2012:26). Due to the extensive influential differences between males and females, the girl must often rely on and be supported by her husband. Child marriage is often of high importance in order for the man to keep up with the socially expected behavior and take care of his spouse financially (UNFPA, 2006:18). The role of being a mother and a wife is a heavy burden for a young girl to bear. In most cases, the girl is alone in the situation, without actual support or possibility of caring for a child (UNFPA,
Due to all difficulties, divorce can be an option, however, the rest of society does not always have acceptance. Here is an example by a woman from Niger: “A man can easily divorce his wife because his decision is final. [On the other hand] it is difficult for a woman to obtain a divorce because people will try to reconcile the couple and, moreover, if she wants a divorce, she must reimburse the bride-wealth even if she had ten children.” - Women’s focus group, Toulou Karey, Loga Department, Dosso Region, Niger (World Bank, 2014:104).

Throughout Africa, for each year of entering marriage before age 18, there is a six per cent lower chance of ability to read and write. Also, there is a seven per cent lower chance of finishing secondary school (World Bank, 2014). The overall attitudes towards the women’s position in society are found to be unfavorable and generally accepted by both men and women. 80 per cent of the women are to believe that violence because of what sex they are born into is normal. In both Niger and Chad, women are in comparison to their husbands, limited from selecting residence. Also, married women in Niger and Chad are less likely to work outside the household without consent from the spouse (World Bank, 2014:19-20).

5.5. Child marriage; a violation of the human rights
As already mentioned, child marriage is a violation of the human rights, which will be further explained by referring to different suitable articles from the “African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child” and the “African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights”.

5.5.1. African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
According to the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR, 1987), 41 out of 54 countries have signed and ratified the charter. Niger signed and ratified in 1999 while Chad ratified in 2000 and signed in 2004 (ACHPR, 2007).

Child marriage is to be prohibited in Africa according to the “African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child”, Article 21: “Protection against Harmful Social and Cultural Practices. 2. Child marriage and betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years and make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory.” (ACERWC, 1990:10).
5.5.2. African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights
ACHPR also presents a ratification table where 53 out of 54 countries have both signed and ratified this charter; among these are Niger and Chad. Both countries signed and ratified in 1986. (ACHPR, 2005)

Article 2: Right to Freedom from Discrimination
Also, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights contains restrictions from discrimination based on sex in Article 2; Right to Freedom from Discrimination; “Every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in the present Charter without distinction of any kind such as race, ethnic group, color, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or any status”. (ACHPR, 1987)

Article 16: Right to Health
In Article 16, it is stated that all individuals are entitled to experience the greatest health possible, both physical and psychological. It is also established that the state is obliged to make sure of protecting the health of individuals and ensure medical care is available for everyone if in need.

Article 17: Right to Education
Article 17 includes the right to education for everyone.

Article 19: Right of All Peoples to Equality and Rights
Article 19 includes the overall equality for everyone; “All peoples shall be equal; they shall enjoy the same respect and shall have the same rights. Nothing shall justify the domination of a people by another”. (ACHPR, 1987)

5.6. Child marriage in Niger
Niger is a country mostly characterized by Islam and Christianity, which came with the colonization. While most local beliefs disappeared, some remained and are continued being practiced (Melton and Baumann, 2010:2102-2103).
The legal age of marriage in Niger for girls is 15, which does not make child marriage illegal in that sense. Three out of four women between the ages of 20-24 in Niger became spouses before the age of 18, in other words, 75 per cent (484,000 girls), which makes Niger the country with the highest rate worldwide. Studies have shown an insignificant trend change from 77 per cent of the girls entering marriage before age 18 in 1998. If proceeding at the same pace, in 2030, the girls born between the years 2005 and 2010, approximately 1,037,000 of them will become child brides. (UNFPA, 2012:62)

