

Early Marriage in Egypt

Field research

El Nadim Center for Rehabilitation of victims of violence

Acknowledgements

On my behalf and on behalf of the Nadim Center, I extend my thanks and appreciations to everyone who contributed to us in the birth of this research, which required a lot of time and effort amid the volatile political situation experienced by our dear Egypt after the revolution of January 2011.

The idea was initiated in Qena Governorate during our tour through the various governorates of Egypt, carrying in our hands a policy bill to protect women from domestic violence in 2008. The seminar held with women who benefits from the services of the community based organization “*Bint El Reef*” or Rural Daughter Association, raised the issue of early marriage as a form of violence against women and girls and the beginning of a new form of violence in the house of the husband or the husband's family when child is surprised with the different tasks expected from her. We realized then that the bill is limited to certain forms of violence against women, according to the international definition; hence, we promised to tackle this problem in another project of its own. On the top of our Acknowledgements list comes “*Bint El Reef*” Association and its head, Ms Ahlam El Kady.

The January 2011 revolution launched amazing energies in a lot of Egyptian youth who are looking for a way to serve this nation. El Nadim received many requests for volunteerism and much of the burden of this research was covered by our volunteers, from the creation of the surveys, methodology of the research and the application of the pilot sample through the application in Cairo and other governorates and the data entry and analysis. Here I cannot thank enough our volunteers Salwa Wakkad, Mai Ahmed Salama, Noha Sherief Khattab, Ghada Ali Ahmed, Sawsan Khalil, Reda Abdel Fattah Barakat, Sarah Raafat, Mariam Abdul Shaheed Shehata.

We also have to note the efforts of NGOs in the governorates, which helped us tremendously in carrying out the surveys in their areas.

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Last but not least, and something that we do not usually do in El Nadim’s publications, I would like to thank my colleagues in the support of survivors of violence against women program, and especially Ms Amani Khalil who suffered the effort of travel with the volunteers to several governorates and Ms Farah Shash, the psychologist and researcher within the same program on the extraordinary efforts in the data entry and analysis and writing up of this research.

Dr. Magda Adly

Coordinated of the Program to Support Women Survivors of Violence

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Introduction

Although there is high prevalence of early marriage in Egypt and many Arab countries, research on the issue is still limited in number and in influence. There has been increasing concerns regarding this issue specifically with the rise of the current political Islamists after the January 2011 revolution and the escalating discussions in the media on removing the minimum age of marriage and non-compliance with the law that states that girls and boys should not get married before the age of 18 and calling to delete this article from the amendments of the Child law in 2008.

Fears have increased among workers in the field of human rights in general and the rights of women and children in particular in this year that ended with the Constitution of 2012. Despite the objection on the criteria for establishing the Constituent Assembly of the Constitution (the first and second) yet the organizations concerned with the rights of women and those concerned with the rights of the child initiated the so-called community dialogue, which did not get anywhere in application beyond listening committees and receiving proposals without discussions from the members of that committee. Along with that the human rights organizations submitted proposals regarding women's rights and children in the

Egyptian constitution and in accordance with international conventions ratified by Egypt. Unfortunately, all efforts went in vein and we received the incomplete constitution that does not guarantee protection required neither for women nor children.

Therefore, we immediately started a research on the issue of early marriage, which was postponed because of the subsequent events that have been taking place after the 2011 revolution, and the importance of engaging in it. We immediately put the issue back on our agenda and supported the research with a documentary on the same issue to reflect how the Egyptians view the issue of marriage of boys and girls.

We put our research hypothesis, hoping we could get an answer that reflects reality regardless of our rights based perspective. We wanted to explore the relationship between marriage and poverty, education and the age of marriage of the parents. We put questions to measure the knowledge regarding the age of marriage in the law and the consequences of early marriage before the legal age and the trends people follow in the Delta area and Upper Egypt; Urban and Rural, so we could further understand how people deal with the issue of early marriage and what is the future of the Egyptian women.

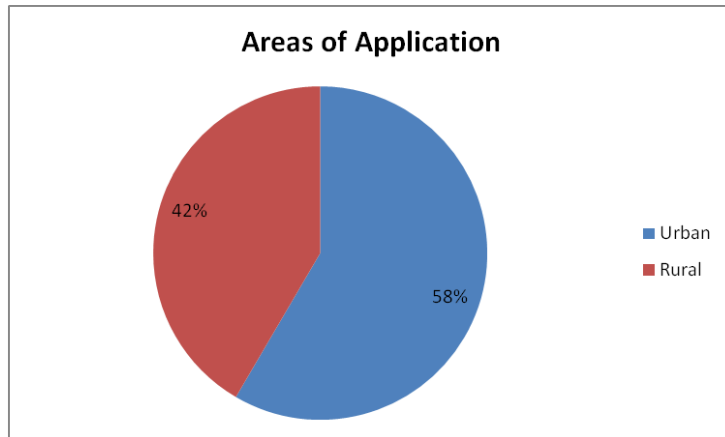
Here we put between your hands and for policy makers this country views of the Egyptians on this issue and we hope it can contribute in defining a vision for the future and a national action plan for the advancement of women, children and the elimination of all forms of discrimination, violence and human trafficking that Egyptian women are subjected to.

Methods

Participants:

1091 surveys were carried out in almost 15 different governorates in Egypt, 58% of the surveys were carried out in urban areas and 42% Rural.

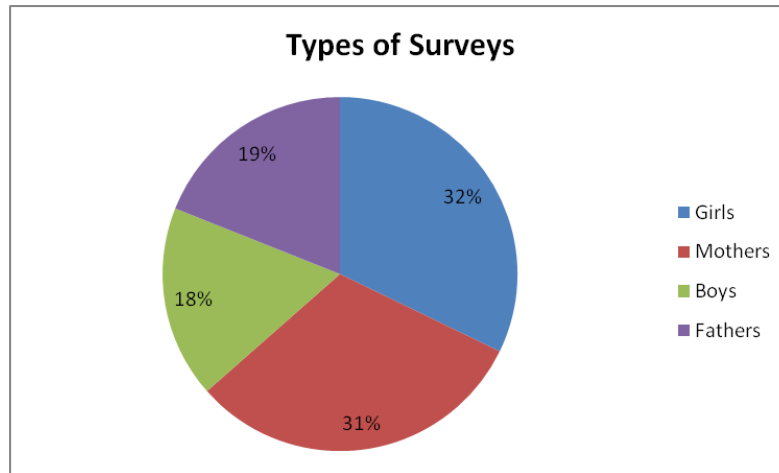
Urban	Rural
596	424



The surveys were divided into 4 types, 1 targeting young girls, 1 targeting young boys, 1 targeting mothers and 1 targeting fathers. The content was almost the same, but the language addressing the participant was different, which it is easier in the analysis.

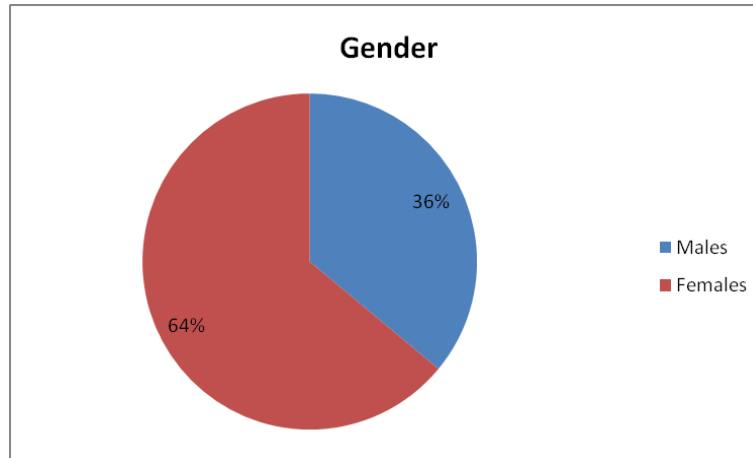
Groups: 32% of the surveys were answered by girls, meaning girls who are not married but could be engaged, or in a relationship, 31% were mothers, 19% were fathers and 19% were boys; who are not married.

Girls	Mothers	Boys	Fathers
351	342	191	207



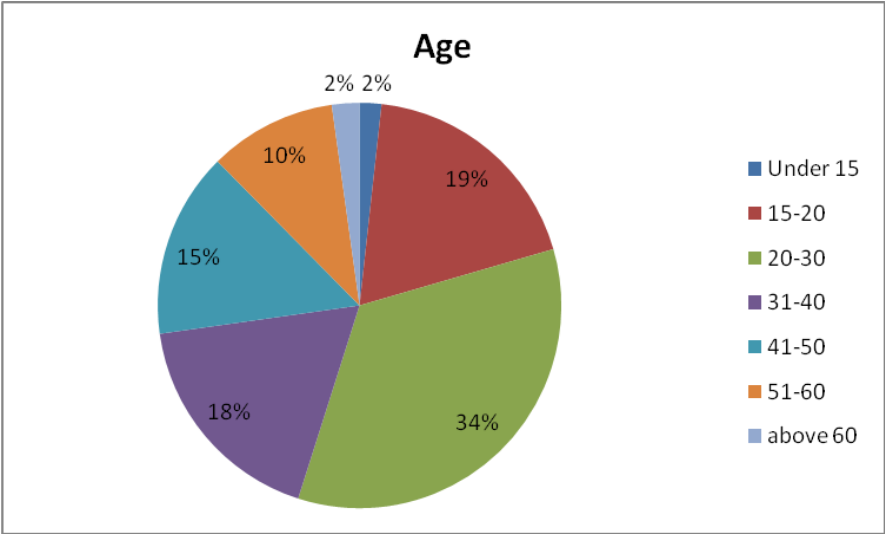
Gender: The majority of the participants in this research were females, constituting 64% (698 participants) and the males constituted 36%. This could be because several interviews were carried in community based organizations that provide services to women and would have higher access to interviewing women; also, young girls are usually accompanied with their mothers, so they would interview both.

Males	Females
393	698



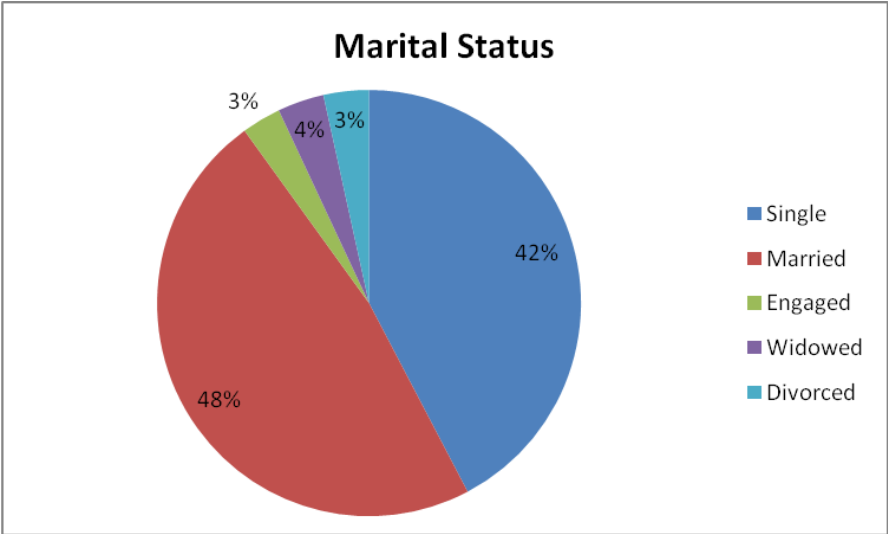
Age: The ages of the participants ranged from under 15 to above 60, the majority, 34% were between the ages of 20 and 30.

