

**CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE
LOSS OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION
AMONG CHILD MARRIAGE VICTIMS: A
CASE STUDY IN CENTRAL LOMBOK**

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Master's Study Program of Education at the Faculty
of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of**

Master of Arts (M.A.)



by:

Suliyana

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UNIVERSITAS ISLAM INTERNASIONAL INDONESIA

DEPOK

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ABSTRACT

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Indonesia is one of many nations with a notable incidence of child marriages. West Nusa Tenggara province, particularly Central Lombok, exhibits the most prevalent child marriage victims. Child marriage in this region is propelled by economic factors, social dynamics, and the strong cultural traditions of the local community known as *Merarik*. The practice significantly undermines children's rights to education, which is the most basic human right. This study aims to (1) explore the local communities' perceptions of educational rights for child marriage victims; (2) examine determinant factors that prevent child marriage victims from receiving their rights to education; (3) investigate national, local, and educational institutions' regulation that protects educational rights of child marriage victims; (4) analyze the effect of child marriage on children's educational and personal development in Central Lombok. This study uses a qualitative research approach to provide relevant information for the study's aims. The data were obtained through semi-structured and deep interviews. Subjects of the study involve parents, the victims of child marriage who cannot continue their education due to underage marriage, schools which have students marry during school age, and village governments, in which the local community often practice child marriage. These subjects all originated from Central Lombok villages, comprising 22 participants. This study finds that: (1) Most of the local community in Central Lombok perceives child marriage as a normal and culturally accepted the practice. Local community tend to neglect the educational rights of the victims of child marriage. Social stigma, discrimination, and a conservative mindset foster the belief that once married, children, especially girls should no longer continue their education, prioritizing marital and domestic tasks; (2) The factors which prevent child marriage victims from obtaining the educational rights are: first, discrimination against children who wished to return to school due to their marital status; second, putting community's interest over the children; third, lack of support from the closest family; fourth, silencing the voices of the children; (3) Early marriages lead to a loss of educational rights for children. Despite there are clear regulations at the national and international levels, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Indonesia's national child protection laws, local authorities tend to focus on the prevention of child marriage rather than educational intervention to help victims to regain their educational rights. Schools also hesitate to accept married students for fear that married students will be bullied at school and fear of being perceived supporting child marriage. (4) Child marriage effects on children's educational and personal development are that child marriage restricts children's educational access and intellectual growth, causes mental pressure, obstructs children from accessing better employment opportunities, inhibits financial autonomy and reduces women independence. In accordance to the findings above, it is crucial to involve customary, religious and women's stakeholders as catalysts to change the mindset of the local community not to accept child marriage as a normal practise. Village governments are expected to be proactive in elaborating national regulations to be implemented at the local level and not only focusing on the prevention of child marriage but also collaborating with schools and NGOs to support and facilitate child marriage victims to access educational opportunities without discrimination.