In Niger, entering marriage before age 18, lack of power in household decision-making or accepting a violent spouse are common experiences for women. Nearly all women of Niger are victims of at least one of the three constraints; child marriage, domestic violence and lack of power in household decision-making. These three constraints are connected to one another, causing further disempowerment and complications for females. 20 per cent of the females in rural areas who have finished primary school are victims of all three constraints in comparison to one per cent of the women in urban areas with a higher level of education than primary school (World Bank, 2014:19-20)

As mentioned earlier, child marriage is most common in rural areas where girls are poor and are lacking access to education. The southern part of Niger is affected to a larger extent than the northern regions. The differences are noticeable, in 2006, 42 per cent of girls within urban areas married before age 18 in contrast to 84 per cent in the rural areas. Similar numbers are to be found on the level of education where 17 per cent of the girls completing secondary school married before age 18 and those without any education represented 81 per cent (UNFPA, 2012:62). The overall literacy rate for girls in Niger is only 23 per cent according to the database of UNICEF (UNICEF, 2014). Furthermore, 48 per cent of the wealthiest girls entered marriage as underage versus 81 per cent of the poorest (UNFPA, 2012:62). In 2011, Niger had 40.8 per cent of the population living in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2012). In Niger, it has

---

1 The text in the report by UNFPA says that child marriage is found to be more common in the rural areas, while the table is showing the opposite. However, it is rather obvious that rural and urban areas are reversed. I have attempted to contact UNFPA regarding this, but I have not received any reply. But, I draw the conclusion that my interpretation is correct due to all other facts.
proven that the higher education level attained the lower risk of becoming a child bride (UNFPA, 2012:62).

A higher number of children due to child marriage is also often a fact, in Niger; the typical family consists of seven children (UNFPA, 2012:55). Also, studies in Niger are indicating that poor girls expecting a child are eight times more likely to give birth without receiving help from medical professionals due to lack of access to proper medical care. (UNFPA, 2006:11)

5.6.1. Efforts being made so far in Niger to prevent child marriage
Efforts have been made and still are in the communities of Niger; UNFPA for example is active in the region trying to have an impact on religious leaders to favor marriage after the age of 18. The work is also focusing on increasing the knowledge regarding the possible negative outcomes from child marriages to prevent the trend from continuing. The Schools of Husbands (“Ecoles de Maris”) is providing knowledge for men regarding sexual health and attempting to change the usual taboo of the subject to a more accepted attitude towards the subject (UNFPA, 2012:55). Research by the World Bank in Niger has also been made, where focus on understanding the different attitudes towards women and their role in the society has been looked into. This has been done in order to empower females and help them to be a greater part of the economic and social community. Hence, females are given the chance to make different choices and are therefore given new opportunities to prosper (World Bank, 2014:5).

5.7. Child marriage in Chad
Islam first came to Chad in the 11th century and a few decades later became acknowledged by the nation. The second largest religious group is Christianity, with a mix of Protestants, Roman Catholics and sovereign Christians (Melton and Baumann, 2010:332-334). In 2010, 364,000 girls in the ages of 20-24 became brides before turning 18 and if carried on, the number will increase to 636,000 girls (UNFPA, 2012:63). The legal age of marriage in Chad has been 15 for girls, also below the international standard. However, the law was recently changed this year when the age limit was raised to 18 (UNFPA, 2015).
The World Bank’s report *Voice and Agency: Empowering women and girls for shared prosperity* has not only focused on research in Niger, but also on Chad regarding the attitudes towards women (World Bank, 2014:4). According to the World Bank database (2012), Chad had 36.5 per cent of the population living in poverty in 2011. The literacy rate in Chad the same year for girls was 42 per cent (UNICEF, 2014). The number of women between the ages 20-24 married before age 18 is estimated to 72 per cent, which is one percentage higher than in 1996. Depending on the living situation, in 2004, 65 per cent in the urban versus 74 per cent in the rural area got married before age of 18. Differences in education are also to be found, where 37 per cent of the females completing secondary school entered early marriage in comparison to 78 per cent without primary education. However, poverty seems to have no impact in Chad, the difference is only one per cent, 67 per cent among the poorest and 66 per cent in the wealthiest areas. (UNFPA, 2012:63)