Under 15	15-20	20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	above 60
19	204	374	194	161	111	24



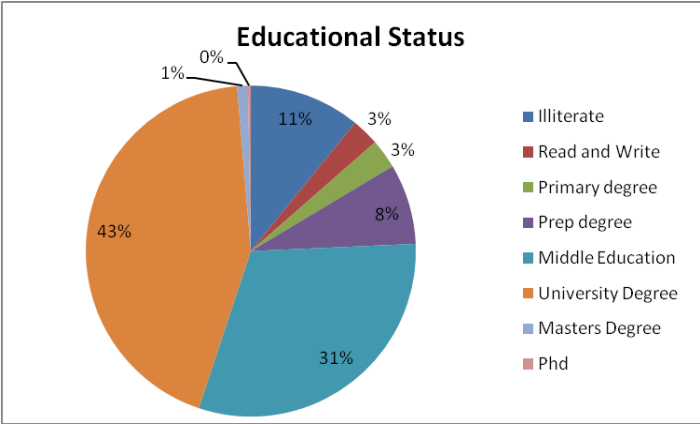
Marital Status: the majority of the participants were married (48%) or single (42%) and the rest are engaged, widowed or divorced. You could find the marital status analyzed by gender in Appendix I.

Single	Married	Engaged	Widowed	Divorced
454	512	32	38	37



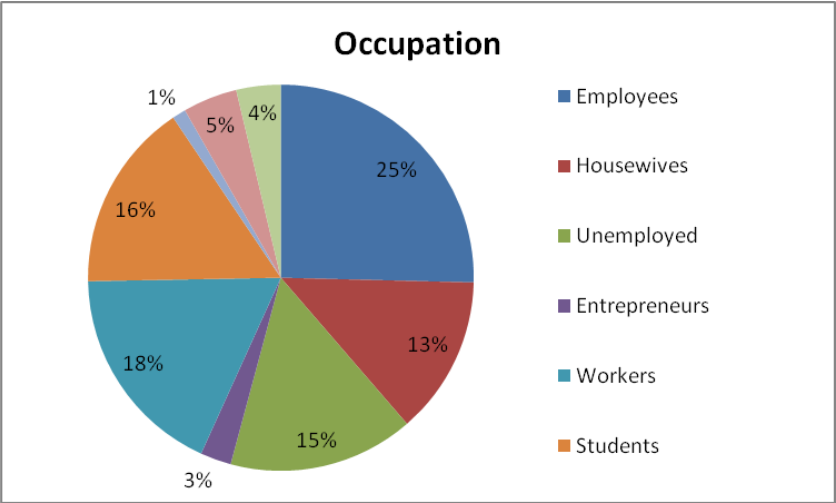
Educational Status: the majority of the participants held university degrees or were students at the university (43%) followed by (31%) who received middle degrees, meaning secondary school or equivalent technical education, 11% were illiterate, and the rest either dropped out of school or can read and write from literacy classes. For the gender desegregated data regarding the educational status of the participants, check Appendix II.

Illiterate	Read and Write	Primary degree	Prep degree	Middle Education	University Degree	Masters Degree	Phd
114	28	30	82	322	455	11	3



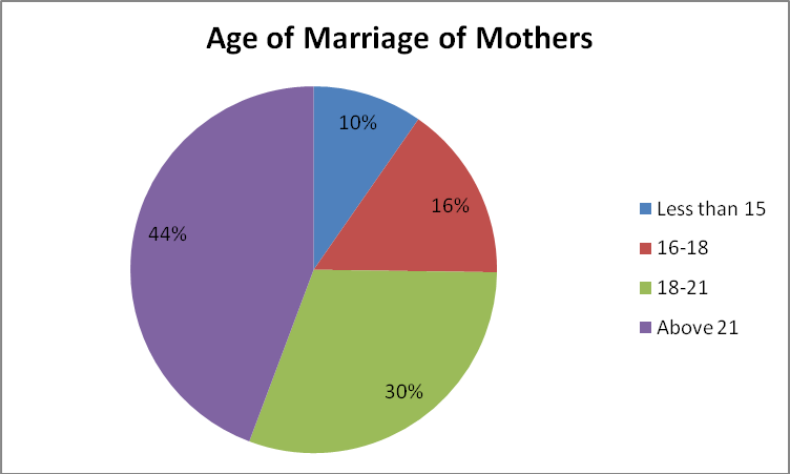
Occupation: the majority of the participants are employees (25%), followed by 18% workers, 16% students, 15% unemployed; 13% women who chose to describe their jobs as housewives, then employees working in development as community based organizations or developmental organizations, professionals; mainly lawyers and medical doctors who are not considered employees, entrepreneurs or small business owners and 1% are retired. For gender desegregated data, check Appendix III.

Employees	Housewives	Unemployed	Entrepreneurs	Workers	Students	Retired	Working in Development or CBOs	Professionals
245	128	150	25	173	153	11	44	36



Age of marriage of mothers: mothers were asked about the age they got married in, to be able to see whether they want their daughter to get married at the same age, younger or older. 26% of the mother's participants were married before the age of 18, 10% of them were married before the age of 15. 30% of them were married between the ages of 18 and 21 and the majority, 44% were married above the age of 21.

Less than 15	16-18	18-21	Above 21
33	53	104	151



Instruments and Sampling:

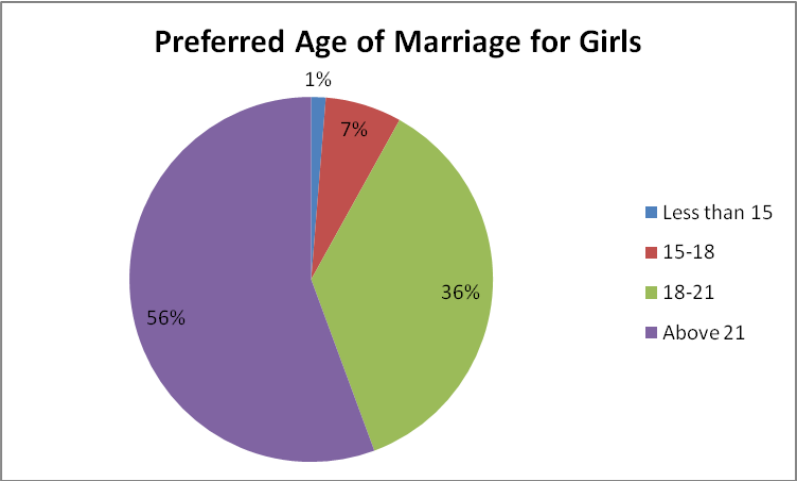
A qualitative and quantitative survey was designed and carried out in several governorates in Egypt by El Nadeem researchers and trained volunteers or by social workers or researchers in community based organizations. The participants were chosen by random sampling from the different schools, universities and households in the different governorates in both rural and urban areas. A pilot study was done on 20 or above participant in Cairo before launching the study. The surveys were carried out in 2 main cities; Cairo and Alexandria and other governorates; Monofeya, Fayoum, Kafr el Sheikh, Qena, Menia, Aswan, Beheira, Sina, Suez, Sharqeya, Asuit, Sohag, Geiza, Kalyoubia and others.

Results

Age of Marriage:

Participants were asked about their opinion regarding the proper age of marriage for girls. The majority (56%) said that the proper age of marriage is to be above 21. The second chosen preferred age was from 18-21 chosen by 36% of the participants, and only 8% chose under the age of 18.

Less than 15	15-18	18-21	Above 21
14	74	395	606



It is important to note that, out of 136 mothers married at the age of 18 or less,

43 thought that the best marriage age for their daughters should be above 21 years old

73 thought the best age of marriage for their daughter is from 18-21.

19 chose that their daughter would be married from the age of 15- 18, giving reasons like, “tetseter”¹ and preventing her from perversion.

Only 1 mother (who was married at 15) thought the best age of marriage for her daughter should be less than 15, saying that so she would be able to give birth to a lot of children and that this is a suitable age, not too young and not too old.

This means that the majority (85.2%) of the mothers who were married before the age of 18 chose differently for their daughters and only 14.8% would make the same choices for their daughters. The women who chose the appropriate age of marriage to be over 18, said so she would be physically and

¹ A traditional term we did not find translation for, and is not clear in itself, it is a socially traded term that could be perceived in many ways, either meaning that the girl need to be with a man to support her, or take care of her, or prevent her from perversion or from people talking about her, and the meaning could depend on the context.

mentally mature, able to handle the responsibility and would finish her education first. The majority of those mothers; who said who mentioned finishing education as an important factor in their decision making process (16 mothers), did not finish their education. 3 of them were illiterate, 1 can only read and write, 6 had dropped out of school before secondary, 3 had degrees equivalent to the secondary degree and 2 did not specify their educational background. This shows that although they did not finish their education, they are well aware of its importance to their children.

It is also important to note that more women than men chose that their girls should be married at an older age (21 and above) than men, women being 61% of the participants and men 45.9%. This could be because of the economic burden that the father have to bear, or because the mothers have experienced the responsibilities and stress of marriage and are more aware of the consequences of early marriage on girls. For the complete classification of answers based on gender, check Appendix IV.

The choices of the participants were supported by a number of reasons. Among those reasons; reaching the proper age of maturity was mentioned the most, and this was reflected through phrases like; having enough experience in life, being aware of the meaning of marriage, being able to chose the right husband, done with her teenage years and reaching physical maturity, one participant says “So that one reaches

certain wisdom and took one's time to take the right decision. Younger people take hasty decisions, because as we grow we see people's issues, so we learn from this and get to know more about life". The majority of the participants here perceived the age of maturity as above 21 first and above 18 second.

Be responsible enough, was the second most mentioned reason, and by that they meant, independence, knowing how to build a family, knowing how to raise her children and sharing financial responsibility. One reason we did not expect would come up in the answers was; so the girl could start work and help her husband with the finances, as it was assumed that the Egyptian community perceives the husband as the one responsible for all the family's finances.

Finishing her education was the third most mentioned reason; it is important to note that the level of education meant differed in the answers for few participants, for example: 4 of the participants who mentioned this chose that the girl should get married less than 18 years old, one said she will finish her preparatory degree (or middle school).

Only 9 participants chose ages above 18 and said because the law says so. Which shows how little significant the law's effect is on the choice of the age of marriage. Other reasons were also mentioned like, decreasing the chances of divorce if she gets married in an older age.

On the other hand, those who chose that the age of marriage to be less than 18 supported their choice by reasons like, a girl would get married anyway so why wait?, It's her destiny, because it's an appropriate age, not too old and not too young (mostly 18 years old), to protect her from perversion, *tetseter* and to decrease her economic pressure from the family.

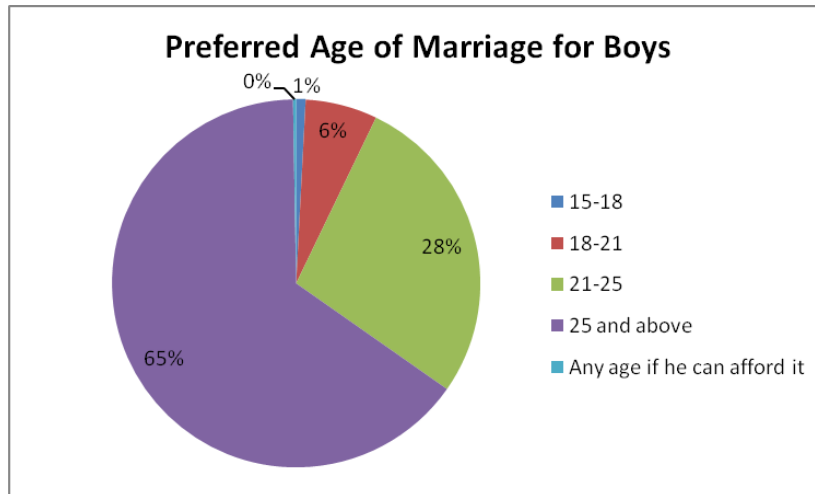
"Tetseter" was common between those who chose less than 18 years old and more than 18 mentioned 10 times by each group.

