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## SOCIO-PEDAGOGICAL

REASONS OF EARLY MARRIAGES IN AZERBAIJAN AND THEIR NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

**RAZONES SOCIO-PEDAGÓGICAS DE LOS MATRIMONIOS PRECOSES EN AZERBAIYÁN Y SUS EFECTOS NEGATIVOS EN EL PROCESO EDUCATIVO**

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### ABSTRACT

The fight against early marriages is one of the most prominent problems in contemporary times to protect the human rights of children. These have a number of negative effects, including depriving young people, particularly girls, of education and future prospects, health risks due to premature birth, perpetuates gender stereotypes and can cause psychological distress. Considering this, this work analyzes the socio-pedagogical reasons for early marriages in Azerbaijan, which significantly affect the development and regulation of the family institution, which plays a fundamental role in the socio-economic dynamics of society. At the same time, the legal regulation of the conditions necessary to contract marriage, and the negative situations that exist in this area, were analyzed. Surveys were conducted in several regions of Azerbaijan where it was confirmed that early marriages remain common. Against such marriages, the responsibilities of the family, school and society were defined, concluding the need to address this problem more vigorously in legislation. Finally, there are presented suggestions that can help prevent early marriages.

**Keywords:** early marriage, motives of early marriages, consequences of early marriages, family values.

### RESUMEN

La lucha contra los matrimonios precoces es una de las problemáticas más destacadas en los tiempos contemporáneos para proteger los derechos humanos de los niños. Estos tienen una serie de efectos negativos, incluida la privación de educación y perspectivas de futuro a los jóvenes, en particular a las niñas, riesgos para la salud debido al parto prematuro, perpetúa los estereotipos de género y puede provocar angustia psicológica. Considerando esto, en este trabajo se analizan las razones sociopedagógicas de los matrimonios precoces en Azerbaiyán, que inciden significativamente en el desarrollo y regulación de la institución familiar, la cual juega un papel fundamental en la dinámica socioeconómica de la sociedad. Paralelamente se analizó la regulación jurídica de las condiciones necesarias para contraer matrimonio, y las situaciones negativas existentes en este ámbito. Se realizaron encuestas en varias regiones de Azerbaiyán donde se confirmó que los matrimonios precoces siguen siendo comunes. Contra tales matrimonios se definieron las responsabilidades de la familia, la escuela y la sociedad, concluyéndose la necesidad de abordar este problema de manera más enérgica en la legislación. Finalmente, se presentan sugerencias que pueden ayudar a prevenir los matrimonios precoces.

**Palabras clave:** Matrimonio precoz, motivos de los matrimonios precoces, consecuencias de los matrimonios precoces, valores familiares.

## INTRODUCTION

The family is one of the great values that have a fundamental role in the socio-economic development of the society, and the system of stable intra-family relations is relevant for the state. According to this, people's attitude towards marriage, family responsibility, family values and at what age they get married is factors that directly affect the future of the family. In maintaining the family institution, that is one of the main social institutions of society, early marriages, which constitute one of the potentially risky marriages, and their timely prevention, emerge as an actual issue, because early marriages, which are widespread in modern society, are also the main factor in the breakup of the family (Hegland & Karimi, 2021; Saleheen et al., 2021). In accordance with the statistics in 2013, the number of early marriages in Azerbaijan increased significantly and reached 6.9% (Chalabiyev & Efendiyeva, 2021, pp. 191–192). In this regard, there is a need to study the experience and consequences of early marriages from a socio-pedagogical aspect.

It is understood as early marriage the marriage or cohabitation of boys and girls of both sexes and adolescents, under the age of 18 (Idawati et al., 2023; Tekile et al., 2020). Although the age of marriage is allowed at 18 in 158 countries of the world in modern times, this law is violated in many situations in the form of forcing boys and girls into early marriage under the name of tradition (Bhattarai et al., 2022; Çelik, 2023; Hosseini & Asadisarvestani, 2022). In accordance with the approach to marriage in the historical context, it can be said that the age of entering into marriage was different in some various historical periods, and the socio-psychological and pedagogical analysis of family experience suggests that a person needs to mature physiologically, socially-psychologically and pedagogically in order to marriage. Even if the person's age suits for marriage, it cannot be taken as an important criterion for starting a family. Because both physical, sexual, and social maturity play an important role in preparing for family life, and these stages of development do not go the same way for everyone. Promoting this factor strictly creates conditions for the creation of stable and happy families.