5.7.1. Efforts being made so far in Chad to prevent child marriage
As mentioned, the legal age of marriage was recently changed. On March 14 this year, President Idriss Deby Itno announced the new law banning child marriage in Chad. Ignoring the new legislation regarding child marriage imperils five to ten years in prison or paying a fine between $1 000 and $10 000. The gathering was called “All together, let’s put an end to the Marriage of Children” when several different authorities got together for collective action to end child marriage. Among these were delegates from the UN and UNFPA and the African Union (AU). Also, religious and customary leaders, and different heads of diplomatic missions attended to the gathering. President Idriss Deby requested that the whole community together should attempt to prevent future child marriages and stop the dated phenomenon. There were a number of different speeches’ and the President stated; “This is a crucial moment in the history of human rights and especially the rights of children in our country. It is unacceptable that today, we continue to force children to marriage”. A goal has been set to 2020, when there should be no more occurrences of marriages before age 18. (UNFPA, 2015:1-2)

5.8. Examples of general programs for prevention of child marriage
There are several different programs for prevention of child marriage; here are two examples from UNFPA and ICRW presented. The first suggestion by UNFPA is to
increase the legal age limit of marriage to 18, which should be valid for both sexes in order not to violate the human rights. The second suggestion is focused on the regions with the highest prevalence of child marriage and contains suggestions on how to prevent the occurrence within these regions and improve the living conditions. The third proposal is to further develop child marriage prevention programs through additional investigations of the causes of the phenomenon. Also, focus is put on alleviating the consequences for young female spouses and increases the support for the ones affected. Lastly, providing for additional supervision of the data collected in order to analyze the outcomes from the efforts put in to the affected areas is suggested. This will be done in order to increase the solidity of correlations between child marriage and schooling, well-being and poverty minimization. (UNFPA, 2012:55-58)

The ICRW has evaluated different strategies focusing on preventing and ending child marriage in different regions. This has been made through mainly five different strategies; 1) increasing and supporting the young girls’ knowledge and capabilities through networking with girls in developing countries, trying to make them more empowered and independent. Focus has also been put on aspiring girls to work as an alternative to marry before adulthood. 2) Gathering and educating the people surrounding the girls. Not only girls are in need of increased knowledge, but also the people around them, since child marriage is such a common and deeply rooted phenomenon, it is of high importance to make marrying later in life socially accepted. 3) Make attending to school more available for girls. Education for girls is seen as a major component when attempting to prevent child marriage. When being a student, the girl is more likely to be viewed upon as a child, rather than a wife soon to be. School is also to be a protected environment, where the girls are supposed to be safe. Supporting girls’ education can also be found to contribute to both the parents and the community. 4) Providing financial relief and encouragement for the whole family. This is done in order to enhance the financial stability for families to avoid child marriage due to poor financial situations. 5) Developing and supporting legitimate policy structure. This includes illegitimating child marriage and exhorting the government to take action against child marriage. (ICRW, 2011:11-20)
5.8.1. Evaluation of general programs by the ICRW

The evaluation made by the ICRW should be a favorable result in;

- Greater knowledge of the harmful outcomes due to child marriage
- A rise in girls ideal age of marriage
- Additional support for girls empowerment when being married
- A rise in girls age of marriage; also
- A fewer number of girls entering marriage before adulthood (ICRW, 2011:21)

The evaluations have been done through qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Also comparative studies of the situation both prior to and after the prevention programs have been of use to evaluate. Besides, some made experiments and observed during the time the programs were active. This has been managed and collected by different organizations that were more or less involved in the programs.

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 1.**
Results: Change in Knowledge/Attitudes by Evaluation Rigor.