Age of Marriage for boys:

Participants were asked the same question regarding the appropriate age of marriage for boys. The majority of the participants believed that the appropriate age of marriage for boys should be above 25 (65%), 28% said it should be between 21 and 25, 6% said the appropriate age should be from 18 to 21

and only 1% said less than 18. 3 participants believed that a boy could get married in any age as long as he can afford marriage. For the complete classification of answers based on gender, check Appendix V.

15-18	18-21	21-25	25 and above	Any age if he can afford it
9	69	300	708	3



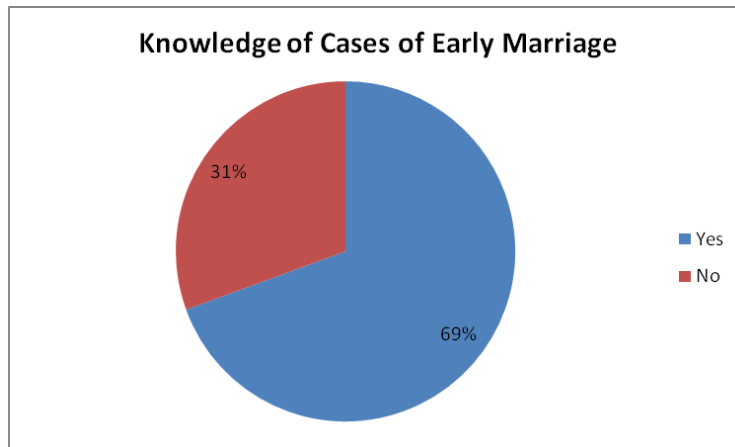
The participants supported their choices saying that the main reasons a boy should get married above mainly the age of 21 was first to be mature enough, meaning physical and mental maturity, and this was expressed through phrases like, mentally mature, experienced, understands the meaning of marriage, knows how to deal with his wife, because girls get mature before boys and passed adolescence. The second main reason was financially ready, that was expressed through phrases like, he got a job and has an income, and he can support a family or has an apartment. The third reason was to be able to handle responsibility (either of a household or financial responsibility) and the fourth reason was so he would be done with his education and military requirements. Other reasons were mentioned, like because these are our societal traditions or religious obligations.

Those who chose ages from 18 to 25, supported their choices by the same reasons but also mentioned reasons like, so he could be in his youth or still young, prevent him from perversion or to be able to see his children get old and help in raising them.

Knowledge of Early Marriage and Divorce:

To understand the participants opinion and what they are built on further, participants were asked about their prior knowledge of cases of early marriage (below 18) and divorce below 18 years old. The majority of participants (69%) did know of girls married less than the age of 18 from their family or neighbours or themselves.

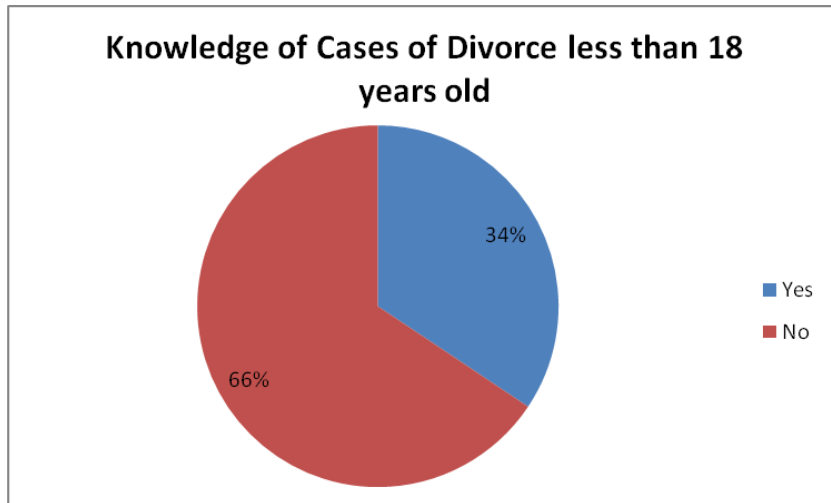
Yes	No
752	331



Divorce below the age of 18:

When asked if they know of girls who were divorced below the age of 18, 34% said yes and 66% said no.

Yes	No
365	697



The participants believed the main reasons for divorce before the age of 18 were mainly lack of responsibility and experience of partners (but the majority referred to the girl) which could be directly related to her age, and this was expressed through responsibility of handling house chores or understanding of the meaning of marriage or lack of experience in life or understanding the sexual relationship (mentioned 308 times). The second most mentioned reason was the lack of compatibility and understanding between partners, and this was expressed through phrases like, lack of communication and understanding between them, not being socially compatible, age differences between partners, not being able to choose the right husband or the girl was forced into the marriage by her family (mentioned 118 times). The third reason was because of bad treatment either by the husband or his family; which was mentioned 18 times and fourth reason was financial issues; mentioned 16 times.

Other reasons were mentioned like, she is going through her teenage years, the husband is controlling, the husband turned out to be different than what she expected after marriage, not being able to get pregnant, not being able to handle the physical pain of the house chores, each mentioned once or twice.

Consequences of Divorce under the age of 18:

When participants were asked if the girls they knew who got divorced before the age of 18 had experienced problems after the divorce, only 10 participants said the girls did not face any problems. On the other hand, the main problem that was mentioned most by the rest of the participants was about issues with getting her legitimate rights, for example, covering the children's expenses, finding a place for her and the children to live or if the children would live with their father or mother (mentioned 137 times). The second most mentioned issue was the societal judgement; which included not only the woman but also her children, some participants expressed that through phrases like, she would be 'a prey' for men, and having problems getting remarried (mentioned 55 times). The third problem was the unstable situation of the children, being deprived from one of their parents or living between houses (mentioned 38 times). Then she will be psychologically affected was mentioned 16 times. Also, being a burden on her family again was mentioned 6 times. Only 4 mentioned issues of kinship, which was surprising, as this was expected to be the main problem with the divorce of girls under the age of 18 since marriage of girls before the age of 18 is not officially registered, hence, children who are born from these marriages are not registered and do not get birth certificates as well. One explanation could be, since early marriage happens

in societies who are close and know each other's, or between extended family members, those societies have customary and traditional provisions that they follow and so, the husband could not evade his basic parental responsibility, and usually the community around them know that this girl was married to this man. Another explanation could be that people manoeuvre the law and extract new birth certificates for the girls that says that she is 18 years old or over.

Benefits and Drawback of Early Marriage:

To understand the choices of the participants regarding the age of marriage whether it's above or under 18, we asked them about their opinions in the benefits and drawbacks of early marriage.

When participants were asked what they think are the benefits of early marriage, many participants (644) said there are no benefits for early marriage. On the other hand, those who mentioned benefits of early marriage stated the main benefit was "*elsotra*". The second most mentioned reason was to have a small age gap between her and her children. The third most commonly mentioned category of benefits was for reproductive reasons, which means better chances of the girl to build a family and have several children. Fourth most mentioned benefit was so she would still be young and healthy and can take care of the

housework and the children better. Also, people mentioned that being married early would teach the girl to be responsible and raise her children more responsibly. Other reasons were mentioned, like so she would not become a spinster or to guarantee her future, because she will get married anyway and be more obedient to her husband. Few participants also mentioned that after the revolution, the security situation has become worse and girls and women are subjected to sexual harassment and rape by thugs, so it is safer if girls decrease their mobility and be in the protection of a husband sooner.

When asked about the drawbacks, the majority said lack of awareness and maturity, they expressed this through phrases like the girl is not mature enough to handle marriage and children, her body is not complete yet, she will face problems with pregnancy, she will choose the wrong man, she will not be able to communicate with her husband or children, and she will be shocked when she discovers the sexual relationship, (all mentioned 320 times). The second most mentioned drawback was related to the ability to handle the responsibility, saying she is too young to handle the responsibility of getting pregnant, giving birth and raising children and she might regret getting married at all, which was mentioned 313 times. The third mentioned drawback was that getting married early would result in higher chances of getting divorced (for the above mentioned reasons), which correlated with the age of marriage chosen by the

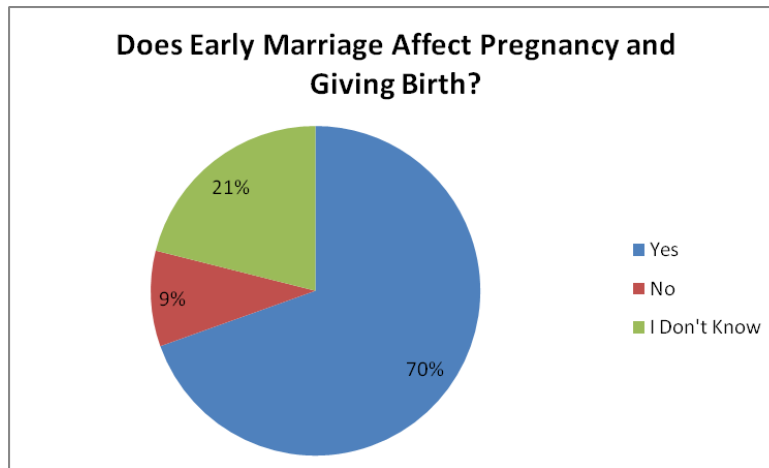
participants and how they saw girls getting divorced because of their lack of maturity and ability to handle responsibility because of their age, (mentioned 40 times). The fourth mentioned drawback was that the girl would not be able to continue her education (mentioned 33 times). The fifth reason was the negative psychological effect of the early marriage and the responsibilities of the marriage on the girls (mentioned 31 times). Other drawbacks were also mentioned, not being able to work and be financially independent and take her own decisions, or being subjected to violence by her husband or his family, or having too many children (each mentioned 6 or 7 times), which all correlates with the reasons they mentioned when asked why the girls they knew got divorced before the age of 18. Only 15 people said there are no drawbacks to getting married early.

Physical, Developmental and Social effects of Early Marriage:

To further understand the effect of early marriage on the girls from the opinion of the participants, they were asked on the physical, developmental and social effects.

When participants were asked whether girls who get married early face problems with pregnancy and birth or not, 88% said yes and 12% said no.

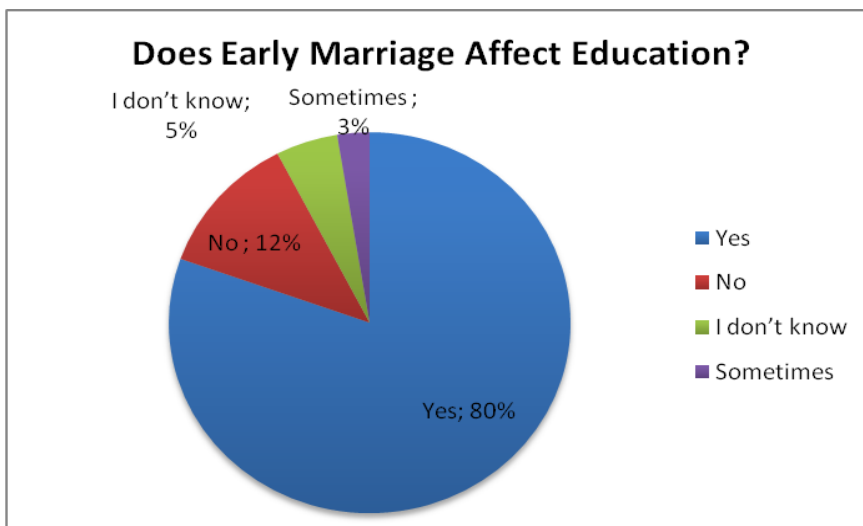
Yes	No	I Don't Know
749	101	227



Physical: When participants were asked, what types of problems, the majority mentioned reproductive problems, like her reproductive organs are not complete yet, which could cause, bleeding, abortion, problems during giving birth, cause danger to the child, her body not being able to bare the pressure of pregnancy, she could die during giving birth, or she won't be able to get pregnant in the first place, these reasons were mentioned 526 times. The second mentioned category of problems were social and psychological problems, for example, problems with taking care of herself and her child, not being able to raise her children, not aware of the sexual relationship and being psychologically affected by having to give birth and take care of a child in an early age, mentioned 72 times. Other general physical problems related to the birth were mentioned 53 times, like malnutrition, blood problems like anaemia and diabetes, and bone erosions. 227 participants said yes problems will occur but they do not know what they are.