According to Duru et al. (2021) early marriage is a multifaceted issue encompassing communal, legal, social, cultural, economic, physical, intellectual, psychological, and emotional dimensions. It is profoundly influenced by a confluence of factors, necessitating collaborative efforts across various sectors to address it effectively. As pointed out by Perez-Amador and Giorguli (2018), early marriages are usually linked to teenage pregnancies, a phenomenon recognized for its heightened risk of maternal mortality and reduced access to prenatal care. Then, the elimination of

child marriage holds the potential to ultimately yield positive effects on both infant mortality and maternal health indicators (UNPF, 2012). Additionally, the postponement of child marriage may engender improved prospects for young women, potentially resulting in enhanced engagement in the labor force. This, in turn, has the capacity to elevate female labor force participation rates, a critical aspect aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 8, which emphasizes the promotion of sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

As noted by Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu and Ergöçmen (2014) in the United States and the United Kingdom, the prevalence of marriage among women aged 15 to 19 stands at 4% and 2%, respectively. In stark contrast, this proportion surges to 62% in Niger and 51% in Bangladesh, exemplifying a discernible trend wherein child marriage is more pervasive in countries characterized by lower levels of socioeconomic development. The highest incidence of women aged 20 to 24 entering into marriage before the age of 18 is observed in South Asia (48%) and Africa (42%), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (29%). The highest prevalence of child marriage is seen in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (Azizi et al., 2021).

In the same case of many countries, for Azerbaijan, the age for marriage is set at 18, and is determined by legislation: *“In the Republic of Azerbaijan, the age of marriage is set at 18. If there are valid reasons, the relevant executive authority of the area where persons who wish to enter into marriage and who are under the age of marriage, allow the marriage age to be reduced by no more than 1 year”* (Family Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 1999). It does not mean that young people of both sexes who have reached the age of 18 are ready for marriage, because in physiological development conditioned by acceleration, socio-psychological decline is manifested in young people aged 18-20. The problem does not end there, and the psychological unpreparedness and social immaturity of young people who get married early has a serious impact on the extent to which they take family responsibility and understand their obligations in family relationships. Early marriages of people who are not yet psychologically fully developed are governed by sudden, unplanned desires, economic-economic and socio-pedagogical difficulties are regularly manifested here.

During early marriages, a number of questions arise, the answers to which determine whether the marriage will be long or short-lived: to what extent the parties entering into marriage trust each other, are they ready for marriage, family life, financial base for the existence of the family, family budget, housing, do they have at least secondary

education and vocational training? The fact is a married man goes to military service after marriage complicates the already socio-psychological undertones of the marriage, which in many cases results in the dissolution of the marriage.

Early marriages in Azerbaijan and its possible effects on our family gene pool have been among the topics of public attention in recent years. In this aspect, the State Committee on Family, Women and Children's Problems jointly with the UN Children's Fund conducted a social study on "Early marriages: violation of children's rights". According to the survey, 38.9 percent of women under the age of 18 were married in urban areas, and 61.1 percent were registered in rural areas. 37.4% of women who entered into early marriage voluntarily, 25.9% under the pressure of their parents, 10.7% because of the difficult financial situation in the family, 7.9% because of the financial wealth of their husbands, 6.4% were abducted and 1.6% were married early because they were pregnant. The specific weight of cases of early marriage was higher at the age of 16 due to their own desire and at the age of 15 due to pregnancy. Abduction cases occurred mostly between 15 and 17-year-olds. According to the information posted on the website of the State Statistics Committee (SSC), in 2007-2017, 27847 girls were married before reaching marriageable age in Azerbaijan. But the real situation is thought to be more different than the official figures, because most early marriages are not registered in any way (Abbasov, 2019). According to official information, only between 2010 and 2015, about 21 thousand children were born from early marriages in the country.

Then, although studies on the topic have been conducted in Azerbaijan (Mehdi, 2009; Torrisi, 2022), in our opinion it should be analyzed in more depth due to the implications it has. Considering this, the objective of this work is to analyze the socio-pedagogical reasons of early marriages in Azerbaijan and its negative effects on the educational process.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to investigate the problem of early marriage in Azerbaijan, a socio-pedagogical survey was conducted in the form of a questionnaire in several regions (Jalilabad, Goychay, Ujar, and Sheki cities). The total sample was 300 respondents, 32% of whom were men and 68% of whom were women. The data was processed with descriptive statistics, which allowed us to have a vision of the situation in the country regarding the issue. 78% of those involved in the survey were residents of villages, 11% of cities and 11% of settlements. The marriages of 94% of

the participating families were registered at the registry office, 4.2% preferred a religious marriage, and 1.8% did not formalize their relationship. Respondents who did not register their marriages at the registry office stated that there was no need for it since a religious marriage was more appropriate. Another reason for non-registration was that women were not yet of marriageable age (24%). It means that at the time of the survey, the age of marriage for Azerbaijani citizens was 18 years, so the age of women who got married early was below 18 years.