The evaluations of the programs made by the ICRW indicate that increasing and supporting the young girls’ knowledge and capabilities are found to be effective in some cases. Not only knowledge, but also the way of thinking has changed in some areas (ICRW, 2011:12). However, only around 50 per cent of this kind of programs turns out to be effective (see Figure 1). Yet, to note is that these are factors difficult to evaluate (ICRW, 2011:23).
The way of acting has also been measured and evaluated and seems to have a more positive impact on the prevalence of child marriage. Only two of the programs were found with no change while 16 proved to be positive or mixed results (see Figure 2).

Gathering and educating the remaining people has shown some results in views upon child marriage. This through open expressions from communities stating that child marriage is undesirable. Yet, in these countries, the prevalence has only seemed to decrease to a very small extent. Improving the access to education for girls has proven to be an effective solution for preventing child marriage in general. When providing financial relief and encouragement for the whole family to cooperate for later marriages, positive results are also found. When receiving financial relief, the girl is no longer considered being a financial burden and child marriage can be delayed and the girl can attain a higher level of education. There is only one evaluation of legal changes to be found, and the result is insignificant (ICRW, 2011:14-20).

5.8.2. Best and worst results
Evaluations of prevention programs tend to vary, but here are the concluding results of the best and worst results found. The programs focusing either on the society or on legislative changes were found to be the most inadequate results. Yet, this does not mean it is not of importance, but perhaps must be combined by other components for
stronger results. Furthermore, focusing on a particular religion to reduce the prevalence of child marriage is not supported by the ICRW, due to lack of efficiency (ICRW, 2007:25). What on the other hand has proven to make the most noticeable difference is the work directly with the girls. Through giving them different tools to empower them and increase their knowledge, positive outcomes have been found. Another positive group of program is the wide-ranging cooperation between public agencies, different schools, organizations, professionals in health and schooling. (ICRW, 2011:23)

6. Analysis

The aim of the study is to analyze how the phenomenon child marriage can exist and how to improve the living conditions of girls. Child marriage is a violation of several different human rights. The “African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child” and the “African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights” have been and are continuously being ignored, for example by Niger. Discrimination based on sex is a global issue, which is victimizing the child brides and has become socially accepted in many countries, even by the girls themselves. The hermeneutic circle has enabled me to make use of my pre-understanding of the subject and attained more knowledge for a deeper insights. Hermeneutics also helps to narrow down the subject, since everything cannot be presented, but the most accurate according to my opinion.

6.1. Sex role theory analysis on child marriage

In chapter four, it was stated that the results of this study should be analyzed following the five steps proposed by Connell.

1) Analyzing and differentiating the person and the societal position attained. Both women and men are socially entitled different positions in society. The social position socially accepted for girls within the areas categorized by child marriage is simply being a mother and wife.

2) The actions allotted to the position. The child bride’s primary task is taking care of the household, usually such as farming, cleaning, cooking and taking care of the children. Working outside the household is rarely a choice for the wife, but is often he
duty of the husband, who is the one with an income. Therefore, the girl tends to be very dependent on her husband due to financial reasons. The girl is either the only wife or is accompanied by a few more if being in a polygamist marriage. Discontinuing school and instead caring for the household is also the norm for the girls. When the first menstruation sets in, the girl’s sexuality shall be safeguarded and school is therefore usually not an option. The young married women most often experience loss of power over resources, which are instead held by the husband. Also, divorcing from the husband is harder for the woman, due to the disempowerment and social norms in society.

3) The proper and anticipated behavior accepted by society. The appropriate behavior for a wife in a traditional household is fulfilling all the tasks expected. The woman is to be the other one in contrast to her husband. The wife is expected to be fertile and give birth to a large number of children, since these are to care for the parents when growing old. The proper behavior is to stay married to one another and keep maintaining the current traditions. These traditions are often of high importance to live by and are therefore prioritized by the community.