Education: When participants were asked whether early marriage has an effect on girls education and the chance to work and be financially independent. 80% of the participants said yes getting married early would have a negative effect on girl's education and 12% said it would not effect her education. 5% said they don't know if it has any effect and 3% said sometimes but it is not a rule.

Yes	No	I don't know	Sometimes
868	129	54	28

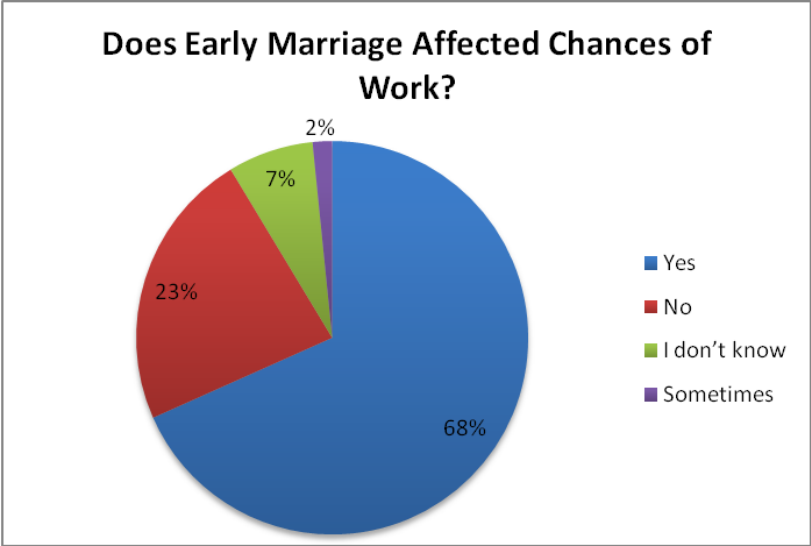


Those who said yes, gave reasons like, she will not have enough time to do both, because of her husband and children's demands and needs, because the husband will not let her, or because the girl is not interested in education.

Those who said no, gave reasons like, said she will decide, if she wants to continue she will find the time to continue, some said it is not a rule, some said that would depend on the husband.

Work: 68% of the participants said yes, getting married early would decrease the chances of work for the girl, 23% said it will not affect her chances of getting a job, 7% said they don't know and 2% said sometimes.

Yes	No	I don't know	Sometimes
727	245	75	17



Those who said yes mentioned reasons like, because she is not educated, some said because she is busy with her husband and children, and some said the husband will refuse, some said if the man is working, the woman should not work.

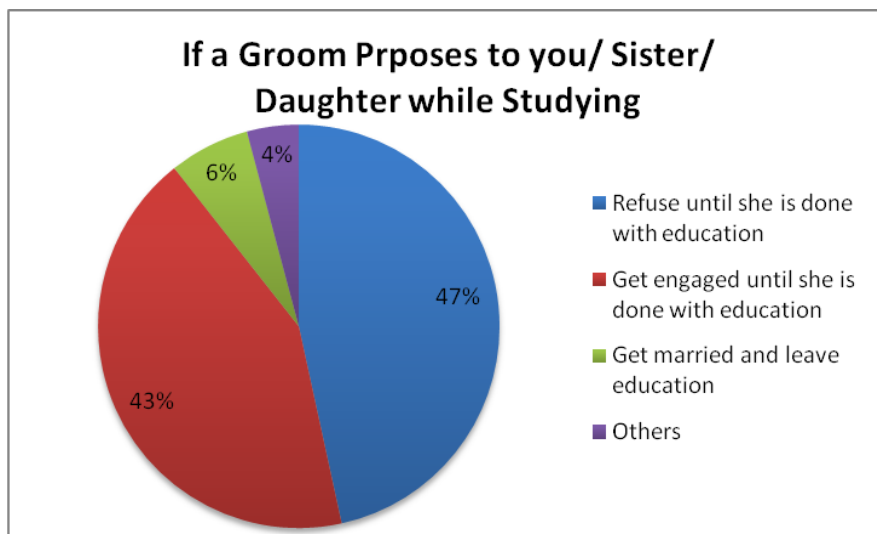
Those who said no gave reasons like she will find a job but it could be insulting or less than what she would have gotten if she got education, some said it depends on the type of work she is looking for, some said that depends on the financial needs of the house; she needs to provide for the family as well, 1 said she is working at her house.

From the comments of the participants it is understood that education and experience from the exposure to work are important factors that affect the maturity and responsibility of the girls, which are the main qualifications that prepare the girl for marriage and bearing children.

To measure the importance of education and its relevance to the girl's marriage decision, participants were asked if a good prepared groom proposed to you, you sister or your daughter while she was studying, what would you say? 47% said they (or her father, brother or mother) will refuse the groom until she is

finished with her education, one participant said “Education is important not for the purpose of getting a job, it defines who you are and what’s your lifestyle”, another participant said “because I did not get education and I suffered, and I want what’s better for my daughter”. 43% said she can get engaged until done with her education then get married, one participant said “I need the education, so I wouldn’t leave school, but also, I wouldn’t want to miss the chance of the groom, so I’ll get engaged until I finish”, 6% said she will leave education and get married, some mentioned reasons like she should get married anyway so why wait, or the chances of getting a good groom is rare nowadays so she has to take the chance and some said education would not benefit her much as marriage, one participant stated “She should get married and spare her mind. The important thing is her agreement, because girl’s education is like writing on water, its worthless”, another participant said “girls education means getting her out of the house, and that just brings trouble, so education is sometimes bad for her”. 4% mentioned other choices like, she can get married and finish her education while married, or it depends on what the groom wants. Only 14 participants said it is her choice. Data classified by each group could be found in Appendix VI.

Refuse until she is done with education	Get engaged until she is done with education	Get married and leave education	Others
503	462	70	45

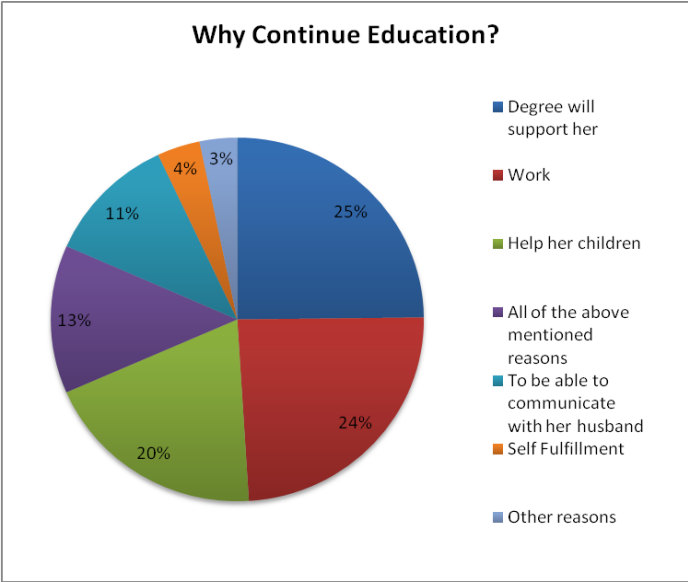


To understand the importance of education further, those who chose that the girl should finish her education were asked why they think the girl should finish her education. 25% of the participants said because the degree will support her in her life, in case she needs to finance herself or if she gets divorced, 24% said to be able to work and support herself and her family financially, 20% said to be able to help her children in their education, one participant said “so I could help my children and they would look up to me and feel proud that I’m their mother”, 7% said so she would be able to communicate with her husband, one participant said “Many grooms proposed to me and left me after they knew I am not educated”, and 13% chose all of the above mentioned reasons. 3% mentioned other reasons, like, to be financially independent, because its my right, to benefit the community, because she likes studying and only 3% of those said she should finish her education for self fulfilment and building a career, which was not one of the options given in the answers of the questions but was added by mainly the girls during the interview as others. One participant said “I need to study so I would be independent and have my own experiences, because god gave me a mind to put it in function.

It seems that the economic situation is highly correlated with the continuation of the education of the girl, whether to support herself or her children or to participate in the financial responsibility of the household

with her husband, then comes the importance of education so she could be a good mother or wife, unfortunately, there was no emphasis on the importance of building a career and self fulfilment for the girl by the degree she receives.

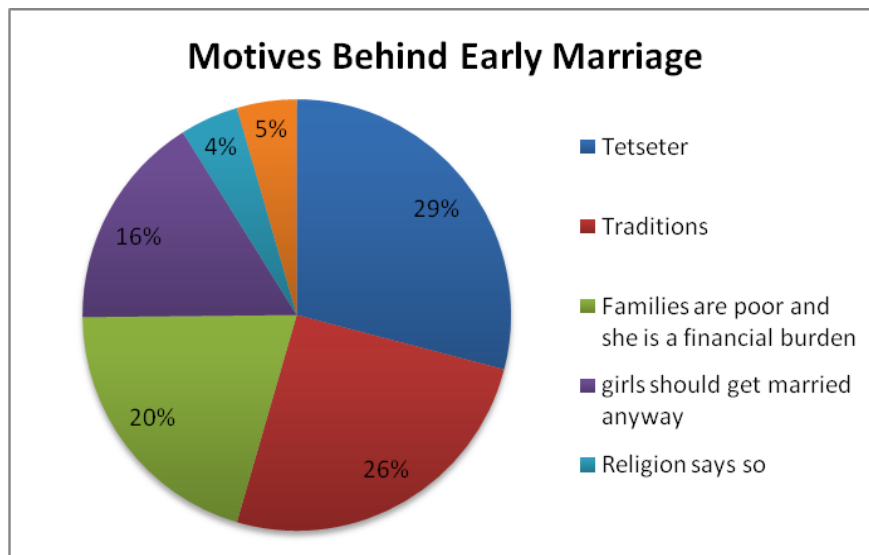
Degree will support her	Work	Help her children	All of the above mentioned reasons	To be able to communicate with her husband	Self Fulfillment	Other reasons
313	305	245	166	144	47	41



Reasons behind Early Marriage:

To understand the main motives behind early marriage, participants were asked why you think girls get married in an early age, the majority of the participants (29%) again said “*elsotra*” was the main reason. 26% of the participants said because these are the traditions mentioned reason. The third mentioned reason mentioned by 20% of the participants, was because the families are poor and the girl constitutes a financial burden on the family that they need to get rid of. The fourth mentioned reason was because the girl should get married anyway so why wait, mentioned by 16% of the participants and 4% of the participants said because religion said so. 5% of the participants chose all of the reasons and some added other reasons like, because the girl wants to get married, because of the lack of education or awareness of her family or because and some said because marriage opportunities are scars now and that’s a chance.

