



Geliş Tarihi (Received): 19.07.2023

Kabul Tarihi (Accepted): 21.08.2023

Araştırma/Research Article

Investigating Attitudes Toward Early Marriage and the Prevalence of Domestic Violence among Women Married as Children and Adults

Erken ve Erişkin Yaşta Evlenen Kadınların Erken Yaşta Evliliğe Yönelik Tutumlarının ve Aile İçi Şiddet Yaşama Sıklıklarının Belirlenmesi

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Alıntı (Cite): Ağyel M, Türk Delibalta R. Investigating Attitudes Toward Early Marriage and the Prevalence of Domestic Violence among Women Married as Children and Adults. YBH dergisi. 2024;5(1): 1-19.

Abstract:

Aim: This study aims to investigate the perspectives of women who married during childhood and adulthood on early marriage and the prevalence of domestic violence among them.

Methods: This study adopted a descriptive and comparative research design. The study sample consisted of 210 women residing in the Kars province of Turkey. Data collection was carried out using a survey questionnaire, the Domestic Violence against Women Determination Scale, and the Attitudes Toward Girl Child Marriages Scale.

Results: The attitude scale scores of women who married at an adult age were notably lower than the average scores of women who married at a young age, with a statistically significant difference. In addition, a higher prevalence of domestic violence was observed among women who married at an early age in contrast to married who married later in life.

Conclusion: Women who enter into marriage at an early age tend to exhibit more favorable attitudes toward girl-child marriages when compared to women who marry as adults. In addition, women who married early were shown to experience more domestic violence

Key Words: Adolescent; adult; marriage age; domestic violence

Özet:

Amaç: Bu çalışma, erken ve erişkin yaşta evlenen kadınların erken yaşta evliliğe yönelik tutumlarının ve aile içi şiddet yaşama sıklıklarının belirlenmesi amacıyla yapılmıştır.

Yöntem: Araştırma, tanımlayıcı ve karşılaştırmalı olarak yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın örneklemini Kars ilinde yaşayan toplam 210 kadın oluşturmuştur. Araştırmada anket formu, kadına yönelik aile içi şiddeti belirleme ölçeği ve kız çocuk evliliklerine yönelik tutum ölçeği kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular: Bu çalışmada erişkin yaşta evlenen kadınların kız çocuk evliliklerine yönelik tutum ölçeği puan ortalaması erken yaşta evlenen kadınların puan ortalamasından düşük olduğu saptanmış ve aralarındaki farkın anlamlı olduğu belirlenmiştir. Erken yaşta evlenen kadınların erişkin yaşta evlenen kadınlara göre kadına yönelik aile içi şiddet düzeyleri daha yüksek bulunmuştur.

Sonuç: Erken yaşta evlenen kadınların, erişkin yaşta evlenen kadınlara göre kız çocuk evliliklerine yönelik tutumlarının daha olumlu olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bunun yanı sıra erken yaşta evlenen kadınların erişkin yaşta evlenen kadınlara göre daha fazla aile içi şiddete maruz kaldıkları tespit edilmiştir. Bu nedenle özellikle hemşireler kız çocukları ve ailelerini bilgilendirmeye yönelik eğitim ve uygulamalar düzenlemelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Adölesan; erişkin; evlilik yaşı; aile içi şiddet

Introduction

Worldwide, approximately 12 million girls are married before the age of 18 each year, and currently, an estimated 650 million women have experienced early marriage.¹ The prevalence of early marriage before the age of 18 is one in five girls worldwide. In the least developed countries, this figure is even more pronounced, with 40% of girls married before the age of 18, and 12% of them married before the age of 15.² In Turkey, according to 2018 data from the Turkish Demographic and Health Survey (TNSA), the proportion of women aged 20 to 24 who were married before turning 18 was found to be 15%.³