4) Involving people set in contrast. In this case, the people in contrast are the male and the female, husband and wife. The bride is often at least a few years younger than her spouse, but the age difference can be a lot bigger. This in turn often causes disempowered young women dependent on her husband. Also, the age limit for entering a marriage can vary depending on sex, when as in Niger for example, the boy cannot become a spouse before the age of 18, while a girl only have to be 15 to enter a marriage.

5) Resulting in advantages and disadvantages depending on one’s action. Becoming a child bride usually has no perks. When being a young mother and wife, heavy duties come with it. This can be very difficult for the girl, who is put into adulthood even if not being ready emotionally or physically. Child marriage is therefore resulting in deprived childhood for the affected girl. When being a child, it is difficult caring for one’s own child. The results from child marriage are already found in the text as both physical and psychological negative consequences. Also the global welfare is affected when neglecting girls. When entering an early marriage, loss of recourses, increased
risk of STIs, and risk of experiencing domestic violence are a few possible outcomes. Also, inadequate medical care for young women when being pregnant or at time of giving birth is a factual inequality causing a high number of avoidable complications and deaths.

The option of divorce may exist to some of the married girls, since it is permitted in both Niger and Chad. However, it is most often more difficult to go through a divorce as a girl due to both financial aspects as well as social norms. Since the married girl tends to have no income due to only caring for the household, a divorce will mean to struggle financially. However, getting divorced can therefore be seen as a disadvantage and is not considered being the norm in the African society, hence, it tends to complicate the situation further. Also, people surrounding the divorced couple will still attempt to reunite them. Furthermore, if not following the cultural norms, one can risk of dishonoring the family and become excluded from the community. Therefore, it is of high importance for families to follow the current norms in society in order to avoid stigmatization. The girl’s option to run away may result in an honor killing if she was to be found. Also this is due to defending the family’s honor.

6.2. Causes of child marriage
A variety of factors influence the prevalence of child marriage as presented earlier in the text. Following, are these factors discussed and analyzed further.

6.2.1. Religion
ICRW does acknowledge the correlation between various religions and child marriage, but states that there is of no use to target one specific religion. The two most practiced religions in Niger and Chad are Islam and Christianity. However, both religions are widely spread across the world, still not causing child marriage in all of the remaining countries, and religion is most often not mentioned in reports about child marriage. The prevalence of child marriage is therefore never influenced by one religion, but there is a variation depending on the country. Targeting one religion is therefore of no use.
6.2.2. Tradition and culture
Since no specific religion is related to the prevalence, both tradition and culture are probable causes of the phenomenon child marriage. The tradition of child marriage has existed for a long time and it may be difficult to change the attitudes. The tradition of marrying a virgin is often important in many societies and the lower age of the girl, the greater chance of her being a virgin. The fear of being left without a spouse and consequently being stigmatized is also a factor to take into consideration. The different view upon the age of adulthood also seems to vary and menstruation can often be seen as an evidence for leaving the adolescence and becoming a woman who is ready for being a wife and a mother. Therefore is marriage at a young age according to the social norm and considered normal behavior. However, these local traditions are the most difficult to influence, whereas lots of effort must be put in this matter in order to make a change.

6.2.3. Gender inequalities
Inequalities between male and female are common; one example to mention is the legal age of marriage in Niger depending on sex. Since marriage for girls is allowed at the age of 15, while age 18 for boys, this most likely has an impact on the prevalence. When even the law states differences between male and female, as the legal age of marriage for example, there are structured gender inequalities within the justice system. Also, the inequalities tend to be more prominent in the developing areas, also where the prevalence of child marriage is at highest. Taken together, these results indicate a great impact of inequality and therefore also affecting child marriage.