According to the general results of the survey, almost the majority of respondents consider unregistered marriage unacceptable according to 45% of respondents' unregistered marriage poses a threat to stable family relationships. According to 19.5% of respondents, an unregistered marriage cannot protect a woman's rights (especially housing, education), and according to 16.4%, it creates serious problems in giving children out of wedlock the father's surname. At the same time, an unregistered marriage calls into question the status of a woman and a man in the family (7%), reduces confidence in the future (4.8%), casts a shadow over trust between a man and a woman (1.5%), may cause serious disputes during the division of property after the end of the relationship, and it leads to conflicts (3.8%), and it is considered as a serious factor in the betrayal of a man and a woman and the spread of polygamy (2%).

In addition, to get a picture of the attitudes of young people about the problem, a survey was also conducted among students at Baku State University and Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Setting the problem in scientific literature

For Azerbaijani society family institution is one of the main social and economic priorities. Early marriages that have a serious impact on family values, and it has been investigated in modern scientific literature. For every society the family is a historical-spiritual factor because "the family is the oldest institution, unique event and manifestation of human interaction, activity and relations" (Abbasov, 2019). Experts' opinions about the real age at which a family should be established also prove that both parties entering into marriage (woman and man) must be psychologically, socially, and pedagogically well-formed.

However, the recent negative changes in family values reflect serious problems in this area. Therefore, even today early marriages, which have a special weight among family-related problems, remain more relevant. G.S.

Gukasova (2012) writes: “according to sociologists, early marriages deprive girls of their basic rights - the right to education, which is necessary to fully enter adulthood”. Early marriages reflect the socio-economic and educational level of the country and the extent it to human rights which protected by the state. “Although early marriage is the norm for both girls and boys in many countries, girls are more likely to be forced into early marriage” (UNICEF, 2014). These marriages leave very painful scars on girls’ lives style, such as incomplete education, loss of health associated with early pregnancy and motherhood, and exposure to threats and often violence. Thus, for millions of girls in the world, marriage is dangerous and not in their interests. Early marriage violates their human rights, deprives them of their childhood, their hopes for education, and their chances to succeed in life, increases the risk of abuse and exploitation, and endangers their health.

Today, early marriages are a general socio-demographic problem not only for Azerbaijan, but for the whole world. Thus, “Every day in the world, 25 thousand and more than 10 million early marriages occur in a year. Nowadays early marriages are more common in Asian and African countries. Almost half of girls in South Asia and more than a third of young girls in sub-Saharan Africa are married before the age of 18. According to the highest rates of early marriage are Niger – 75%; Chad and the Central African Republic – 68%; Bangladesh – 66%; Guinea – 63%; Mozambique – 56%; Financial – 55%; Burkina Faso and South Sudan – 52%; Malawi – 50%; and India - 47%”.

Regarding the causes of early marriages, it is known that Azerbaijan is an Eastern country in terms of mental values, and early marriage history is wrongly appreciated as a tradition and mental value. Thus, in Azerbaijan, as well as in other countries, these factors have a certain role in the emergence of early marriages. But there is not only a legal problem since international law clearly prohibits early marriages as mentioned (although early marriages are still widespread in developing countries, especially where military operations are active, terrorist acts are frequent, and humanitarian crises occur), but in many cases, if the marriage is ended, a young woman cannot bear both the financial and moral burden of life. Usually, young women face financial and moral problems after the divorce because they are not officially married in the eyes of the state. Among these problems, along with the children born from informal marriage, the problem of housing prevails.

Research indicates that various forms of violence against women within early marriages, including physical, psychological, emotional, and economic abuse, are prevalent (Chalabiyev & Efendiyeva, 2021, pp. 409–410). It is evident that women who attempt to seek assistance

from law enforcement agencies due to domestic violence often encounter resistance. Gender stereotypes deeply embedded in society discourage women from reporting violence to authorities. Consequently, women who do come forward are subjected to criticism not only from their relatives but also from their communities. The response of law enforcement agencies to cases of violence against women within the family unit remains ambiguous. In some instances, certain officers, disregarding the principle that human rights apply to both genders, reprimand women for challenging social norms. They respond to such women with statements like: “You should have considered this before getting married,” or “You should have been involved in family matters from the start,” perpetuating the cycle of victim-blaming.