In early marriages, girls often face the challenge of being involved in male-female relationships before they have fully completed their biopsychosocial development and gained comprehensive knowledge about their bodies.^{4,5} This forces them into sexual partnerships against their will, exposing them to early pregnancy and motherhood at an early age.^{2,6} Women who marry early tend to have more pregnancies and births than women who marry later in life.⁷ Thus, girls who marry at a young age often face difficulties during childbirth, including preterm labor, etc., leading to risky pregnancies and postpartum complications.^{2,6} Unfortunately, these complications contribute significantly to mortality rates among married adolescent girls.² One study found that early marriage is associated with increased physical and sexual violence for women compared to those who marry as adults.⁸ Globally, women who marry before the age of 18 are 50% more likely to experience physical or sexual violence from their partners during their lifetime.⁹

The adverse consequences of child sexual abuse resonate throughout a young girl's entire life.¹⁰ One study documented that 14.6% of women subjected to early marriages endured physical abuse from their spouses, while 27.1% experienced psychological abuse.¹¹ Within the context of South Asia, research highlights the pivotal role of early marriage in exposing women to spousal violence. A study conducted in Bangladesh demonstrated that 78.9% of women who had experienced spousal violence had been married before reaching the age of 18.^{12,13}

Child marriage poses significant threats to the well-being, health, and prospects of girls.² Notably, the provinces with the highest prevalence of child marriage in Turkey are Kilis, with a rate of 15.3%, followed by Kars with 15.2%, Ağrı with 15.1%, Muş with 14.4%, and Bitlis with 12.7%.¹⁴ Given Kars' standing as the second-highest province in terms of early marriage rates (15.2%), this study seeks to investigate the attitudes of women who married early and those who married as adults towards early marriage, as well as the prevalence of domestic

violence.

Research Questions

1. Is there a difference in the attitudes of women who married at an early age compared to those who married as adults regarding girl-child marriages?
2. Are there observable variations in the occurrence of domestic violence between women who married early and those who married as adults?

Methods

Research Design and Sample

This study adopted a descriptive and comparative research design. Conducted between December 6th, 2018, and July 25th, 2019, the study is focused on Kars, a province with the second-highest prevalence of early marriages in Turkey.¹⁴ According to the 2016 data of the Turkish Statistical Institute, among the total female residents of Kars province, the study population consisted of 2117 women, of which 321 were married at an early age, while 1796 were married at an adult age.¹⁴ To determine the appropriate sample size for the study, a power analysis utilizing the G*Power software was performed, resulting in a power ratio of 95.0%. Consequently, the study sample consisted of 210 women, wherein 105 were married at an early age, and the remaining 105 were married as adults.

Data Collection Tools

Introductory Information Form

The first section of the questionnaire aimed to collect socio-demographic information about the participants, followed by the second section focusing on their obstetric characteristics. The third section centered on assessing the women's attitudes toward early marriage, while the fourth section aimed to assess the frequency of domestic violence experienced by these women.^{8,15,16}

Domestic Violence against Women Determination Scale

Comprising 87 items, the Domestic Violence against Women Determination Scale was

developed by Yanikkerem and Saruhan in 2005 to identify the frequency and severity of domestic violence encountered by women. The 5-point Likert-type scale prompts participants to indicate the frequency of engagement in behaviors linked to violence. Items are graded on a scale of 1 to 5 (1: never, 2: rarely, 3: occasionally, 4: frequently, 5: always), and the scores that can be taken on the scale are in the range of 87 to 435 points. The derived scores are categorized into five groups: 0-87 (very low), 87-174 (low), 174-261 (moderate), 261-348 (high), and 348-435 (very high). During the original development of the scale, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated as 0.98. In our study, however, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was determined to be 0.97.¹⁷