6.2.4. Poverty
Poverty is often mentioned as a major cause of child marriage in most reports. However, this can vary as in the examples of Niger and Chad. Lots of differences between the two countries are to be found, yet, similarities can also be discovered. Even though claimed by many that poverty is a major component for child marriage, this has turned out not to necessarily always be the case. The poverty rate is higher in Niger than in Chad, and also the number of child marriages. This might indicate that poverty is a factor causing child marriages. However, this is not to always the case and a country characterized with poverty does not ultimately indicate a high rate of child marriage. Also, UNFPA (2014) stated that poverty was found to be a major
component in Niger, yet had no influence on child marriage in Chad. In Chad there is only a small difference, one percentage between the prevalence of child marriage among the poorest and the wealthiest. On logical ground, one can draw the conclusion of poverty as a major component within some areas, while not affecting as much in others.

6.2.5. Power and keeping the family from disgrace
Families seem to have a desire to conform to the rest of society, and therefore keeping the tradition of child marriage alive. Staying away from shaming the family and instead continuing with the tradition is often an alternative. Even if attitudes towards child marriage change among a few families, this does not have to equal a decrease in the prevalence. This since an abundance of people still prefers to live according to the old traditions.

6.2.6. Protection
A correlation between child marriage and HIV and AIDS infections has been pointed out and making an effort to protect the girl, an early marriage seems to be an option. However, the opposite from what is desirable tends to occur, and the risk for infection increases instead due to the often older and more sexually experienced spouse married to. Protection from other troublesome events such as kidnapping is also a reasonable motivation for child marriage. A man is usually to be seen as the one to protect his wife, while the reality for a child bride is plausibly dominated by domestic violence.

6.2.7. Rural and urban areas
A higher rate of child marriage was found within the rural areas in Niger, while no significant difference between rural and urban areas were to be found in Chad. This also indicates that girls located within the rural areas are not always at more risk than others. However, on a global level, the prevalence of child marriage is close to twice as common in rural areas in contrast to urban. Even though a larger amount of girls located in the rural areas of the developing world are affected, this is not always influencing the prevalence of child marriage.
6.3. The negative cycle of child marriage in Niger

When summing up all findings presented from Niger, one can look upon the subject of child marriage as a negative cycle starting with gender inequality. The role of the female is in most cases subordinate to males, causing disempowerment for girls. This in turn causes poverty and especially affects the rural areas. Poverty in Niger seems to be a major component causing girls to enter marriage early, which in turn forces them to drop out of school and instead stay at home taking care of the household. When having a mother without a proper education, this in turn increases the difficulty of retaining her children in school, which causes further complications in a negative cycle. The gender inequalities tend to continue due to girls’ school dropouts, and are therefore not given the opportunity to attain a higher level of education. The income gap between males and females are therefore expanding when the chances of entering the labor market decreases for females. Also, the child of a young mother is also more likely to become a child bride, hence, the cycle continues. When marrying early, as mentioned earlier, there are lots of different consequences, both physical and psychological such as complications in conjunction with carrying a child or mental consequences. One or a few of these other risks of child marriage can have an impact and further complicate the issue in the negative cycle.

6.4. The negative cycle of child marriage in Chad

Moving on to Chad, the cycle is rather similar. When summing up findings in Chad, poverty seems to have an insignificant effect on the prevalence of child marriage. However, lack of education is likely to be associated with child marriage due to the high number of child marriages among girls who have not finished primary school presented earlier. Therefore, a negative cycle in Chad might be starting with gender inequalities, followed by lack of education, which in turn causes child marriage. The marriage in turn, forces the girl to drop out of school and completing the cycle with further gender inequalities. Also here, induced health issues from child marriage can additionally complicate and impact the cycle in a negative way.

The purpose of presenting these negative cycles is simply to show two examples of how the different components can be related in Niger and Chad. It is also a way of describing a possible explanation for the ongoing trend of child marriage in a different way. However, these kinds of negative cycles must be broken in order to move
forward and attain prosperity. Main focus should be put on girls’ education, since a higher education most likely equals marrying later in life. And due to other positive effects coming from more schooling for girls, it should be in all governments’ best interest to focus on girls’ education. One must also keep in mind that the differences of causes within the countries can vary and generalizing a whole country is not always appropriate, one could look region for region applying several different programs within the country. The goal set up by the government to have no prevalence of child marriage in 2020 is a step in the right direction to end the cycle.