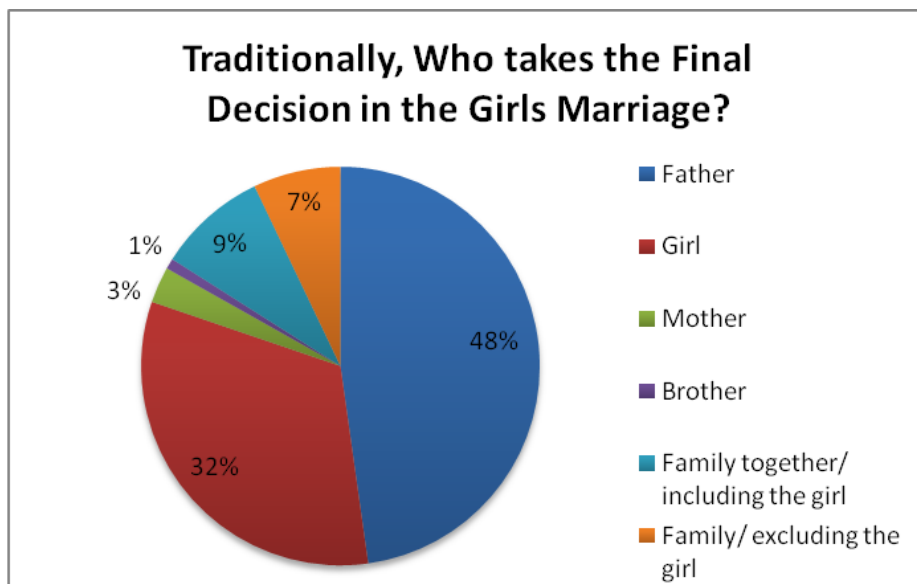
<i>Tetseter</i>	Traditions	Families are poor and she is a financial burden	Girls should get married anyway	Religion says so	All of the above
283	248	198	158	43	44



Choice and Decision Making inside the Family:

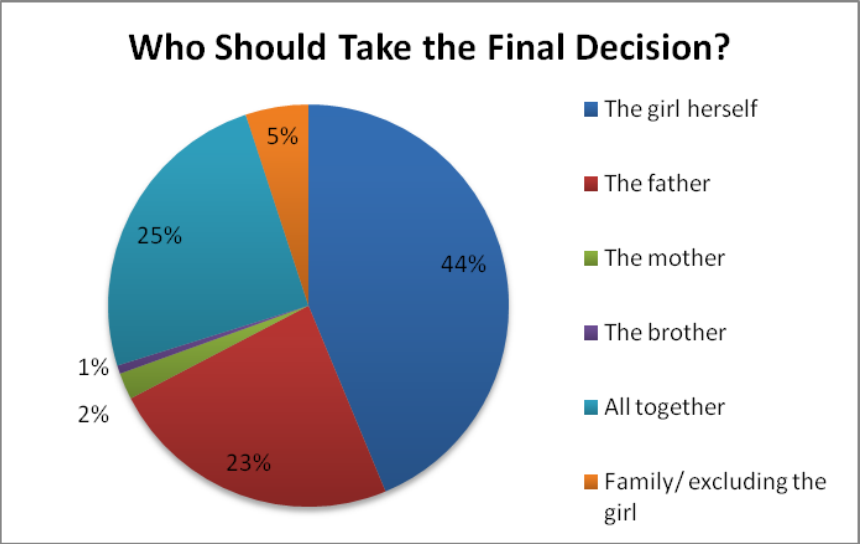
To understand who the main decision maker is when it comes to the girl's marriage, participants were asked in your community or traditions, who has the final word when it comes to the girl's marriage? And in their opinion, who should have the last word? The majority (48%) said the father traditionally is the one, who takes the decision when it comes to whom and when the girl gets married, the second most mentioned answer by participants is the girl (32%), 9% said the family all together (including the girl), 7% said either the family excluding the girl or some other family member like the uncle, and only 3% said the mother and 1% said the brother.

Father	Girl	Mother	Brother	Family together/ including the girl	Family/ excluding the girl
505	343	31	9	94	75



When they were asked, in their opinion, who should take the decision, the majority (44%) said the girl herself, one participant said "According to Sharia'a acceptance comes first so the girl can get to have the choice that is suitable to her". The second choice was all the family together (25%). Then the third mentioned choice was the father (23%), only 5% excluded the girl from the decision making process and only 2% chose the mother and 1 % chose the brother.

The girl herself	The father	The mother	The brother	All together	Family/ excluding the girl
327	177	16	5	185	38

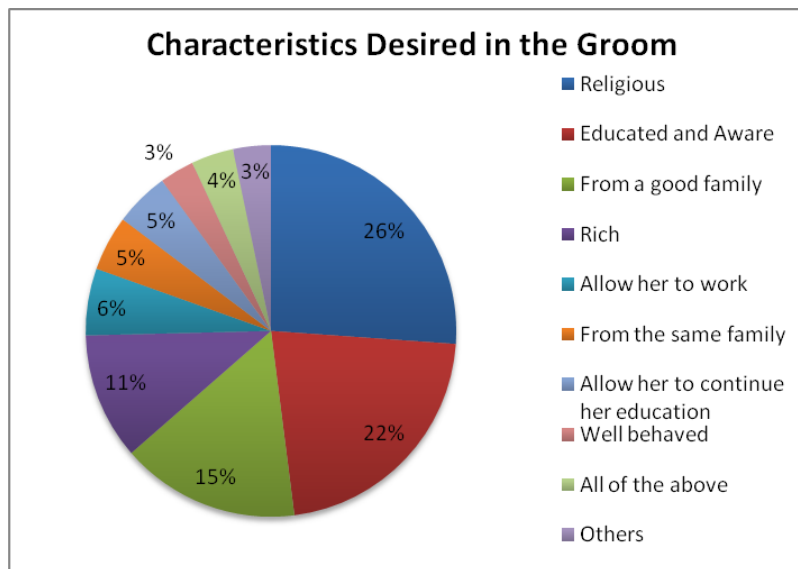


The above statistics contradicts with the answers of the participants when they are asked questions about their opinion in an actual situation, like when the girl gets a groom who is 20 years older, or when she gets a groom while still in education, in which they actually took the decision for her instead of saying its her decision to take. This could mean that when people are asked who should decide when it comes to the choice of marriage for girls they would say the girl herself, but in practice, very few people would let her take the decision if they think she will take the wrong choice.

Groom Characteristics upon which the Decision of Marriage is taken:

To understand what the decision of marriage, weather early or not, is based on, participants were asked, what are the most important characteristics they wish to see in the groom that will marry them, their daughter or their sisters.

Religious	Educated and Aware	From a good family	Rich	Allow her to work	From the same family	Allow her to continue her education	Well behaved	All of the above	Others
461	386	275	195	103	85	84	53	65	58

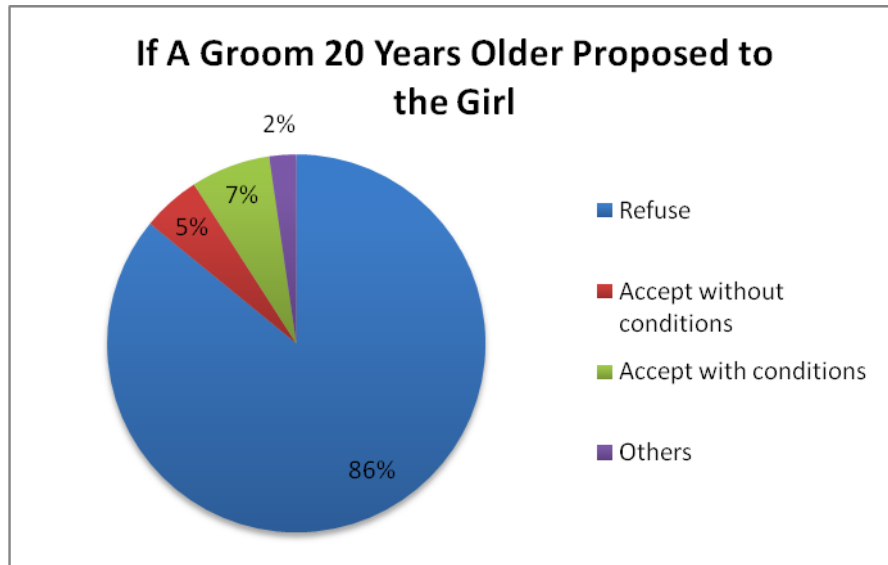


The most mentioned characteristic by the participant was being religious (26%); several participants stated, "Religion will teach him how to treat his wife well". Educated and aware was the second mentioned characteristic (22%) one participant said "The educated will take an educated wife and the illiterate will take an illiterate one". 15% of the participants chose from a good family, and 11% said he has to be rich, 6% said allow her to work, and only 5% said that he has to be from the same family, and only 5% said allow her to continue education, it is interesting to see that more people mentioned allowing her to work more than allowing her to continue education, that could be because it is assumed that the girl is done with education already, or because, as mentioned before, there has been higher emphasis on girls work and contribution to the family's finances more than before. 4% mentioned all of the above, and 17 participants of those 4% said all of the above, except being from the same family. 3% of the participants mentioned that he has to be well behaved, although this was not an option in the multiple choice answers of the question and 3% chose other options like being in love (19 times) and social compatibility.

When participants were asked if a rich groom proposed to you or your daughter, sister, but is much older (about 20 years older) what would you say? The majority, 86% of the participants said they will refuse mainly because they will not communicate well, or the groom will not understand her, some said 5 years are suitable and some said 10 is the maximum. 5% said they will accept without conditions and 7% said they would accept under certain conditions, those conditions were either financial, some saying the groom has to be rich, or compensate the age difference with money, or put her money in the bank, or that

the groom should be religious, or well behaved or they are in love, or their mentalities are close. Only 25 (2%) of the participants actually mentioned that it's the girl's decision because she decides whom to marry.

Refuse	Accept without conditions	Accept with conditions	Others
932	54	74	25

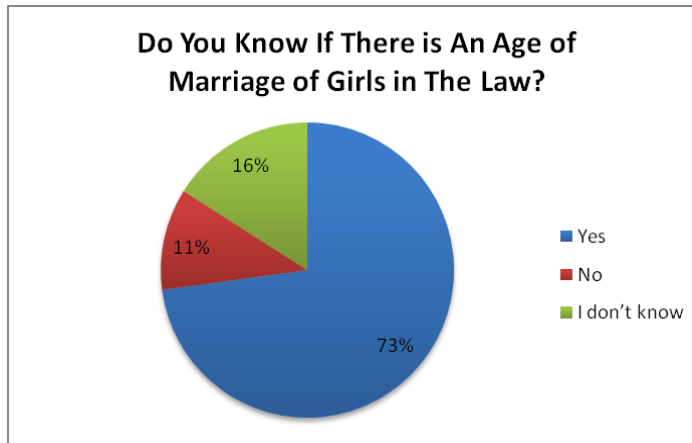


Knowledge:

Age of Marriage in the Egyptian Law:

To measure the knowledge of the participants, they were asked whether there is a minimum age of marriage for girls in the law. The majority of the participants (73%) knew that there is a minimum age of marriage in the law, and 67.5% of those who said yes gave the right answer, which is 18 years old. 19% did not specify an age but knew it exists in the law, 6.6% gave ages less than 18 and 6.6% gave ages above 18. 11% said there is no minimum age of marriage and 16% said they don't know.

Yes	No	I don't Know
792	121	174

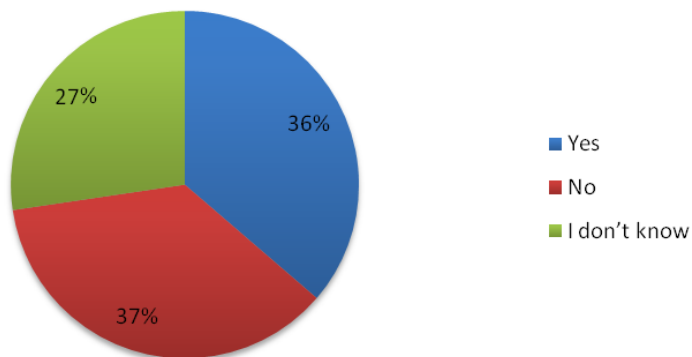


Age of marriage in boys

When they were asked whether there is a minimum age of marriage in boys, 36% said yes, 37% said no, and 27% said they don't know. Only 33.4% of those who said there is a minimum age of marriage for boys knew the right answer, which is 18 years old. It is obvious that the knowledge of the participants when it comes to the girls is much higher than the boys, this could be because the issue is discussed a lot in the media and there have been several initiatives of raising awareness regarding the issue, or because they do not have to deal with the issue of marrying boys earlier than the age of 18, but it could come across with the girl. It is important to note that 7.6% (48 participant) of those who knew that there is a minimum age of marriage for girls in the law, said that the girl should be married before the age of 18.