The very low level of education and worldview of those who marry early often lead to a lenient attitude towards violence against them. Many of these women resign themselves to their fate and endure the abuse inflicted by their spouses throughout their lives. Low self-esteem and a sense of hopelessness are common among such women. Furthermore, early marriages significantly impact the socio-pedagogical development not only of the individuals involved but also of the children born into these unions. Intra-family issues within such households result in specific disturbances in children and significantly influence their ability to form healthy relationships in their future families. A daughter witnessing such treatment of her mother within the family tends to develop an aggressive attitude towards her future partner, creating conditions for potential family conflicts later on.

According to the data from the State Statistics Committee in Azerbaijan, there has been a decline in the incidence of early marriages compared to previous years. Although the official record for the number of young brides entering early marriages was 137 in 2021, the unofficial count of unregistered unions is higher. The findings of international organizations paint a concerning picture. UNICEF’s report, expressing apprehension over the surge in underage marriages in Azerbaijan, reveals that research conducted within the country indicates that one out of every eight individuals in this group is married or is preparing for marriage before the age of eighteen. The report’s authors assert that such trends often lead to physical and mental health issues, resulting in depression and, in some cases, even suicide among the brides. UNICEF identifies two main reasons contributing to the resurgence of early marriage practices. The first reason pertains to cultural beliefs, where a girl beyond the age of 18 is regarded as old in certain regions, prompting parents to seek early marriages for their daughters. The second reason is linked

to economic considerations, as parents believe that an early marriage could ensure a better life for their children. Consequently, UNICEF highlights a noticeable rise in early marriages and teenage pregnancies as a consequence of these factors (Garayeva, 2010, p. 6).

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the practice of forcing young girls into early and arranged marriages constitutes one of the most significant social problems in the country, reflecting a violation of women's rights and perpetuating gender-based stereotypes. These marriages, rooted in interpretations of Sharia laws, often render women dependent on their husbands and extended families in the long term. The persistence of early marriages in contemporary society can be attributed to the widespread influence of religious doctrines, underscoring the necessity of examining familial and marital issues through a gender lens. Extensive research conducted in this domain indicates that the discourse surrounding women's rights and gender equality remains complex and somewhat contradictory in modern-day Azerbaijan. While there exists a legal framework in the country that ostensibly ensures gender equality, traditional cultural norms persist, fostering rigid notions about the roles of women in both the family and society. These deep-seated stereotypes serve as significant impediments to the realization of women's rights (Nakhchivanli & Gasimova, 2008).

The consequences of early motherhood resulting from premature marriages can have detrimental effects on the immune system of underage girls. Given that their bodies are not fully developed physiologically, they may encounter difficulties in combating diseases. Isaev & Kagan (1986) highlight the risks associated with early pregnancies, emphasizing the medical dangers faced by teenage girls themselves. If a girl becomes pregnant before her body is fully mature, the developing fetus can impose an additional burden, potentially leading to complications during childbirth. In addition, experts suggest that early marriages are often more fragile and prove to be socioeconomically and psychologically unsustainable. Vasilievich (2021) supports this notion, asserting that early marriages, predominantly entered into not out of love but due to necessity or under the influence of impulsive decisions and traditions, do not reflect genuine unions or constitute stable families. As a result, they are prone to quick dissolution.

Acknowledging the role of stereotypes in early marriages is crucial, and a comprehensive gender-based examination of customs and traditions, integral components of the national mentality, is essential for addressing issues in this domain. Certain aspects within the national mentality warrant critical gender-centric analysis, particularly given

contemporary demands. Stereotyping engenders an environment conducive to biased generalizations, overlooking individual capacities and circumstances. These stereotypes "shape the perception of men and women and dictate their behavior in various spheres of life" within both societal and familial contexts (Chalabiyev & Efendiyeva, 2021, p. 313). The influence of factors such as customs, traditions, and religion, which contribute to the shaping of these stereotypes, often impedes change, fostering stability and a tendency toward conservatism rooted in the preservation of historical memory and the experiences of past cultures.

It is well understood that, similar to all other nations, the Azerbaijani population maintains its distinct set of customs and traditions, which can be categorized into two groups, one characterized by regressive tendencies and the other by progressive ideals. A concerted effort must be made to combat regressive customs that hinder gender equality, impede the establishment of equitable rights among individuals, degrade the dignity of girls and women, and relegate women to secondary roles within both the family and society. This fight should primarily be spearheaded by the women themselves. Researcher S. Hajiyeva (2012) writes that "there is no need to forcefully revive dead, outdated, so-called customs. Depriving girls from education at an early age and forcefully marrying them, not allowing them to work, trying to exclude them from public life is one of the customs that have become harmful to our society, and such customs cannot be established by force".