![Figure 3. Negative cycle](image)

### 6.5. The characteristics of a country with a high rate of child marriage

As presented, the reasons for child marriage can vary depending on area. In general, the highest prevalence of child marriage is found among girls in the rural areas of the developing world, who suffer from poverty and have only attained a small level of education or none. However, I must note that this is a generalization and is not applicable everywhere. A country with a high rate of child marriage is therefore most likely to be found in the developing part of the world where the poverty rate is high. Tradition is probably important in the society and has been for a long time. There is no specific religion associated with child marriage and the country can therefore be characterized by several different religions. Also different myths and social norms are probably strong in the society and the desire to conform to society to avoid shaming the family.

The false impression of protecting the girl through child marriage might be common in the country, even if the outcomes from the marriage tend to be worse than if not entering an early marriage. Domestic violence for example has shown to be very common within the marriage, increasing if the girl is underage and therefore
disempowered in comparison to the usually considerably older spouse. A country characterized by child marriage may look different depending on region. Only because one country has a high prevalence of child marriage, it does not necessarily mean this is occurring all over the country. Some areas within the country can be found with high prevalence, while others are found to be lower. Parts of the country may suffer from a high rate of poverty, and others might not. Also, the girl’s location is often connected to the prevalence since most child marriages occur in the rural areas of the developing world. Yet, this is not always the case, in Chad for example; the difference between rural and urban areas is noticeable smaller than worldwide.

The documents I have perused have made different correlations between child marriages and education as presented. Some reports highlights that child marriage is an obstacle for girls’ education. However, perhaps it is the opposite correlation that child marriage does not influence education at all, but simply that a higher level of education decreases the occurrence of child marriage. Yet, it is of high importance to establish what the actual correlation is, if child marriage is affecting the level of education or the opposite way around. The question is if there is a one-way correlation or not and how these two components actually are influencing one another.

6.6. How to combat child marriage

Due to the lack of evaluations of child marriage prevention programs existing, it is rather difficult to establish what actually has an impact on the prevalence and occurrence. Therefore, establishing the root cause of child marriage in different societies and through the establishments create prevention programs is important. Thereafter, these programs should be evaluated in order to make them more effective for preventing child marriage. However, it seems like education is the most crucial factor in the matter, which primary focus should be put on. Perhaps building more all-girls schools will attract more parents to allow their girls to stay in school longer for attaining a higher level of education. Since some parents choose to pull their daughters out of school to protect their sexuality, this might be an alternative. Parents may feel more secure knowing that their daughters are only surrounded by the same sex and child marriage due to this kind of protection might decrease. Also, sexual
health education for males in order to change the usual taboo of the subject might neutralize discussing sexual relations and therefore easier come up with solutions.

Furthermore, aid could also be more focused on combating child marriage and give families at high-risk financial support, if poverty is proven to affect the prevalence of child marriage in the specific area. Through this, the girl might not be seen as an economic burden that is eased by child marriage and later marriage is instead preferred.

As mentioned, change in legislation for decreasing the prevalence of child marriage is to be found. Yet, only one evaluation has so far been made, which was found to be insufficient. However, only reforming the legislation regarding the legal age of child marriage is not enough, implementations of these changes are also crucial. There is of no use to have laws if these are not implemented and the attitudes towards child marriage change. Laws and policies regarding legal age of marriage must therefore both be enforced and implemented in order to achieve success in the matter. Even though the attempts to increase knowledge regarding the subject have not proven to be very effective, this could still be important. Changing society’s attitudes towards something that has been the norm for long takes time. But persistent attempts in changing these attitudes and bring the negative consequences to surface might prove to be effective in the long term. And by changing the law, a statement that child marriage is not accepted is made.