Attitudes Toward Girl Child Marriages Scale

Developed by Bağdat Deniz Kaynak (2016) and adapted into Turkish by Sakallı-Uğurlu (2002), the Attitudes Toward Girl Child Marriage Scale is composed of 12 items, and evaluates participants' agreement level with each statement, utilizing a 6-point Likert scale (1: Strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: somewhat disagree, 4: somewhat agree, 5: agree, 6: strongly agree).^{18,19} Notably, the 1st, 3rd, 6th, and 12th items are reverse coded. The scale's minimum score is 12, while its highest possible score is 72. The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale is 0.91. Although the scale lacks a defined cutoff point, a higher score corresponds to a more favorable attitude toward early marriages. In the present study, the calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.91.^{18,19}

Data Collection

Participating women were visited at their residences during the hours of 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, wherein the purpose of the research was explained and informed written consent was obtained from those who agreed to participate in the research. Subsequently, the introductory information form, Domestic Violence against Women Determination Scale (DVAWDS), and the Attitudes Toward Girl Child Marriages Scale (ATGCMS) were administered for completion. On average, each participant dedicated approximately 50 minutes to the completion of the data collection instruments, encompassing an average of four household visits per day. The data collection phase was conducted between December 6th, 2018, and July 25th, 2019.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis of the study data was performed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0. The suitability of the data for normal distribution was tested via the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Descriptive statistics including percentages, numbers, means, standard deviations, medians, minimums, and maximums were used. Mann Whitney U, Kruskal Wallis, Dunnet's T3 post hoc test, Pearson's correlation analysis, and Durbin Watson's linear regression analysis were employed. $P < 0.05$ was considered to denote statistical significance.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Ethics Committee for Non-Interventional Research at the Faculty of Health Sciences (no.81829502.903/09, date: October 26th, 2018). Further permission was obtained from the Kars Governorate and the developers of the measurement tools employed in the study. After informing the participants about the research objectives, written consent was obtained from those willing to take part in the research.

Results

Within the scope of the present study, the average marriage age of the women who entered marriage at an adult age was $\bar{X} \pm S.D = 24.79 \pm 3.51$. Conversely, women who married at a young age (≤ 18 years) had an average marriage age of $\bar{X} \pm S.D = 16.31 \pm 0.78$.

The mean score on the Domestic Violence against Women Determination Scale for women who married as adults was $\bar{X} \pm S.D = 161.55 \pm 47.02$ (87-174 points=low), whereas women who married at a young age recorded an average scale score of $\bar{X} \pm S.D = 214.22 \pm 58.95$ (174-261 points=moderate). The difference between them was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Furthermore, the attitude scale scores of the women who married at an adult age were notably higher than the average scores of the women who married at a young age. This difference was also statistically significant ($p < 0.05$, Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of mean scores of women on the Domestic Violence Against Women Determination Scale and the Attitudes Toward Girl Child Marriage Scale.

Scales	Adult Age (n=105)	Early Age (n=105)	Test and p value
	Mean±S.D	Mean±S.D	
DVAWDS	161.55±47.02	214.22±58.95	t=7.16 p=0.00
ATGCMS	22.76±9.99	30.57±13.92	t=4.67 p=0.00

*Domestic Violence against Women Determination Scale (DVAWDS), Attitudes Toward Girl Child Marriages Scale (ATGCMS)

The findings indicated that women who married at a young age encountered a higher prevalence of domestic violence compared to those who married as adults. This disparity was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$, Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of women's experienced levels of violence according to the Domestic Violence against Women Determination Scale

Level of Experience of Domestic Violence	Adult Marriages		Early Marriages		Test p
	n	%	n	%	
Low	86	81.9	22	21.0	$\chi^2=81.028$ p=0.00
Medium	13	12.4	66	62.8	
High	6	5.7	17	16.2	

Regarding the total mean scores of the Domestic Violence Against Women Determination Scale and the Attitudes Toward Girl-Child Marriage Scale based on the age and marital status of women who married either as adults or at a young age, no significant differences were observed ($p > 0.05$). The mean scores of the Domestic Violence against Women Determination Scale were 222.97 ± 61.21 and 218.85 ± 64.50 for women who had arranged marriages at a young and adult age, respectively, and the difference between them was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of mean scores of women on the Domestic Violence against Women Determination Scale and Attitudes

Toward Girl Child Marriages Scale in terms of their Socio-Demographic Characteristics.

