



EDİTÖRE MEKTUP / LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Addressing the challenge of child marriage through vocational services

Mesleki hizmetler aracılığıyla çocuk evlilik sorununu ele almak

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To the Editor,

There are no doubts that child marriage is a global public health concern, not only because it deprives them of their childhood, but also significantly affects their studies, wellbeing, dreams and eventually into a poor future^{1,2}. As a matter of fact, it has been anticipated that in the current decade, more than 135 million girls will be compelled by their parents or guardians for child marriage across the world, which is a definite concern for policy makers¹. On the social front, the practice of child marriage plays a crucial role in augmenting the incidence of partner violence, physical and mental abuse².

In addition, there is a simultaneous rise in the incidence of early conception and complications related either with the pregnancy or with the childbirth^{2,3}. All in one, it makes them dependent on their spouse and they are unable to live independently in the society or pursue their dreams¹⁻³. However, despite the presence of numerous adverse consequences of the child marriages, it is of great concern that we have failed to make any significant advances in the direction of bringing an end to the practice of child marriage². On the contrary, the practice is on the further rise, especially because of the increase in the number of youths in the developing nations^{1,3}.

In Jordan, a 2% rise in the incidence of child marriage has been reported between 2011 and 2016 and there are no surprises that a remarkable percentage of the girls who have been exposed to child marriage have dropped out of the schools⁴. The main reasons for such a rise is due to poor socioeconomic status and

because of the cultural or social obligations running in the families for generations together^{2,4}. The issue does not end here, as it is then followed by the imposition of social restrictions, abuse and most of the child brides are becoming pregnant owing to their lack of awareness about contraceptive measures or poor health care utilization¹⁻⁴. If we look towards the bigger picture these child brides have to sustain the lives of a newborn in such a stage of their life, when they are in no position to maintain their own health and wellbeing^{1,4}.

In an attempt to maintain the optimal health standards of these vulnerable children, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has come up with an initiative to start vocational training programs^{3,4}. The ultimate goal of these training programs is to ensure that they are self-dependent and are employed in a place of their liking and thus can support themselves^{3,4}. In other words, the victims of child marriage are trained to become confident and simultaneously encouraged to change their hobbies into a professional career⁴. Apart from this, a hotline service has also been initiated in the region, which supports the girls through provision of free legal assistance and counselling to all those who are in need of the same⁴.

In conclusion, child marriage is more of a social concern and is widely common among girls of poor socioeconomic status. The time has come when we should start targeting these areas and focus our efforts towards changing the mindset of the society. In addition, the delivery of timely support services can help the girls have a better quality of life.

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