Yes	No	I don't know
389	390	293

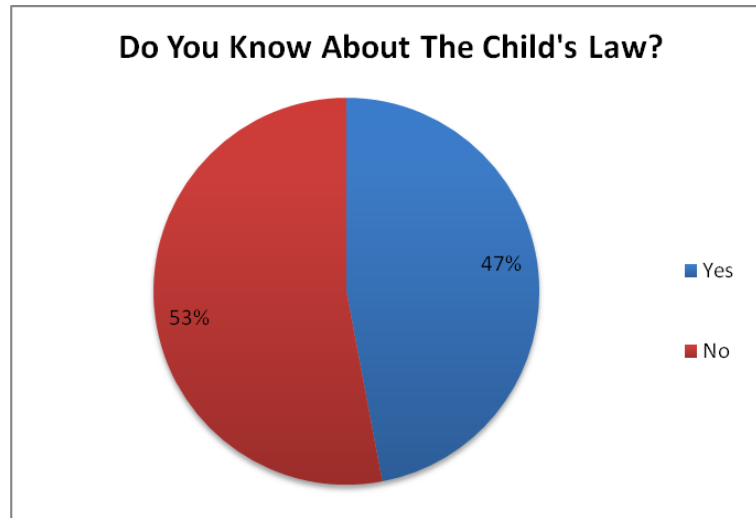
DO You Know If There is an Age of Marriage of Boys in The Law?



Knowledge about the child's law:

To further measure the knowledge of the participants, they were asked whether they heard about the child law or not, 53% said no, and 47% said yes.

Yes	No
506	570



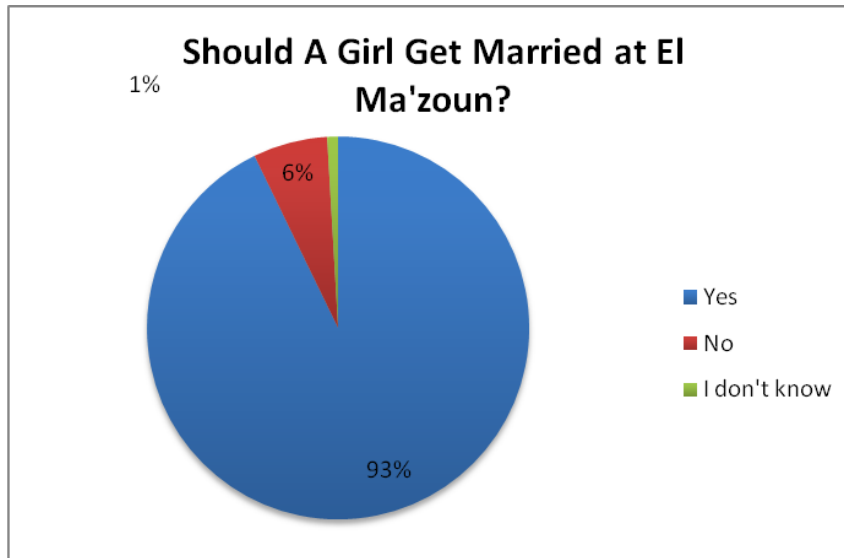
Out of the 47% who said yes, 70 participants (14%) of those said they do not know what the law states. Those who knew what it states said, either it ensures the rights of children in health and education was mentioned 159 times, it protects them from violence was mentioned 86 times, it regulates issues of child labour and street children was mentioned 59 times, it is a law that is not applied in Egypt was mentioned 45 times, it solves custody issues was mentioned 26 times, said it regulates the age of marriage was mentioned 24 times, 15 said it is a very good law without mentioning anything about its content and it is not a very good law was mentioned 10 times, again without mentioning the content of the law. Few participants knew that the age of marriage is part of the child's law. The media mainly tackles issues of child's right in relation to child's labour or street children or with issues of custody, but rarely age of marriage.

Authorization:

To understand how girls get married before the legal age, participants were asked whether the girl should have an authorized marriage (at Ma'zoon), the majority, 93% of the participants said yes, and the reasons were, so she could ensure her rights and because this is the only legitimate marriage, 6% said no and 1% said they don't know. Those who said the girl does not have to have an authorized marriage chose other options like civil marriage (most commonly mentioned), at a lawyer's office, customary marriage, publicity, at the mosque, and the process of giving an age to a child according to their bone structure.

It is important to note that 79 participants of those who said yes the marriage has to be at the Ma'zoon (authorized) said that the best age of marriage for girls is under 18, and from those who said no, 8 said the girl should be married before the age of 18 and 58 chose above 18. This could mean that the majority actually thinks that it is important that the marriage is authorized, whether to reserve her rights or because religion says so, even if the marriage was not registered at the beginning, in some cases, the Ma'zoon would still marry the couple if she is less than 18 or they would rely on previously mentioned forms of marriage and could later register the marriage. On the other hand, the majority who said no are from university students, who chose civil marriage as an alternative form of marriage.

Yes	No	I don't know
1004	68	10

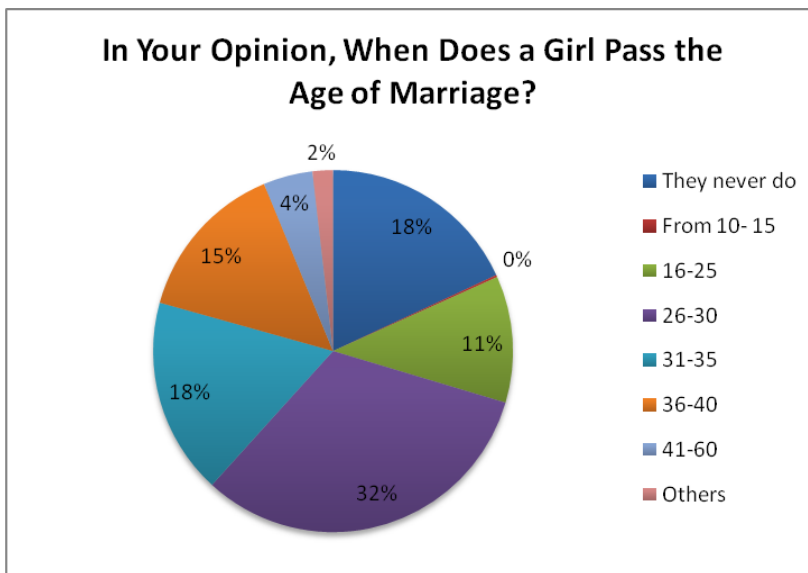


Pass the age of marriage:

When we started the pilot phase of this study, several participants mentioned that the current issue is the lack of marriage opportunities and the delay in the age of marriage because of the economic situation and not early marriage, so we added 2 questions at the end of the research to explore the issue of what the participants called “spinsters” referring to women who did not get married.

When the participants were asked when do they consider the girl passed the age of marriage, the majority said girls pass the age of marriage in the period between 26-30 years old (32%), 18% said they never do and 18% said above 30, 15% specified above 35, 11% said from the age of 16-25, 4% said above 40 and 2% said other comments like this is faith or this is lack of awareness or education.

They never do	From 10- 15	16-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-60	Others
188	2	118	334	183	150	46	19



Reasons for Fear of Getting Married in a Late Age:

When participants were asked why people are afraid that girls don't get married until a late age, the majority said so she wouldn't be a spinster, mentioned 291 times. The second most mentioned category of answers was because of social pressure, which was reflected in phrases like, because people will talk about her if she didn't, people could say she is "faulted", people could say something happened to her and she is not telling, she will prevent her younger sisters from getting married, mentioned 211 times. Fear of living alone was the third mentioned category, participants expressed that saying, because she has to be dependent on a man to protect her, because she can't live alone, because her parents will die and leave her alone, all mentioned 166 times. Traditions was the fourth most mentioned reason, participants said because all girls should get married anyway, because religion says so, or because these are our traditions, all mentioned 138 times. The next most mentioned reason was reproductive reasons, as participants said fear of not getting pregnant, she needs to get married before reaching menopause, mentioned 128. The characteristics of the groom was the next mentioned reason by the participants, they've expressed that saying, because the older she gets, the less qualified grooms propose to her was, as she gets older, her chances in getting a good groom decrease, she will get someone who has been married before or has kids,

because men like young girls, all mentioned 127 times, one participant said “Never mind if he is married, has kids, or divorced. The most important thing is to get rid of the stigma of being a spinster”. “*El Sotra*” was the next most mentioned reason, saying Afraid of her behaviour, perversion; she will be targeted by men, stated 116 times by the participants. 52 participants said people should not be afraid if girls are late in the age of marriage since this is fate or is lack of awareness from the society. The economic reasons were only mentioned 38 times; saying because she is a financial burden on her family, because of the economic situation in Egypt is very bad.

Conclusion

The motive to conduct this research grew out of the increasing discussions around changing the law regulating marriage by different conservative groups. According to this research results, early marriage could result in physical and psychological consequences, whether from housework, pregnancy, birth or sexual relationship from an early age. Along with rights violations; for example, right in getting education and legitimate rights in marriage or after divorce. It could also affect personal development; as she would not be able to get enough exposure, have a career and be independent. However, the results show that the majority of participants actually prefer the age of marriage to be over 21 and not less than 18. This means that the opinions of the majority of the participants from the different backgrounds fits with what the current law states although not all of them are fully aware of what the law states and why.

Moreover, the results show that the main factors that affect the choice of preferred age of marriage is based on are 1- maturity, 2- responsibility 3- traditions and 4- stage of finishing education. This is the case with both genders. Yet, for the boys there is a higher emphasis on the financial stability or readiness, as he will be financially supporting a family. These factors are also consistent with the reasons mentioned when

asked if they know girls who got divorced under 18 years old and why. These factors are associated in the answers of the participants with the age of 18 or above, meaning, in the participants' opinion, a girl would not be mature enough, physically or mentally and would not be responsible or experienced enough before the age of 18. This actually fits with previous research on age of maturity and responsibility in which some research, states that adolescents, scored significantly worse than adults in levels of responsibility and less mature decision making¹. Other longitudinal studies showed that the adolescent brain continues to mature after the age of 20 years old and significant changes takes place in regions of the brain known to integrate emotions and cognitions².

Besides, through out the research, there is an emphasis on education, even if it's not until university or for the purpose of career development, but to complement her role as a mother and a wife and help her whenever she needs to support herself or her family. Several mothers who are not educated or did not

¹ Dartmouth College. (2006). Brain changes significantly after age 18, says dartmouth research. Retrieved from <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~news/releases/2006/02/06.html>

² Johnson , S. B., Blum , R. W., & Geidd , J. N. (2010). Adolescent maturity and the brain: The promise and pitfalls of neuroscience research in adolescent health policy. *US National Library of Medicine, National Institute of Health*, 43(3), 216-221.

finish their education believe that their girls should finish their education so they would be more independent.

In addition, motives behind early marriage are, unlike what the mainstream assumption, thinking it's mainly related to the economic situation and poverty. It is actually mainly a result of traditions. Traditions here are represented mainly through the term *El sotra*. This was shown through different questions in this research, when asked what are the main benefits of early marriage, the majority said "*tetseter*". When asked why girls get married early, the majority said for "*El Sotra*" and it was mentioned as a reason for marriage, whether early or not when asked about the reasons for the choice of the preferred age of marriage, As mentioned above, this word could mean being protected and supported by a man, or preventing her from perversion or preventing people from talking about her. This concept or term holds so many meaning and representations, when asked what comes to mind when you hear this word, different meanings come to mind, yet, they are all associated to ideas of shame, protection and honor. Girls are expected to bring shame to a family, since every man's honor in the family is associated with her behavior, a girl has to be protected by a man; whether father or brother, from the day she is born and then by a husband. She is identified in a family context, as a daughter, mother or wife, rather than as an individual.