		Married as Adults		Married as Children		Comparison of the Scores of the Scale	
		DVAW DS	ATGC MS	DVAWDS	ATGCM S	DVA WDS	ATGCMS
		Mean±S.D	Mean±S.D	Mean±S.D	Mean±S.D		
Age	29 and □	168.23±60.04	22.36±10.09	212.36±59.46	33.02±14.56	F=.48 p=.62	F=1.49 p=.23
	30-39	152.41±26.29	22.71±10.62	211.85±62.06	30.29±14.46		
	40 and □	162.19±42.63	23.48±9.32	220.22±55.80	26.93±11.62		
	Test	KW=.18 p=.19	KW=1.17 p=.56	KW=1.13 p=.57	KW=3.22 p=.2		
Marital Status	Married	158.57±43.69	22.36±9.98	205.38±53.161	32.24±14.96	F=1.21 p=.3	F=2.37 p=.01
	Divorced	240.67±91.47	29.00±14.73	238.19±67.507	27.14±11.35		
	Widow	172.00±49.32	26.80±6.53	229.30±69.782	25.40±7.57		
	Test	KW=4.81 p=.090	KW=3.72 p=.16	KW=2.96 p=.227	KW=2.83 p=.24		
Form of Marriage	Non-Nuptial Marriage	223.38±81.73	30.75±11.83	234.16±66.44	27.88±12.41	F=3.1 p=.80	F=6.05 p=.01
	Official Marriage	156.45±39.53	22.10±9.60	205.48±53.52	31.75±14.45		
	Test	U=170.50 p=.01	U=208.00 p=.03	t=2.34 p=.02	t=1.32 p=.19		
Marriage Style	Arranged Marriage	218.85±64.50	25.92±9.734	222.97±61.207	29.26±13.634	F=3.98 p=.047	F=3.239 p=.073
	Companionate marriage	153.46±37.98	22.32±9.999	194.25±48.630	33.56±14.319		
	Test	U=153.00 p=.00	U=439.500 p=.12	t=2.35 p=.02	t=1.47 p=.14		
Educational Status	Primary	237.40±73.64	28.00±7.42	240.38±63.65	29.86±12.39	F=.75 p=.52	F=2.73 p=.04

	Secondary	209.40± 85.37	38.60±2 0.03	203.69±56. 15	28.79±14. 21		
	High	161.79± 44.01	24.63±8 .11	191.44±42. 63	33.28±15. 74		
	University	152.76± 35.62	20.65±8 .66	182.00±7.0 7	28.00±12. 73		
	Test	KW=12. 55 p=.01	KW=1 3.40 p=.01	KW=14.28 p=.02	KW=1.42 p=.70		
	Difference	1-2>3-4	2>3-4	1>2-3	-		
Employment Status	Yes	149.84± 21.78	21.93±8 .69	186.42±39. 75	33.08±18. 14	F=1.4 2 p=.23	F=3.22 p=.07
	No	205.73± 80.67	25.91±1 3.66	222.46±61. 34	29.83±12. 44		
	Test	U=531.5 0 p=.00	U=778. 50 p=.29	U=592.00 p=.00	U=931.00 p=.75		
Spouse's Educational Status	Primary	259.67± 77.37	33.67±1 3.61	253.93±67. 02	26.14±7.8 1	F=1.3 7 p=.25	F=1.36 p=.25
	Secondary	215.00± 81.64	31.33±7 .12	216.17±61. 60	31.09±16. 51		
	High	151.50± 27.48	26.75±1 3.25	194.27±41. 58	33.40±15. 37		
	University	156.11± 39.99	20.61±8 .13	181.00±32. 98	26.67±8.7 1		
	Test	KW=11. 08 p=.01	KW=1 5.57 p=.00	KW=15.74 p=.00	KW=3.53 p=.32		
	Difference	1-2>3-4	1-2-3>4	1>2-3-4	-		
Spouse's Employment Status	Yes	159.64± 46.20	22.36±1 0.20	205.36±53. 28	31.51±14. 58	F=3.5 9 p=.06	F=3.42 p=.07
	No	171.78± 49.95	26.33±7 .33	260.06±66. 99	25.71±8.5 4		
	Test	U=368.5 0 p=.49	U=255. 00 p=.04	U=431.50 p=.01	U=601.50 p=.20		
Social Security	Yes	160.15± 45.89	22.73±9 .93	209.24±56. 13	30.97±14. 30	F=.15 p=.70	F=.44 p=.51
	No	234.00± 66.47	24.50±1 7.682	267.33±65. 47	26.33±8.3 2		
	Test	U=16.50 p=.042	U=98.5 0 p=.91	U=226.50 p=.02	U=373.50 p=.50		
Family Type	Nuclear	156.67± 41.30	22.05±9 .75	211.43±63. 04	30.53±14. 04	F=2.0 3 p=.13	F=.44 p=.51
	Extended	170.37±	24.89±1	210.56±50.	33.18±14.		

