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Period

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Too Young To Wed

With our media riddled with the phenomenon of 'teen moms' and teenage pregnancy, the thought of teen marriage is probably nothing new. But the reality of the situation is far from a laughing matter in regions of poverty, where underaged girls are profit, and are arranged to their demise. While most news like this is swept under the rug, these horrors are the reality of thousands of underage girls throughout Southern Asia. As activists continue to fight for the rights of the child brides, governments will turn a blind eye to these perverted acts. These unconventional weddings are usually the norm in countries outside of our small world, should we intervene in matters that are not ours?

Aside from what is commonly shared about the lives of the child brides, there is a lot more complexity in the relationship of the girls and their husbands. Most of wives are often between the ages of 12-15 when they are married off, commonly to a man at least 10 years or older. 1 in 5 girls within the regions where the marriages are popular are to be married before they are 18(Plan). Seen as property to the new family, they are usually mistreated by the in laws and are torn away from the family they have been with for a majority of their lives. The mentality of the wives often change, to the daily abuse at first seeming alarming and then is eventually accepted due to prolonged exposure (Forward). Everyday southern Asian clinics are filled with young girls who have either attempted suicide on their own or are suffering from physical abuse(Ludden). Having little or no knowledge of their future husbands, nothing is to be expected and the passing of HIV and AIDS from the husbands are common(Forward). Even if the husbands admit to this abuse, charges are either ignored or not charged at all(Ludden).

The unconventional relationship also drastically effects the young wives in much more ways than one. The childbirth mortality rates are sky high in the regions with the marriages(Plan). At age 15 and under, the children are 5x more likely to die during pregnancy and delivery(ICRW). With 70,000 underaged wives dying annually during childbirth, you will start to wonder how news like this is swept under the rug, as it continues to happen(UNICEF). When they girls are first taken most parents believe that they are saving their daughter from rape by giving her to a man early, but what they don't know is that the statistics for sexual abuse within the regions are just as high as childbirth mortality (Ludden). The bodies of the girls are not yet fully developed when

they are expected to have a child, leading to infection, disease and death(Ludden).

The occurrences are also have a widespread effect on the nations. Many of the husband's claim that in their religious scriptures, this is a completely legal marriage as long as the girls have had their first period (Plan). While laws have been passing officially banning any arranged marriages not meeting the age minimum, incarcerating the perpetrators is a long and laborious process, and is often ignored(Ludden). Even if one of the child brides manage to escape, continuing life is difficult. The families of the girls often only marry their daughters off because of financial gain(UNICEF). They receive a dowry from the husbands family in return for their daughter. If the girl would ever try or successfully leave, that would result in shame for the family and especially the girl(Forward).

An everyday occurrence within regions of poverty and lack of health care, this hazardous practice continues to ruin the lives of young girls. Unaware of the consequences of these marriages can result with fatal effects on the girls, and even aware parents continue to follow this trend. With laws passed banning the marriages, the culprits still remain untouchable by religious scripture, or are ignored by their governments. But although common in other countries, these affairs do not touch our western border. Policing the marriages seems to be a difficult task for smaller, non powerhouse countries, it is a matter of the will to act, now.

Work Cited

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