Those socially constructed concepts need to be analyzed further, deconstructed and challenged as they are the core of several forms of violence against women.

All of this should help policy makers; non-governmental organizations concerned with women's, child's rights and youth health to lobby against the calls for changing or removing the laws regulating the age of marriage. It should also help them intervene on the different levels with different stakeholders. It is recommended for researchers to focus more on exploring terms like "elsotra" more effectively, what they mean in the different contexts and how they affect the behavior of the society. Moreover, current laws, especially the child's law needs to be amended so those who are involved in the criminal act of early marriage could get prosecuted, as neither the family nor the husband get any punishment for this criminal act. All the stakeholders should take it upon themselves to focus on the issue of early marriage, know how to tackle it, increase the awareness of the community on its consequences, work more on emphasizing the importance of education as a prevention tool to the different forms of violence against women and work on the different policies to prevent early marriage and confirms the act as a criminal act, so the Egyptian society would get a step closer to eliminating early marriage and the different forms of violence against women and children.

Appendix I

Data classified by gender Demographics

Educational Status	Men	Women
	%	%
University	48.3	40.2
Middle Education	33.6	28.68
Illiterate	6.2	13.45
Reads and writes	2.6	2.6
Primary	0.7	3.13
Preparatory	5.48	9
Post graduate	1.28	1.33

Appendix II

Occupation	Men	Women
	%	%
Employee	29.3	23
Worker	33.4	7.29
Student	9.86	19.4
Working in Development	5.47	3.98
Professional (Dr, Lawyer)	5.75	2.48
Housewife	0	21
Entrepreneur/ Small business owner	4.1	1.6
Unemployed	8.21	19.9

Appendix III

Marital Status	Men	Women
	%	%
Single	38.8	44.3
Married	57	42.7
Engaged	3.6	2.6
Widowed	0.5	5.2
Divorced	0.7	4.9

Appendix IV

Data classified by gender Results

Age of Marriage chosen for girls	Men	Women
	%	%
Less than 15	1.7	1
15-18	8	6
18-21	45.4	30.6
21 and above	45.9	61

Appendix V

Age of Marriage chosen for boys	Men	Women
	%	%
15-18	1.5	0.4
18-21	7	5.7
21-25	33.9	23.7
25 and above	58	69

Appendix VI

Decision of Marriage while Studying	Girls	Mothers	Boys	Fathers
	%	%	%	%
Leave education and get married	3	8.5	5.8	8.7
Get Engaged	44.6	42.5	50.2	36
Refuse until she is done with education	47.8	45	40	50.5
Others	4.6	2.5	4	4.5

Case Stories

1. Governorate: Assiot

Current age: 28

Age at marriage: 15

Marital status: Married, in the process of pursuing legal divorce

Number of children: 2

Socioeconomic status: Unemployed, living with her father at the moment.

Educational level: Illiterate

Father's educational level: Uneducated.

“What can I say.... I did not get any education and my father too did not get an education. He said education is bad. When I got married I was 15 years old. Maybe a little over older than 15. The sheikh could not even write the official legal marriage documents because I was too young. I first got married in an informal way, I mean we had a wedding in the street and the sheikh of our

mosque came and married us orally only. This way the people of our hometown knew we were married. My husband was also my relative, I mean he was family. When I reached the legal age of marriage we got legal married on paper.

Honestly, my husband and I loved each other. When he proposed I was truly happy. I was going to die of happiness. I was an immature kid after all. The wedding, the wedding dress and the wedding veil were all very exciting to me as a child, beside the excitement that I was going to marry someone I loved...

The first year of marriage it was ok. After the first year the problems really started and he started to call me names and beat me all the time. His mother couldn't stand me, neither her, nor his sister.

He also used to lock me up in the house and cut communications between me and my family. He didn't want them to visit me and he doesn't allow me to visit them as well.

The first daughter that we had; was born with fluid in her brain. The doctor said that there was a possibility that she would be disabled. He didn't know this was because I was still too young. I

don't know what caused this to happen to my daughter, was it that my body could not stand the pregnancy and birth? Or was it just fate? Or was it because my blood/genes and my husband's blood/genes do not mix together well? And I took an injection.

This girl... I went around and around to many doctors with her and then she went To Asiout. They did a CT scan/magnetic resonance scan and ECT. Until now she is not achieving a lot in school and she is still following up with someone for rehabilitation and treatment.

I filed for divorce but it is still in the courts. Ever since I went and stayed home with my dad, he has not even asked about the kids at all and does not care at all what happens to them. Sometimes he goes to their school to see them. The kids are scared of him and they get extremely tense and afraid. They actually don't even know him well; they consider their grandfather their father. Also, their father remarried and had more children and my daughters know nothing about them.

Before marriage I was so happy that I was getting married to the one I actually love. I was young; I didn't know anything about anything. But after the first year the problems started, the beating and horrible treatment from him and his family. I couldn't stand this life, the hardship and humiliation.

I left the house and went to my father's house and requested a divorce. He was stubborn and unwilling to get the divorce. This is why I went to the courts to pursue a divorce and we are still in the process.

My children are my life and I don't want or need anything from him, except for him to leave me alone and forget about me completely. He can divorce me, and leave me to raise my children in peace."

2. Governorate: Assiot

Current age: 27

Age at marriage: 17

Marital status: Divorced

Number of children: none

Socioeconomic status: Commerce Diploma, unemployed

Father and mother's educational level: Illiterate.

"You can't exactly count my marriage as an early marriage, I was 17 years old. This is the general standard in our hometown. After the high school diploma, girls are supposed to get married right away. Either way, he is a far relative of ours. We got to know him from my paternal uncle's wife. We were engaged one year till I finished my high school diploma. Honestly I didn't know him ... Even during the days we were engaged I didn't spend time with him. I mean I barely would greet him and then leave straight away. My parents told me it was indecent for me to sit with my fiancé.

Because of this, I didn't get to know him and he didn't get to know me. In those days, we didn't have a direct way to communicate with each other through the phone. I knew absolutely nothing about him. I had no idea what he liked and what hated. Marriage posed one problem for me, that I cannot have children. Though after 40 days of marriage and after I found out I can't have children, my life became bitter. There was doctor that said that there was a possibility that I could have children after a surgery. I went to the hospital and I stayed there for a month. My husband didn't even ask about me while I was there. I couldn't go back home because either way he would get married again to have children. There was no way I would live with him because he feels sorry for me. I went to my father's house and his mother forbade him from asking about me as well. I stayed at my father's house for two years and then we got a divorce.

People don't stop gossiping and can't leave anyone alone or mind their own business. The gossip keeps increasing but I don't care about what people say. If I did care about what people said, I would not be able to survive. Right after my divorce, my mother died. My father died too, a few

months after my mother died. Now I am responsible for the family home and my brothers and sisters. There are seven of us and I am the one that takes care of them.

I learned a lesson from my experience with my husband. You have to know the person you are going to marry. This is why I make my sister to spend time with her fiancé and talk to him on the phone so that they can understand each other and get to know each other.

3. Governorate: Assiut

Age: 47

Marital status: Divorced.

Education: Sewing Institute

“My story is like many other girls stories from my hometown. I got married when I was 12. And this is of course because of traditions and practices where we live. In our family, when a girl reaches puberty, they go crazy to get her married. My elder grandfather sees on a yearly basis which of the girls has grown up and has to be married, and he sees who from the boys can get married and he puts them together. I was the only girl at the time who was seen ready for marriage and the person I married was chosen because he could not marry the other girls who were his nieces and nephews.

At the time, he was 37 years old and I was 12 years old. I had no idea what was going on. All I knew about marriage was that the wife cooks for the husband and washes his clothes. And I didn’t know anything more than that. I was extremely weak. This got in the way of performing my

marital duties fully, or at least that's what he used to tell me all the time. This lack of understanding made me feel separated from the marital demands and made me hate them.

If you only knew the kinds of problems I have faced in my life, you won't even believe it. From swear words and name calling to hitting to divorce.

So, for example, he was 25 years older than me, so of course he was always extremely jealous, in a really idiotic way. The jealousy became lack of trust and accusations. This jealousy led him to neglect me, insult me, and hit me.

This is other than the fact that his income was very basic and I have three kids getting schooled now. So I was forced to continue my education in the institute for sewing so I could make some income to make the family's budget better. He was not willing to take another job to help out with the family expenses. This of course increased the sense of jealousy, accusations, beatings, and insults. Every time I would leave and go to my father's house, he would come to get me and force

me to go back home and my family would tell me that I have to put up with all of this for the children's sake.

I put up with it until my children got married, then I got divorced after that. By that time, I had been married for 24 years and my youngest son was 21 years old.

The physical and health problems are endless. I was always hemorrhaging. This is of course other than the problems that the pregnancy itself gave me, preeclampsia; blood pressure problems. But if he had treated me better, maybe we would not have gotten divorced and all of these problems wouldn't have happened. To summarize, if I summed up my life, it would be to before marriage I didn't understand a single thing. After marriage, I hated myself to the extent that I wished for death every day.

After my divorce, there were a lot of complicated problems. From my hometown, when a woman gets divorced she needs to move back into her father's house, not go out at all, and never leave the

house. Every little thing you do or say is held against you. I had to go out because I had to go to work. This created a lot of problems between me and my older brother and fights. But I insisted to live alone and to keep on working. And the fights kept increasing because of this. After a while though, they got used to this situation.

The women in my neighborhood also started to get very jealous and suspicious of me, they thought I would steal their husbands. They were worried about their husbands cheating with me. Even my own sisters are worried about their husbands, like I am going to steal them away. This made me withdraw from everybody, even the closest people to me so that I could be free of them and so that they could be free of me.

Now I don't care about anything in this world except my children and nothing upsets me except when they are not with me. They live in Cairo now after they got married and I only see them during holidays.

4. Governorate: Sohag

Age: 36

Number of children: 4

There is no way people want their daughters to get married in this day and age. I wouldn't believe that anyone from the Salafis would say that. These must be rumors! Everyone sees these days that education is very important, and education for girls is more important than for boys as well. I got married when I was 13 and in the beginning of course it was hard. His mother was of course a very strict and harsh person, not just to him but also to her own daughters. And I still did not know how to do anything about housekeeping or farming.

The girls and the wives had to cook, bake, remove the hay and grass, and feed the cattle. In other words there was lots of work, in the house and outside of the house. The marriage itself was hard work as well. My mother never told me what marriage actually was, what the relationship is

between a man and a woman. My aunt hinted at what it meant, but even if, in the beginning of the marriage I was very exhausted and scared. I didn't understand anything I was still a kid. How could I ever do this to my daughters? At times I ask myself how my parents agreed straight away like that when I said I did not want to go to school any more. I was a 9 year old girl! They should have asked me why don't you want to learn? Who is upsetting you at school? Things like that.

Not just like ok fine, stay at home... they let me lose the chance to learn and get educated like my sisters. Do kids always know what is in their best interest? No. It needs someone to understand the child, to see what the reasons are that the child does not have an interest in education. Maybe it's a simple problem that can be easily solved. My sisters and brothers got educated and some of them have masters degrees, and me, well here I am.

My daughters are now in college and they have been proposed to many times by very nice boys from reputable families and I refused them all, even to get engaged. There will be no marriage until they finish college and take their degrees. I don't want anything to get in the way of their

education, like what happened to me. Especially what happened to me when my husband died and left me with four kids, my youngest son was still breastfeeding. I should be the mother and the father. I teach them, advise them, and support them financially as well all on my own. I lived through very hard times because my father passed away as well at that time. I was supposed to find a job that could pay for all of these things for my children, without having an education and having all of these kids as my responsibility.

By the way, the upper Egyptian community is persecuted. People think that they are the way they used to be and they do not make progress with the rest of the world. The people who make their children marry young are very few now in our hometown and in the countryside specifically. All the people around us and our family got their children married after college and no one can make us return to the way things used to be.