		53.25	0.27	21	76		
	Separated	240.67± 91.47	29.00±1 4.73	229.33±62. 59	25.78±11. 04		
	Test	KW=6.04 p=.049	KW=3. 04 p=.22	KW=1.21 p=.55	KW=4.39 p=.11		
	Difference	3>1-2	-	-	-		
Family Type Before Marriage	Nuclear	157.82± 46.47	22.08±8 .76	219.74±59. 59	29.15±14. 05	F=3.57 p=.03	F=.44 p=.51
	Extended	170.72± 49.03	24.91±1 2.20	207.72±56. 61	31.59±13. 94		
	Separated	147.50± 10.61	12.50±. 71	337.00±0.0 0	37.00±0.0 0		
	Test	KW=3.7 5 p=.15	KW=4. 93 p=.08	KW=2.97 p=.23	KW=2.46 p=.29		
Mother's Educational Status	Illiterate	165.71± 41.12	27.05±1 3.41	217.94±57. 47	30.26±13. 42	F=.72 p=.54	F=1.06 p=.37
	Primary	164.77± 54.34	21.40±8 .88	220.87±63. 85	30.49±14. 01		
	Secondary	149.63± 20.49	22.75±8 .61	171.44±29. 64	30.78±16. 92		
	High	189.00± 42.04	36.67±1 9.35	168.50±31. 82	42.50±23. 34		
	Test	KW=7.1 5 p=.07	KW=.8 7 p=.83	KW=8.25 p=.08	KW=1.42 p=.84		
Mother's Employment Status	Yes	155.00± 14.11	19.00±4 .34	283.50±75. 66	31.00±8.4 85	F=3.2 8 p=.07	F=.44 p=.51
	No	162.28± 48.73	23.15±1 0.24	211.65±57. 17	30.51±14. 09		
	Test	U=231.5 0 p=.40	U=242. 50 p=.49	U=38.00 p=.13	U=83.00 p=.65		
Father's Educational Status	Illiterate	188.64± 45.54	25.09±7 .76	219.92±52. 99	28.61±12. 20	F=.66 p=.57	F=.60 p=.61
	Primary	165.00± 60.18	22.72±1 1.56	225.13±70. 86	31.03±14. 69		
	Secondary	156.54± 28.93	22.13±1 0.82	199.39±51. 18	32.96±17. 23		
	High	150.57± 29.565	23.29±9 .361	189.15±42. 002	30.54±11. 174		
	University	179.33± 93.429	18.17±5 .636	-	-		
	Test	KW=9.3 7	KW=4. 79	KW=5.60 p=.11	KW=.54 p=.91		