Keywords: *Central Lombok, Child Marriage, Rights of Education*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A Child marriage is legitimate or unofficial partnership involving a young person under a minimum of Eighteen and an adult or a different young person (Unicef, 2023). Practice of child marriage refers a complex phenomenon which is becoming a national and global concern (Juariyah et al., 2024). This practice is harmful because it is a critical assault for human rights due to its consequences cause premature conception, social loneliness, distracts education, and puts at risk to the children's development by placing them to adult tasks for which they are unprepared (Boran, 2013, Tolerans, 2020 cited in Ortaççı, 2023). Consequently, in considering these facts, individuals who are subjected to child marriage can be categorized as victims, as they are dealing with conditions which severely limit their rights and potential for growth. In Indonesian context, this phenomenon happens in 34 provinces with various prevalence (Central Statistical Agency, 2023). To consider this, the authorities implemented several steps to mitigate and counter this harmful practice. Ministry of National Development Planning was launching the five national strategies as the key step for reducing practice of child marriage. The strategies are optimizing children's involvement, supporting a safe environment, improving service and accessibility, strengthening regulation and institutions, and strengthening stakeholder coordination (Central Statistical Agency, 2023). Regardless of these initiatives, marriage among children is prevalent in Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, resulting in a severe loss of educational opportunities for the victims. Existing legal protections and government actions have been insufficient to ensure continued education for children who marry at an early age. Financial difficulties, societal stigma, as well as a lack of institutional support force many child marriage victims to drop out of school, exacerbating regional educational disparities. Several studies have shown that various factors, such as economic barriers, social norms, and cultures, contribute to child marriage practices. These practices have significantly affected children leading to the loss of access to and opportunities for the victims. The importance of quality and inclusive education for individual growth and development is mentioned in SDG 4, but this ambition cannot be achieved by children who marry early. The objectives of this study aim to figure out the primary variables contribute to the loss of access to education for the youth who identified as child marriage victims in Central Lombok. Additionally, this research intends to provide insightful information for developing effective policies to give all children access to education regardless of their marital status.

1.1 Background of the Study

Elopement is a pretty well-known culture in Lombok; it is called *Merarik*. *Merarik* is the act of taking the girl without her parent's permission with the intention of marriage before the whole process of marriage is carried out. Initially, this culture meant in preserving women from the crimes performed by King Anak Agung Made Karangasem (Fitrianita et al., 2019) when a war between Bali and Lombok happened in 1891 (Dwinanto, 2001). Most of the Lombok people, or the Sasak tribe, seem to maintain this culture until this day, but unfortunately, this culture has many disadvantages. For instance, this tradition violates women's rights, creates conflict between two parties of families, and increases child marriage (Aniq, 2019; Fitrianita et al., 2019). The practice of marrying off the children is one of the disadvantages of the *Merarik* tradition, which will become the focus of this thesis. According to the Religious Court (2024), child marriage is a highly complex problem. This issue is like an iceberg phenomenon that is visible only on the surface, but there is a bigger problem invisible at the bottom. The child marriage issue appears to be decreasing; in fact, there are many unreported practices carried out which cannot be recorded by the government.

Depending on this comprehension, it is necessary to highlight that the tradition of *Merarik* stands as one of the primary causes of child marriage in Lombok. This practice not only defends young partnerships, but also has a number of disadvantages, such as the decline of children's overall well-being, disruption of economic stability, and increased health risks such as premature birth, sexually transmitted infections, and elevated maternal and infant mortality rates (Nour, 2009; Mahato, 2016; National Socio-Economic Survey, 2016; UNICEF, 2020). Recognizing these major disadvantages, it is critical to analyse the concept of children and explore the legal frameworks that should protect them due to the impact of child marriage. Children Protection law Number 23 (2002) defines children as any person bellow eighteen of age, including the infants. Meanwhile, Unicef Indonesia (2018) defines children as individuals who do not reach eighteen years, except the relevant legislation stipulates an earlier age of majority, and all of them possess the rights to develop nutritiously, receive an education, be secured, have their voices acknowledged, and be treated equitably. This means children at this age are in the stage of developing physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially. They need guidance and a safe environment that can protect their present and future lives, in which marriage in this age will harm the phase of life mentioned.

Understanding the concept of children and their development needs highlights the potential dangers of marriage in child age. Moreover, define child marriage is cruciality to