5. Governorate: Sohag

"I am a new bride right now but this is my third marriage. My husband has been married since he was 18 but God has not given him children yet. My first marriage was fake. I was 14 year old. I married my paternal cousin. They asked me if I was willing and I said yes. But I didn't know anything about anything so my consent couldn't really count as consent. I was little and my cousin worked in Saudi Arabia so he used to bring me presents. I agreed to marry him because he was going to bring me a bag and a dress from stores outside of Egypt and that he was going to take me around and travel... things like that. I stayed under his thumb for 3 and half years but we didn't get married in that time. This whole time he was still in Saudi. By this time I became 17 years old and I began to understand that marriage wasn't all presents and fun. I also realized that his personality was not the kind of personality I would choose for myself today. I asked my dad to separate us and he did.

My second marriage happened when I was 18 and I had finished high school. I had four sons and one daughter with him. We had problems after that and we got divorced. I worked in a couple of local NGOs with my high school degree. I wasn't giving direct services but I was assisting the programs. After a few years, my husband now proposed to me. He is 10 years older than me and he is a really good man and has manners. His only issue is that he gets jealous. His first wife is in the same building, the floor below. She is cooperative; she works and is very busy. So her relationships with other people are not strong.

6. Governorate: Kafr el Sheikh

“We were 6 people living in the family home. I am the eldest of the siblings. My father was a worker in the local council and my mother was a housewife. That’s how life was. When I turned 14, many men started to propose marriage. I was so happy! I felt that I was all grown up, and I felt beautiful and desirable. And as they say, I felt that there was a market demand for me. One of the suitors was very comfortable financially and was a far relative of ours. I mean, we knew him, and my father agreed for us to get married. At the time, I was 14 years old and was in 3rd preparatory. My father asked me, are you consenting to this marriage and I said yes I am. I agreed at the time because he was a relative of ours, and also because he was handsome, as well as the fact that people had good things to say about him.

After two years of being engaged, I decided that I did not want to marry him and I gave him his things back. When we had just gotten engaged he traveled to Libya. When I had sent his things backs, and my father fund out, my father beat me. At the time I was lost, I couldn’t feel anything,

and I was doing as I was told to do. By my father I mean. A year later we got married, and we stayed in Cairo for a while. After that we traveled together to Libya. I had one year left of high school, and I made the condition that I have to finish high school and he agreed. After marriage, he refused to let me finish school, and my husband and my father fought about this issue, and I was left not knowing what to do. I was confused and lost and stuck between my husband and my father. When we had moved to Libya, he started to hit me a lot and treat me very badly even though I was pregnant at the time. He wouldn't let me talk to my family at all, not phone calls or letters.

When we came to Egypt so that I could give birth, he took me to stay at his family's house. He would not let me go to see my family and he even wouldn't let my family come to see me. At this time we had been married for one year. He locked me in his parents' house, but I found a way to escape from them and go to my father's house. I asked for a divorce. And after a lot of problems and complications, I got a divorce. I had my daughter in my family's house. I was still very young. After my divorce, people gossiped about me a lot, one person would say one thing, and another

person would say another. Men thought of me as a prey. I was opposed to marriage but I was so bored from this idea, and then got remarried after 6 years. I married a man that was married already, but his wife cannot have children. A little while after I married him, his wife died. I have had 3 of his children and my daughter from my first marriage living in my father's house..."

7. Governorate: Kafr el Sheikh

“I got married young and my husband was much older than me, over 10 years older. He was a very negative and exhausting person who loved problems. And he was always putting me in a bad mood. I was living in his family’s house in the village, so I would complain to his mother and his sister. But they were always on his side and they think that it is the right of the man to yell and hit his wife. I had two daughters with him, but still this continued. He didn’t use to leave enough money for the essential things for the house, even baby’s milk. His family saw that this too was normal and ok. The situation ended in divorce.

After two years I remarried, the man was already married with two young children. I had a son with him. So in the house there were 5 children. There were so many expenses and I was embarrassed to also request expenses for my two daughters. I am a housewife and I do not have a personal income, in other words I was dependant on my husband for everything. He tries, but the expenses are too much for school and lessons and the girls’ father does not pay child support. The child support case in court was unsuccessful. Now we cannot even find out his address. A man

came and proposed to my young girl. She is not so young really, she is 16 years old. The man was in a hurry to get married. I don't want my daughter to get married before she finishes her education, but the problem is that us women do not have a say in all of this. The decision is up to her uncles even though they do not provide financial support in the absence of the father. They are trying to help us find him though. But concerning the issue of this marriage, they are the ones who take the decision. I tried to make them let her finish her education, even if just high school, because from what I know the legal age of marriage is 18 years old. But her uncles did not care about this and did not take it into consideration. They said they will make him sign an informal document and when she reaches 18 they will register the marriage legally."

8. Governorate: Alexandria

“I got engaged when I was 14 years old. They had my age assessed when I was a teenager and they said that I was 17 and my family married me off then. The age difference between us was big and he had a son from a previous marriage. Now he is 55 and I am 37, around 18 year difference between us. They told me his son would stay with his mother and not stay with us, but when we got married he stayed with us. His mothers parents wanted to get back at me. I had a daughter with this man. His son started to hang out with thugs and make a lot of problems in the street. He started to pay attention to my daughter and look at her and I got scared for my daughters safety. He married a girl in secret/illegally, and her parents threatened to kidnap my daughter and that they would throw acid in my face to disfigure me. I was still young and I didn’t know what to do. I have a daughter and I had no idea how to protect her and I had no one to help. All of this happened to me because I got married early. When I got married I really didn’t know what marriage meant. My father was the only one that was not agreeing for me to get married but I was excited to get married and wear a white wedding dress and to live in Alexandria. At the time, my

dad told me not to get married to this man because he was married before and had a son already from a previous marriage. He said I don't want my daughter to take his baggage and make my daughter get married early. I didn't understand what was going on and I didn't know that all of this was going to happen.

9. Governorate: Alexandria

My name is Mahmoud. My father died when I was 7 years old. I am the only son and have three sisters. I left school so I could work and support my mother and my sisters. I worked in a workshop at first and then when I grew up a little I started to work by driving a small microbus, without a license of course. God blessed us with enough because he knew I was supporting my family. My oldest sister, I helped out with her marriage and took care of everything so she wouldn't feel less than anyone else, this sister got married after finishing her diploma. The other one is in her second year in the commerce diploma, I am helping her out with her marriage needs as well, and she got engaged this year. Her fiancé is in a rush and wants to marry her right away, but I am insisting that she has to finish her diploma first. I try as much as I can and if I had the resources to help her continue to university I would have done that. We live at El Ezba, which is considered a rural area, and a lot of the girls there get married before the legal age of marriage, she gets married at the Ma'zoun and the family takes grantees from the groom. The Ma'zoun keeps the documents they made the groom sign and when the girl gets 18 years old, he documents the

marriage and legalize it. If anything happened from the groom, he could get jailed using the papers and receipts they made him sign as grantees. But in front of God, all the requirements needed for marriage are met. I mean the girl agrees, a wedding is done and everyone knows these two are married, the papers and the witnesses are there and everything. Its only the documentation and registration of the marriage that is not done. I am now 19 years old and I swear I walk looking at the ground in order not to get attracted to any girl, and then I'll have to marry her and I took an oath on myself and decided I am not getting married before I marry off my two sisters and send my mother to a pilgrimage.

El Nadim Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture

El Nadim Center was established as a non - governmental and non-profit organization in 1993

El Nadim Center seeks to eliminate the phenomenon of violence and torture in all its forms whoever the victim or offender is:

Therefore:

- * The center offers psychological support, psychiatric treatment and rehabilitation and legal support to survivors of violence or torture , according to the needs of the survivor.
- * It is also working to propose draft laws or amendments to existing laws,which aids the restitution of the dignity f the survivor and punish perpetrators of violent crimes. This could be done through lobbying or advocacy campaigns to put pressure on decision- makers in order to amend the existing laws.

- * El Nadim Center also does awareness raising campaigns against the use of violence for any reason, whether in detention, in the public domain, within the family, from the state, within an institution or other places.
- * El Nadim Center trains field workers on ways to support survivors of violence and torture.
- * El Nadim Center documents violations committed against citizens or individuals whether these violations were physical, psychological or legal.
- * El Nadim Center performs fact-finding missions in incidents that require it.
- * El Nadim Center helps development organizations in all the governorates of Egypt to establish units to receive the women survivors of violence through training programs that include issues like gender discrimination, physical and psychological effects of violence, legal consultation and listening skills and counseling for survivors.
- * El Nadim Center is a member of a number of regional and international networks, which are concerned with the same issues the center is working on.

How to contact us?

Address: 3 (a) Suleiman al-Halabi street, Ramses Street, next to Orabi metro station.

Phone: 25787089 - 25764409 Fax: 25776792

Hotline for women survivors of violence: 01006664894 - 01006662404

Hotline for Survivors of Torture: 01009952374 - 01000552793

To communicate via Facebook: El Nadeem

Website: www.alnadeem.org

E-mail: info@elnadeem.org

Publications of El Nadim Center:

Publication	Date	Comment
Seminar on "FGM" a Scientific and Social Perspective.	1994	El Nadim Center with the New Woman Foundation& Health Development Association
Activity Report and Documented Testimonies of Victims of Torture from 1993: 1996.	1997	
Appeal from the other world "written with the blood of Rabee' Soliman" .	1999	El Nadim Center and the Legal Assistance Centre for Human Rights
Torture in Egypt, "Facts and testimonies" First Edition.	2002	
Torture in Sudan, "Facts & Testimonies".	2003	
Torture in Egypt, "Facts and Testimonies", Second	2004	

Edition.		
Doctors Against Torture.	2004	
Days of Torture, "The Experiences of Women in Police Stations".	2005	
Women Against Violence "Testimonies from Inside Egyptian Families"	2005	
Torture in Egypt "Testimonies and Facts" from 2003: 2006	2007	
Testimonies of Women on Violence within the Family.	2008	
Tales of People of El Mansoura, from and to the Police Stations	2008	
Field Research on "Violence Against Women"	2009	
Manual for Doctors and Lawyers for the Documentation of Cases of Torture, Based on the	2009	

Istanbul Protocol.		
The Public Prosecution: between the Authorities of Accusation and Investigation.	2009	
Tales of People of Alexandria, from and to the Police Station.	2010	
Diaries of Torture and Ill-Treatment in Egypt.	2010	El Nadim and the Task Force for Combating Torture.
The Court Ruled "A Read in Some of the Provisions of the Judiciary in Cases of Torture"		El Nadim and the Task Force for Combating Torture.
Diaries of Revolutionaries Against Military Rule.	2012	
100 Days Under The Rule of Mohamed Morsi	2012	
Diaries of Suppression/ Oppression Between the Military and the Brotherhood's Rule	2012	
Bear Witness Mohammed Mahmoud, "On the First Anniversary of the Martyrs of Freedom"	2012	

Proposals of Policy Bills:

- A proposal for a bill that would criminalize violence against women inside the family.
- Proposed amendments of some articles of the Penal legal and criminal proceedings for the crime of torture.
- A proposed bill on criminalizing sexual violence “Joint work with the Task Force for Combating Sexual Violence”.
- Propositions on mainstreaming women in the constitution “Joint work with the Egyptian Feminist Union”.

Booklets and Brochures in simplified Arabic:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women - the Universal Declaration of Elimination of Violence against Women.
- A Policy Bill to Protect Women from Violence within the Family - Egyptian Constitution for Egyptian Men and Women.
- Personal Status Law "Q & A" –two brochures with information on the concept and different forms of violence against women.
- Brochures and booklets on harassment and rape, three from El Nadim and another joint venture with the Task Force for Combating Sexual Violence.
- A number of Brochures and contact cards with the services El Nadim offers and how to contacts us.