		p=.05	p=.31				
Father's Employment Status	Yes	165.42±52.43	23.67±10.71	201.76±51.09	32.29±15.18	F=5.20 p=.02	F=.21 p=.65
	No, It Isn't	155.61±36.02	21.47±8.52	225.67±62.94	28.53±12.35		
	Test	t=1.02 p=.31	t=1.08 p=.28	t=2.14 p=.03	t=1.37 p=.172		
Number of Children	Three or less	155.40±42.27	22.156±7.87	202.53±65.02	31.74±14.88	F=1.73 p=.12	F=1.97 p=.06
	Four or more	166.17±50.14	23.217±11.37	216.80±57.61	30.31±13.78		
	Test	t=1.16 p=.25	t=.53 p=.59	t=.95 p=.34	t=.40 p=.69		
Birth order in the family	First	153.06±43.27	20.50±7.57	229.78±65.38	32.00±13.16	F=.79 p=.55	F=1.42 p=.29
	Second	163.59±44.38	20.17±6.51	197.97±50.77	31.11±14.93		
	Third	165.72±47.10	25.20±13.10	219.03±62.27	30.23±13.08		
	Fourth or □	167.26±57.73	27.32±11.54	225.48±60.55	29.71±14.95		
	Test	KW=2.74 p=.43	KW=8.022 p=.046	KW=4.27 p=.23	KW=.62 p=.89		
	Difference	-	4>1-2	-	-		

Domestic Violence against Women Determination Scale (DVAWDS), Attitudes Toward Girl Child Marriages Scale (ATGCMS)

Concerning the total mean scores of the Attitudes Toward Girl-Child Marriage Scale based on the type of marriage (adult >18 years old) and early married (≤ 18 years old), no statistically significant differences were found ($p > 0.05$). Additionally, for women who married at a young age without an official marriage, the mean score on the Domestic Violence against Women Determination Scale was 234.16 ± 66.44 , marking an increased score from 205.48 ± 53.52 points compared to women who had an official marriage. This difference demonstrated statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3).

Based on the education of the women who entered marriage at both adult and early ages, the scores obtained from the Domestic Violence against Women Determination Scale indicated that the difference between the mean total scores was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). In terms of the Attitudes Toward Girl Child Marriages Scale, women who married as adults and had completed secondary education exhibited an equivalent mean score compared to women

with other educational backgrounds (primary, high school, and university graduates). However, the mean scores were found to be higher, and this difference was statistically significant ($p<0.05$). Additionally, concerning the Domestic Violence against Women Determination Scale, the mean scores for women who married as adults and belonged to either nuclear or split family structures before marriage were comparatively lower than those who married at an early age within the same family types. This difference was also statistically significant ($p<0.05$) (Table 3).

Discussion

This study aims to investigate the perspectives of women who married during childhood and adulthood on early marriage and the prevalence of domestic violence among them. Childhood marriage is defined as entering a formal or informal marriage before attaining the age of 18. Child marriages constitute a violation of human rights.²⁰ The present study revealed that women who married early exhibited more favorable attitudes toward child-girl marriages compared to those women who married as adults (Table 1). While various studies have documented negative attitudes toward child marriage,^{16,21,22} some researchers have reported that attitudes among early-married women tend to be positive.²³ This phenomenon could be attributed to the learned desperation often associated with girls who marry at an early age.

Existing literature indicates an association between child marriage and an elevated risk of spousal violence as well as other forms of violence.²⁴ Our findings demonstrated that 5.8% of women married as adults, and 16.2% of those married during childhood experienced significant levels of violence (Table 2). The study by Güneş et al. (2016) revealed that women who married at an early age were exposed to more physical, psychological, and sexual violence than women who married as adults.⁸ Marriage during adolescence or childhood was linked to a higher occurrence of physical violence.²⁵