### Survey results about early marriages in Azerbaijan

Early marriages are considered as a factor that directly affects the weakening of the family institution, which is one of the main pillars of the Azerbaijani society, and against such negative situations legal action is taken within the state legislation. According to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Children's Rights", as well as the 1989 Convention "On Children's Rights", the entry of children into marriage involves a violation of human rights. At the suggestion of the UN Children's Fund, the Azerbaijani legislation has raised the marriage age for women from 17 to 18 since 2011. In general, 18 years of age is the limit set by the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child in terms of child protection. However, although the trend of early marriages has decreased over time (Table 1), they have not yet been completely eliminated.

Table 1. Number of marriages in Azerbaijan by age groups of bride and groom.

Years	General number	Age (years)			
		Till 18	18-24	25-34	Over 35
1970	35222	-	24189	6554	4479
1980	60134	167	47260	9564	3143
1990	73119	471	49787	17322	5539
1991	74378	548	53102	17262	3466
1992	68740	780	49505	15065	3390
1993	60028	5044	39299	12937	2748
1994	47147	4497	30064	9959	2627
1995	43130	4030	27384	9220	2496
1996	38572	3404	24217	8405	2546
1997	46999	3963	30115	9972	2949
1998	40851	3410	26027	8765	2649
1999	37382	2649	23940	8316	2477
2000	39611	2473	25341	9140	2657
2001	41861	2348	26960	9990	2563
2002	41661	2140	26362	10406	2753
2003	56091	2556	36098	13880	3557
2004	62177	3214	40030	15085	3848
2005	71643	4016	45617	17252	4758
2006	79443	4607	50787	19399	4650
2007	81758	5023	51996	19946	4793
2008	79964	5544	51468	18439	4513
2009	78072	5380	50595	17622	4475
2010	79172	4742	52132	17883	4415
2011	88145	5138	56101	21226	5680
2012	79065	295	53738	19487	5545
2013	86852	229	58880	21432	6311
2014	84912	479	56945	21041	6447
2015	68773	388	46287	17050	5048
2016	66771	312	44503	17196	4760
2017	62923	317	41381	16617	4608
2018	62484	338	40683	16653	4810
2019	63869	366	39979	17877	5647
2020	35348	165	20942	10568	3673
2021	56314	137	34041	17206	4930

Source: own elaboration

However, more worrying is that parents, unfortunately, are often the initiators of early marriages, as can be seen from the Table 2.

**Table 2. Statistics about the initiator of early marriages, in %**

Initiator of early marriages	%
The respondents themselves	28%
Husband/wife	15%
Parents	42%
Relatives	6%
Other members of family	2%
Mother-in-law, father-in-law	7%

Source: own elaboration

As shown from the table parents are the main initiators of early marriages, and they emphasize that they do this to protect their daughters from future sexual harassment or unnecessary “interviews” and moral corruption. It can be said that more than half of the respondents partially or completely agreed with this idea (61% of men, 49% of women). It should be noted that in this approach, in comparison to city residents, rural residents expressed a narrower attitude. In accordance with the rural residents in the regions, the social role of girls in the family and society is limited to make a birth, managing the household, protecting the family hearth, and therefore education and acquiring any profession are not considered so important for girls. They attribute dominance to boys in both education and career, which can be seen as a main factor that reinforces gender inequality in society.

In addition, a certain number of respondents consider early marriages as a way for parents to solve their financial problems and do not consider the interests of their children. Although 24% of the respondents chose their spouses themselves, 35% followed their parents’ decision to get married unconditionally. At the same time, 41% of men and 28% of women stated that it is pointless to oppose the decision of parents regarding early marriage. Some statistics on the response to early marriage of the respondents are shown in Table 3

**Table 3. Response to early marriage**

Response to early marriage	Men	Women
Firstly I resisted this marriage	14%%	15%
At first I was unhappy	5%	7,80%
It was pointless to resist	18%	15%
I neither resisted nor expressed my displeasure with this marriage	41%	40,10%
The family was created by my choice	22%	21,10%

Source: own elaboration

As can be seen from the table, most of the respondents who were forced into early marriage find the optimal way hardly to get out of this situation. Approximately 51% of them never thought about opposing their parents’ decision on early marriage, and they accepted this decision as fate. The respondents expressed this in their interviews, as the following cases:

“My parents almost never asked my opinion about my marriage. Because, since childhood, in our family, father’s word was accepted as law and it was followed unconditionally. I was 16 years old when I got married, and even if I was unhappy with this marriage, I didn’t have the courage to go against my parents. At the same time, I was not at the level of understanding how to find optimal ways out of this situation yet. It was instilled in me since childhood that my parents wish me a happier life and they have more experience in this field” (Khalida. 19 years old, Ujar district).