analyze how child marriage is defined legally and traditionally, as well as the existing rules that protect children's rights and promote education for them. According to the Central Statistics Agency and Unicef Indonesia (2017), child marriage is a practice of marriage governed by administrative, founded in faith, or traditional customs, occurring with or without formal registration or consent in which one or both partners are individual under eighteen years old. Paul (2019) stated that child marriage is when children who marry before 18, particularly girls, are not limited to a specific tradition and are considered a global risk category. Law and Human Rights Ministry of Indonesia (2007) declared that if the candidate for bridal or bridegroom younger than twenty-one years old, she or he should acquire written consent from the parents to get married. Republic of Indonesia in Section 1 of 1974, Article 6 Point 2 established rules of marriage that stated every individual who is not 21 years old must have parents' agreement to marry (Department of Religious Affairs of Republic of Indonesia., 1996, 1997). Meaning that children have compulsory to complete their school at least until secondary school. As articulated in the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and Education Number 19 (2016) in article 2 point 1, the government supports a 12-year compulsory education program by providing the Smart Indonesia Program to 6-year-old- to 21-year-old students. Child marriage has detrimental effects, including significant gender inequality, as girls frequently serve as domestic help to their mothers-in-law, are separated from their parents, are limited to social interactions with peers, and have difficulties of access to formal education (Boran & Gökçay, 2013, cited in Cantekin, 2019).

Regarding difficulties in accessing education for child marriage victims, it reminds me of a case in 2017 when one of my eleventh-grade students married for a month. She divorced and hoped that she could be a student at the same school where she was, but the principal of the school rejected her request to regain her education regarding her status as a widow. The school principal worried that receiving students with the status of a widow would jeopardize the school's reputation. My student lost her education rights because of this discrimination. They forgot that she is still a child whose rights must be protected and supported regardless of race, religion, gender, and marital status.

Rejecting children to access education is against the Education National Law in the year 2003, in Article 1 point 5, which states that all education personnel are community members who dedicated themselves to supporting the implementation of education (National Education Law, 2003). Furthermore, article 11, point 1 of the law retrieved that the government and sub-government are responsible for giving service and easy access and guaranteeing quality education for the nation without discrimination (National Education

Law, 2003). Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) point 2 confirmed the regulation that stated liberty of the children must be honored and legally established without discrimination (Unicef for Every Child, n.d.).

According to the discussion above, understanding definitions of child and child marriage denote that marriage is forbidden for anyone under the minimum age limit set by the rules. Therefore, children must be protected to guarantee their rights as children. Children are not objects of their parents' ownership or vulnerable things, but they are human beings with their rights (Unicef Indonesia, 2023). The best needs of the child should always be considered. They are free to participate and express their opinions, have the rights to be nurtured and become responsible citizens, and should have the rights to a complete and comprehensive education without prejudice based on citizenship, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. (UNESCO, 1995). Every child has rights to education, with primary and secondary education free and accessible, encouraging them to get as high as possible; schools must respect their rights and promote high-quality education (Unicef Indonesia, 2018). The constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, 1945, also asserts the educational rights of children. Article 31 mentions that everybody has the right to education, and the government is required to subsidize it.

In addition, child marriage is classified as a 'harmful customary behaviour' as it despoils children to their childhood, education and security (Situmeang et al., 2023). In line with this, Unicef Bangladesh, (2017) argued that child marriage goes against the children's essential freedom, harms their options and chances, and risks them to exploitation, physical harm, and manipulation which in turn increases school dropout rates. This impact was also found in a study by Stimfle & David's (2016) which showed that child marriage reduced girls' completion rate in secondary school by 14 percent. In addition, to affecting education, child marriage also has widespread impacts on social welfare and health. Burgess et al. (2022), which analyzed data from 12 countries, found that child marriage contributes to depression, mental illness, domestic violence, poverty, childbirth difficulties, and social isolation.