The research revealed that women who married at an early stage of life and who were compelled into marriage (often due to family or kin requests and financial constraints) were particularly susceptible to domestic violence, especially physical violence.²¹ Notably, the present study identified that women married as children and adults both who underwent religious marriages reported higher mean scores on the Domestic Violence Determination Scale when compared to women with official marriages ($p<0.05$, Table 3). This discrepancy might stem from the lack of official rights afforded to women in religiously solemnized marriages. In addition, this study unveiled that the average Domestic Violence Determination Scale score for women who had arranged marriages during their youth was higher than that of

women who had arranged marriages at a later stage. This finding implies that women entering marriage at an early age are at a greater risk of experiencing violence ($p < 0.05$, Table 3). Studies have also suggested that arranged marriages are associated with heightened domestic violence compared to marriages based on mutual consent.^{26,27} This suggests that early arranged marriages tend to exhibit a higher prevalence of domestic violence.

The likelihood of encountering domestic violence tends to increase as a woman's level of education decreases.²⁸ Early marriage is more prevalent in rural areas and among women with limited education.^{29,30} The present study revealed a significant correlation between early marriage and primary school education, demonstrating that women who married early and had primary school education experienced notably higher levels of domestic violence compared to their counterparts with varying levels of education ($p < 0.05$, Table 1). An extensive investigation further confirmed that women who did not complete primary school were twice as susceptible to domestic violence than those with a university degree. Previous research has consistently reported a negative correlation between experiences of domestic violence and lower educational status among women.^{15,23,28,31,32} In terms of the Attitudes Toward Girl Child Marriages Scale, women who married as adults and had completed secondary education exhibited a higher mean score compared to women with other educational statuses (primary, high school, and university graduates), and this difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Interestingly, a study examining women's attitudes toward girl-child marriage discovered that a significant majority of women with limited educational backgrounds had negative attitudes toward girl-child marriages.²¹ Conversely, another study focusing on attitudes toward girl-child marriage reported that educational status did not appear to significantly impact attitudes toward early marriage.²²

Child marriage is closely associated with an elevated risk of spousal abuse and various forms of violence.²⁴ Another study reported that women who married at 16 or younger faced a higher vulnerability to spousal violence compared to those married at 17 or older.³⁴ A nationwide study conducted in Turkey revealed that women aged 15-24, representing the youngest age group, were nearly three times more likely to experience physical and/or sexual violence than women aged 45-59.³³ In this study, women who married as children were found to experience more domestic violence than women who married as adults.

The study revealed that women who entered into early marriages were doubly susceptible to physical violence and triply vulnerable to sexual violence compared to those who married later in life.³⁵ Güneş et al.'s (2016) research similarly reported that women marrying early

endured higher levels of physical, psychological, and sexual violence compared to women marrying at an older age.⁸ Marriages during adolescence or childhood were associated with an increased incidence of physical violence.²⁵

Furthermore, the combination of early marriage and motherhood tends to exert an adverse influence on employment for these young women.³⁶ The research found that women who married early and were not engaged in employment faced significantly higher levels of domestic violence in comparison to those who were married early and had employment ($p < 0.05$, Table 3). Likewise, literature suggests that women subject to violence are less likely to hold income-generating positions.³⁷⁻³⁹

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of our study underscore the multifaceted challenges encountered by women who enter marriage during childhood, encompassing obstacles related to education, employment, and socioeconomic status, and the findings also underscore an increased likelihood of domestic violence for these women. These subsequently hinder children's entitlements to education, health, and safety. These exert a negative impact not only on the young girls themselves but also on their families and the broader community. Consequently, healthcare professionals, particularly nurses, and midwives, should initiate training initiatives and practical interventions aimed at disseminating information to girls, their families, and the community, enlightening them about the potential health-related complications entailed by such early marriages.

Limitations

This research was conducted exclusively among women who had experienced early and adult marriages within the province of Kars. As such, the generalizability of the findings is restricted to the specific context of Kars province.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Contribution of Author

Conceptualization and design, data analysis: RTD, MA; Investigation, Data collection,

Writing: MA; Methodology, Visualization, Writing- Reviewing and Editing: RTD

Acknowledgments

We thank all the participants for their support by participating in our study.

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