The foregoing discussion suggests that education is a recurring component in most researches as a key component in the issue. It seems as the higher education level, the lower the risk of becoming a child bride. The child marriage rate in both Niger and Chad appear to be highly influenced by the level of education, and no contraposition against the correlation is yet to be found. Both Niger and Chad have signed and ratified the “African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child” and the “African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights”; yet, Niger has still not taken full responsibility. Their own national law are not changed to the limit of 18, and child marriage is therefore not in that sense illegal. Yet, these African charters are ignored by Niger and just recently changed by Chad, on the matter of child marriage at least.
The conclusion to be drawn from all information attained is that a country with a high rate of child marriage is lacking in gender equality and also in girls’ education. The government is insufficient in meeting girls’ needs, and therefore the whole population. Either way of choosing when to enter marriage, there can be unwanted consequences. Yet, if entering marriage in adulthood, the benefits always seem to be better than child marriage. Countries characterized by the phenomenon of child marriage should take responsibility and actively attempt to combat the issue. Authorities and different organizations should cooperate for more effective solutions. The fact that more girls within rural areas are often more affected might be due to lack of access to information. It is a question of proper knowledge reaching out and also having an impact on everyone. The governments, with assistance from different organizations should make knowledge accessible to everyone, even within the rural areas. All the suggestions being made are important for empowering girls and change the sex roles. This should be prioritized since welfare will also be more efficient, which should be in everyone’s best interest. In other words, cooperation for solving the problem is of high importance.

6.6.1. Suggestions for further research
Besides from the causes presented, further research within the affected areas is of high importance. Through additional research, one can hopefully establish more in detail what is causing child marriage. One should also analyze the different norms in the society and if there are any myths influencing the phenomenon. After establishing the causes of prevalence in the areas, programs for changing the social norms and breaking the myths should be designed. Hence, there should be different programs depending on causes of occurrence and therefore different programs used in different areas. These programs should thereafter be evaluated and further developed for future improvements. Also, the actual correlation between child marriage and education should be further explored in order to create more efficient programs for child marriage prevention. One should also remember not to neglect the girls who already entered an early marriage, but help them to ease their situation.
7. Conclusion

Child marriage is a complicated phenomenon. Partly since the topic in question is sensitive to discuss, but also since factors seem to vary depending on the specific contexts in each region. The focus has been put on girls below the age of 18 when entering marriage, due to the high number of occurrence and also due to the harmful outcomes that often follow. Many different global humanitarian organizations have been creating programs and written reports regarding the subject, attempting to combat the problem. As an example, several of the eight goals of the MDGs are actually dealing with the issue of child marriage, but still the results are inadequate. It is difficult to generalize besides from the level of education applicable to everyone when it comes to child marriage; therefore one cannot develop one program valid across the globe, but must investigate the area in question to distinguish the factors influencing the rate of child marriage since there is not only one factor affecting. Depending on community, different myths or norms ruling in the area can be influencing the prevalence of child marriage. When having established the causes of child marriage within the specific area, one can create a suitable program for preventing the occurrence. As being presented, certain factors may have a great impact in some areas while being insignificant in others such as the poverty rate. Evaluations of existing programs for prevention of child marriage have been presented and through these I have also presented suggestions on how to combat the phenomenon.

The study has been focusing on child marriage in general, but also presented the examples of Niger and Chad, two countries in Africa with an extremely high rate of child marriage with a deficient decline during the last decades. It seems like families often consider child marriage as the best choice due to lack of knowledge, since the reality in most cases is the opposite of a good choice. However, improvements in Chad are found in the recent change in legislation regarding the legal age of marriage. Although, it is yet too early to evaluate the outcomes from the new law, it is definitely a step in the right direction. Hopefully, also Niger and other countries are to change the legal age of marriage, and also implement the law.
Bibliography

Printed sources


Electronic sources


World Bank. (2012). *Poverty and Equity, Chad* [Online]

Appendix 1. Map.

Map covering Africa.

(UN, 2007)