The information above tells how dangerous the child marriage practice is. However, there are some reasons why child marriage is still becoming an issue around the world. In South Asia, rural residency, low education level, poor economic status, inadequate availability for the media, and religion were all consistent aspects driving youth to marry earlier (Subramanee et al., 2022). Research in Afghanistan by Delju (2024) found that factors contributing to child marriage are safety concerns, norms and traditions, economic barriers, low levels of parents' education, and education banned for women. In the

Indonesia context, factors causing child marriages are economic pressure, culture, lack of health information, lack of parents' and children's education, social protection, and labour (Central Statistical Agency et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the inconsistency of regulation regarding dispensation is also one factor in the child marriage phenomenon in Indonesia (Nuraeni & Songgirin, 2024). The ambiguity potential of child marriage civil law is found in Regulation number 16, 2019, particularly in Articles 7, point 1 and 6 point 2. Article 7-point 1 states marriage is legal if male and female attain 19 (nineteen) years of age. Meanwhile, in Article 6, point 2, the regulation about dispensation or permitting the candidate of bride/groom has no specific instructions for persons who want to marry below the legal age. A similar thing was also found in a study conducted in Malaysia by Makhtar and Ab Kadir (2019) presented that the constitutional basis for marriage in Malaysia is ambiguous, with varying minimum age standard between Islamic and civil law. Islamic law mandates that the earliest permitted eligibility for married is 18 for males and 16 for females, while civil law states that boys under 18 are not allowed to marry, but females under 18 need the Chief Minister's permission to marry. The regulations do not apply to females under 16 years of age. The inconsistent law enforcement allows people to choose organizations that make it easier to get permission to conduct child marriage. Besides the similarity of inconsistency of law, child marriage effects in Malaysia are also similar to what happened in Indonesia. It significantly limits children's education access and damages their socioeconomics. Moreover, in the Lombok context, the average factors leading to child marriage are religion, culture, and economic pressure (Hidayana et al., 2016; Herliana et al., 2018; Colquhoun, 2020; Aulia et al., 2023).

Besides, aligning to Sustainable Development Goals agenda, child marriage is a detrimental condition encountered by 650 million women and 155 million men in the world (Siddiqi & Greene, 2022; UNICEF, 2019). Indonesia, in 2018, reported that 1,220,900 Females aged 20 to 24 were married under the age of eighteen, placing Indonesia as the ninth nation with the greatest number of child marriages worldwide and the second highest in ASEAN (Central Statistical Agency et al., 2020). Meanwhile, West Nusa Tenggara province, notably Central Lombok, represents 19.32% of female marry under 18 (NTB Statistics Agency, 2020). These data indicate child marriage is still a big issue in Indonesia. Central Statistical Agency (2023) stated that in 2022, Indonesia targeted to decrease child marriage in whole provinces by 8.06 %, reaching 8.74%. Unfortunately, when many provinces generally decreased, West Nusa Tenggara increased.

In West Nusa Tenggara, particularly in the Lombok region, child marriages occur due to various factors. For example, in North Lombok, ethnographic and demographic data of adolescent mothers confirmed that early marriage and adolescent motherhood are potentially happen when girls own insufficient level of schooling, shortage of job opportunities, poverty, and low socioeconomic status (Bennett, 2013). Another study by Adrian et al. (2024) in East Lombok, particularly in the Sakra subdistrict, found unique considerations of child marriage factors. There is a term “Betungkem Jarang-jarang,” which means not many people genuinely care about child marriage. They let child marriage happen as it is because it has been a long-standing custom in Lombok. This sort of thing leads to the local government having a lack of power to restrict child marriage. Avoiding child marriage necessitates enhancing regulatory and legal systems to ensure greater understanding and improved implementation of existing rules (McCleary-Sills et al., 2015). A fragile country's characteristics are a lack of control regarding responsibility to set laws and enforcement (Save the Children, 2024).

Furthermore, when child marriage is seen from an educational perspective, it creates long-term negative impacts, such as significant barriers to educational access. Child marriage is the most prominent contributor to the school dropout rate. According to the Statistics Agency, 94.74% of children who marry early leave schools, and only 5.28% continue their schools (Yunelia, 2018). On the other hand, A child marriage disproportionately impacts females compared to males. Females are often expected to do various household work after getting married. A study in Nepal conducted by Mahato (2016) stated that the majority of adolescent females discontinue their education and fail to complete primary school, they have an overloaded workload, domestic violence by their mother-in-law, and early pregnancy, which makes infant and maternal mortality worse. The findings of some of the research above reflected those girls bear moral, social, and health burdens at a very young age without enough readiness to bear them. In contrast, the boys are pressured to marry according to financial independence and ability to support the family (Edmeades et al., 2022). This means that boys have less anxiety than girls regarding psychological and emotional burdens after marriage.