Our family consist of many children and we did not have any financial difficulties. Since my mother got married at an early age, her biggest wish was for me to get a higher education after completing my secondary education. However, my father’s attitude towards my education was very strict, and whenever education was mentioned, he always showed me my own mother as an example. After completing the 9th class, I did not continue my education at the insistence of my father. It’s true, although I protested against this violation of my rights, my father’s psychological and sometimes physical violence left me no choice but to get married early at his request. But I was so stupid because of my young age. If I were in that situation now, I would refuse this marriage no matter what and I would turn to law enforcement agencies and certain non-governmental organizations. Because this marriage did not bring me happiness, it destroyed my dreams” (Konul. 28 years old. Goycay district).

Among the respondents, 18% did not have accurate information about who to turn to in such a situation, and 9% of respondents said that they refused to turn to state authorities. It is also clear from this analysis that the education of teenagers forced into early marriage about which administrative bodies they can turn to is at a very low level (Table 4). This makes it important for the young generation to receive information about early marriages.

**Table 4. Sources of information on the negative consequences of early marriage**

Source of information	Share in information
From their own family members and relatives	20,20%
From street	8%
I have witnessed it myself	3%
From friends and acquaintances	9%
From the State Committee on Family, Women and Children's Problems	5,80%
From school, college or high school	28%
From medical staff	5%
From the organizations concerned with this problem	6%
I have a hard time answering	5%
I have found things in media	10%

Source: own elaboration

As can be seen from the table, the information received by teenagers and young people about early marriages and family-related organizations is not very high (5.8% and 6%). 28% of the respondents stated that they received this information from their educational institutions. The highlights of this survey are get information about the problem from the mass media. Recently, the socialization of early marriages carried out at the instigation of the family in Azerbaijan through social networks (not only in Azerbaijan, but also in the regions of Georgia where Azerbaijanis live) has focused the attention of the society on this problem, and the state authorities have taken prompt measures to prevent these negative situations.

Researches and observations delivered on early marriages, and it is clear that such marriages have a negative impact on the lives of those who enter into them. 42% of the respondents stated that this marriage overruled their future plans, and up to 80% of them stated that their desire to continue their education and get a family education remained unfulfilled (Table 5).

Table 5. Effect of early marriages on young people's future.

Effect of early marriage on future vital plans	%
It prevented me from getting higher education	53%
It prevented me from working in any enterprise.	16%
It prevented me to get the profession I wanted	17%
It prevented me to work where I wanted (in the city or in a foreign country)	5%
It prevented me from doing business	4,20%
I have a hard time answering	3,20%
There has been no change	1,60%

Source: own elaboration

The results of the survey prove once again that early marriages are the most serious obstacle for women to continue their education in the future and to acquire the profession of their dreams (67% of women). Among the total number of respondents, 53% (both men and women) indicated early marriage as the main factor that deprived them of the opportunity to continue their higher education. The negative impact of such marriages on family values and the health of mothers and children were clearly reflected in the survey (Table 6).

Table 6. Consequences of early marriages

Attitudes about the negative impact of early marriages	Men	Women
Non-realization of prospective plans of young people for the future	45%	32,40%
Premature births and the resulting damage to a woman's health	18%	30%
Birth of children with disabilities and certain health problems	11,20%	12%
Divorce of young people who are not fully ready for family life	13%	15%
Incapacity to legally protect women's rights as a result of early marriage Unable to legally protect women's rights as a result of early marriage	16,80%	5,60%
Infidelity in early marriages	2%	2%
I see no harm in early marriages	14%	3%

Source: own elaboration

According to data, early marriages are more dangerous for the mother and the baby. There is little difference between the opinions of both male and female that will lead to divorce (13% of men, 15% of women). It can be concluded from the comparison of both Tables 5 and 6 that both women and men who participated in the survey mentioned more harmful aspects of early marriage, which stems from their own social experience couples are more aware of the tragedies this problem will bring nowadays. Therefore, 70.2% of women and 29.8% of men said that they are against early marriage of their children in the future.

In the analysis of problems related to marriage, such a question naturally arises: whose opinion do the respondents accept as dominant in concluding a marriage? The relationship to this can be clearly seen from the Table 7.



Table 7. Attitudes toward those who make decisive decisions during the marriage

The person who makes the final decision on marriage	Men	Women
The decision of the person to be married	60,50%	56,7
Decision of parents or relatives	12,8%	17,4
Decision-making by the person entering into marriage together with his parents or relatives	26,7%	25,9

Source: own elaboration

As can be seen from Table 7, more than half of the respondents of both sexes (60.5% of men, 56.7% of women) consider it right that make decision marriage should be made independently by that person, parents and relatives noted to consider the importance of their relationship.

Along with the socio-pedagogical damage of early marriages to families, some respondents also mentioned the positive aspects of these marriages in the survey. This can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8. Respondents' thoughts on positive outcomes of early marriages

Thoughts on the positive effects of early marriage	%
I do not see any positive aspect in early marriage	53%
Families from early marriages compared to other families they are stronger	9%
In this marriage, the rights of the woman are better protected	7%
Early marriages may prevents violations	2%
Parties entering into marriage overcome difficulties they can come better together	3%
There is no infidelity in early marriages	4%
Parents support the children born in the family for a longer time	22%

Source: own elaboration

As can be seen from the table, although more than half of the respondents (53%) have a negative attitude towards early marriage, according to 9% of them, such families have stronger foundations. 22% of the respondents believe that in early marriage families, parents provide financial and moral support to their children from a young age, and this continues even after they start a family. 24.6% of those who took part in the survey also noted the negative impact of early marriages on their social communication with friends and relatives. In the study of problems related to early marriages, the opinion of the respondents about which age period is more suitable for marriage is also interesting, so we gave some space to this issue in the survey. According to the results, the majority of those who

took part in the survey noted that the age range suitable for marriage is the age range of 21-26 years. But in this direction, the differences between the age of marriage of boys and girls have also shown themselves, so that 42% of the respondents considered the age of marriage for girls to be 19-22 years old, and 31% for boys to be 22-24 years old. But one out of eight respondents said that the most appropriate time to get married is after the age of 25.

Since the attitude of young people, who are the future of society, to early marriages is interesting from the point of view of the problem, we conducted a survey among 200 second and third year students of Baku State University and Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University. 78% female and 22% male students participated in the survey and the results are reflected in Table 9.

Table 9. Results of the survey in university students.

Questions	Answers and their variants
1. Your gender	Boy – 22 % Girl – 78 % Total – 100%
2. Your attitude to early marriage	a) Negative – 96.5% b) Positive – 0% c) I don't know – 5% Total – 100%
3. Who do you think is the initiator of early marriages?	a) Parents – 76.5% b) Relatives-11% c) Other members of parents-0.5% d) The person who entered early marriage herself/himself-12% Total – 100%
4. What measures do you consider important to prevent early marriages?	a) Parents should be punished -19% b) It is necessary to educate parents - 44% c) It is necessary to bring responsibility to those who enter early marriage-13% d) It is necessary to conduct educational work in schools - 12.5% e) Frequent showing of social videos about the consequences of early marriages in the mass media - 11.5% Total-100%
5. Where were you born?	a) City-53% b) District-31.5% c) Village-15.5% Total-100%

6. At what age did your parents get married in your family?	a) 16-19 years old-6.5% b) 19-25 years old-60.5% c) over 25 years old-33% Total-100%
7. What should a person forced into early marriage (girl or boy) see as a way out?	a) Should apply to law enforcement agencies - 68.5% b) She/He should express his displeasure to his parents and resist - 31.5% c) Must agree to this marriage-0% Total-100%
8. What do you see as the consequences of early marriages?	a) Not realizing of prospective plans of youngs for the future - 38% b) Premature births and damage to the woman's health as a result - 12% c) Birth of children with disabilities and certain health problems - 9.5% d) Divorce of young people who are not fully ready for family life - 29.5% e) Unable to legally protect women's rights as a result of early marriage - 11% f) I don't see any harm in early marriages - 0% total-100%
9. Your opinion about the positive consequences of early marriage	a) I don't see any positive aspects of early marriage - 92% b) Other families born from early marriages they are stronger than families - 2% c) Early marriages prevent premature moral corruption of young people - 1.5% ç) Married parties are better able to overcome difficulties together - 2% d) There is no betrayal in early marriages - 0.5% e) Parents support children born in the family for a longer period of time - 2% total-100%
10. What age group do you think is appropriate for your child to get married in the future?	a) 17-18 years old - 1% b) 19-21 years old - 3% c) 22-25 years old - 65% d) over 25 years old - 28% e) after 30 years old - 3% Total-100%

11. Do you consider it normal to get married while studying at a higher education institution?	a) yes, this is normal - 8% b) no, it prevents you from getting an education - 58% c) can be - 28% d) I don't know - 6% total-100%
13. At what age do you plan to get married (or are you already married)?	a) up to 20 years old - 1% b) 20-23 years old - 21.5% c) 24-26 years old - 55.5% d) 27 and older - 14.5% - 7.5% total-100%

Source: own elaboration

According to the results of the query, a large part of the requests - 96.5% had a negative attitude towards early marriage, and 3.5% of them had difficulty in answering this question. To the question, "Who do you think is the initiator of early marriages?" 76.5% of the respondents indicated their parents, 11% their relatives, 0.5% other family members, and only 12% saw themselves as the initiator of marriage, highlighting the dimension of the problem. Regarding preventive measures to prevent early marriages, 44% of the students said that in order to prevent early marriages, parents should be educated about this problem, 19% said that parents who force their children into early marriage should be punished, and 11.5% mentioned that the problem should be covered more by the mass media.

Better results are shown in the question "What should a person forced into early marriage (a girl or a boy) find a way as exit?". In this case, 68.5% of the students considered their appeal to the law enforcement agencies, and 31.5% considered their opposition to their parents and expressed their displeasure as the main way out. 38% of the students who answered the question considered early marriage as an obstacle to the future plans of young people, 12% as a result of early births as a result of this marriage, and as a result of this damage to the health of a woman who is not fully formed from a physiological point of view. When asked about the positive aspects of early marriage, 92% of the respondents stated that they did not see any positive aspects in this marriage. The outcomes of the study suggest that young people perceive early marriage as a problem for the family, which is one of the main institutions of society.

### Final remarks

Today, early marriages remain an actual problem for the family gene pool of Azerbaijan, and in order to prevent this problem, serious educational work should be carried out in all regions, cities and villages of Azerbaijan. But this education should be widely carried out not only among

students in schools, but also among parents. Because teenagers are still economically dependent on the family, they are provoked to this problem by family members and cannot fight. The school, the family, and the community should work together to solve this problem and involve well-known intellectuals, teachers, and religious figures of the region in this work, and provide parents (especially fathers) with extensive information about the medical-social-psychological-pedagogical consequences of early marriages. With this awareness, parents can realize what tragedies they are leading their children to.

Along with this, the effectiveness of the laws of the state operating in the field of marriage should also be instilled in parents, and parents who forced their daughters into early marriages by forcefully withdrawing them from education should be informed about the criminal and administrative liability provided for in the legislation. Whether in the Criminal Code, or in the Civil and Family Code, at the same time in the Law "On Education" adopted in Azerbaijan in 2009, the articles expressing special legal responsibility and preventing early marriages should be reflected. On the basis of these articles, the persons who forcefully instigate the marriage of teenagers and young girls under the age of marriage by distracting them from education, whether it is a parent or a religious figure performing the religious ceremony, should understand the essence of the crime they will commit and the responsibilities they will bear.

Then, based on our research the following are suggestions that can help in preventing the problem in early marriages:

- To develop an accurate statistical database containing the exact number of early marriages, distribution by age and gender by the State Statistics Committee. In addition, to clarify the statistics of religious marriages not registered by the state authorities. This way more informed actions can be taken.
- To strengthen awareness in the civil society about the consequences of early marriages and for this purpose to regularly use the mass media, religious institutions, and the activities of the school with families from the point of view of the problem.
- To educate about sex education in schools.
- To include certain information about early marriages and their harmful effects in school curricula or curricula.
- To scientifically inform students with information about the social equality of the sexes by using the possibilities of the gender aspect of the subjects taught at school.
- Improve the action plan for more serious punishment of parents and relatives who are directly involved in

this case (high fines, prosecution by law enforcement agencies, etc.).

## CONCLUSIONS

In Azerbaijan, while the incidence of forced early marriages is relatively low, it remains a significant concern, particularly for underage girls and, in some instances, boys. Often instigated by their parents or close relatives, these unions pose potential societal challenges. Notably, resistance from the victims, who are typically not of marriageable age, is rare, and awareness about the adverse consequences of such marriages is typically low. Gender stereotypes persist as a significant factor driving these marriages, constraining women's roles within the household. Moreover, the study's results are limited by the secretive nature of some families, leading to underreporting and thereby hindering a comprehensive understanding of the problem.

Early marriage represents a blatant violation of human rights, depriving young girls of education, health, and future opportunities. To address this issue, it is imperative to enhance parental education on the consequences of early marriages through collaborative efforts between schools and families. Additionally, rigorous monitoring of girls' education, facilitated by coordinated action among relevant authorities and schools, is crucial in preventing such situations. Regular trainings and conversations should be held about the place and role of early marriage in the causes of domestic violence, its impact on family relationships, and the health problems of children born from this marriage through education in schools and the public. We must not forget that the formation of future generations as healthy citizens and human beings directly depend on the health of mothers.

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