Seen the effects of child marriage, it leads the exploitation and violence against women (Amelia, 2022). Child marriage increases underage divorce and adverse reproductive health for female adolescents (Akrom et al., 2022). In addition, marriage is a barrier to achieving and denying children the chance to experience youth life (Suriah et al., 2022). This, however, can be reduced by providing and supporting child marriage victims

to gain their education regardless of their marital status because education is one of the tools to achieve justice and prosperity in life.

Moreover, in promoting equitable chances for men and women, education is a key factor, as it encourages people to confront unfair gender customs, which are often unspoken laws of behavior (Marcus, 2018). However, many challenges are faced by child marriage victims, especially adolescent females. It is difficult for them keep continuing education after marriage. A study conducted in Indonesia by Marcoes & Putri (2019) in five provinces of West Nusa Tenggara, West Java, Banten, East Java, and South Sulawesi found that only a few private schools and no state school accepted child marriage victims or divorce children to continue their education. The study also found that acceptance to married students is also based on the flexibility of school regulation, while for State schools, it is based on formal regulation from the central government. Further, this study also found that Private schools which accepted married students back to school are based on the school's regulation. Meanwhile, no State school found accepted child marriage victims back to school due to its regulations that rely on the central government's policy.

Child marriage in central Lombok is a common practice. It is deeply structured by many factors, especially rooted by *Merarik* tradition and reinforced by other factors, such as religion and social norms, gender disparity, economic pressure, and parents' low level of education. One of most critical negative impacts of child marriage is its interruption educational opportunities for the perpetrators of this practice. They forfeit their opportunity to pursue further education after-marriage. In the context of central Lombok, as the part of province with highest prevalence cases of child marriage cases, significant discussion is required from the stakeholders of local government and educational institutions which is still very limited in helping marriage children's victims back to school. Therefore, I am interested in studying about this issue by undertaking research under the title "The Causes and Implication of the Loss of Access to Education among Child Marriage Victims: A case Study in Central Lombok.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the above research background, this research will answer these following questions:

1. How does the local community perceive education rights for child marriage victims in Central Lombok?
2. What are the factors that prevent child marriage victims from receiving their rights to education in Central Lombok?

3. How can national and local regulations as well as educational institutions protect the rights to education for child marriage victims in Central Lombok?
4. How do child marriages affect child marriage victims 's educational and personal development in Central Lombok?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

1. To explore the local community's perceptions of the educational rights of child marriage victims in Central Lombok.
2. To identify the factors that prevent child marriage victims from receiving their rights to education in Central Lombok.
3. To explore how local and national regulations as well as educational institutions can protect the educational rights of child marriage victims in Central Lombok.
4. To analyses the effect of child marriage on the educational and personal development of child marriage victims in Central Lombok.

1.4 Research Limitation

This study is focusing on Central Lombok areas. The subject of this study involving four of groups of participants: parents whose children married before reaching legal age of marriage, individual who experienced child marriage and unable to continue their education, four schools that experienced students who did child marriage practice during school age, and six village governments in locations where child marriage is frequent in the community. The participants such as parents and child marriage victims were selected due to their direct experiences and perceptions of the consequences of child marriage in the context of educational rights. Meanwhile, schools are selected based on the rates of marriage cases committed by students, where each of school has 2 to 5 students marry per year. The last, six village governments were chosen due to the prevalence of child marriage within their communities, the accessibility of the locations, and the willingness of participants to engage in interviews since this study is sort of sensitive issue. Nonetheless, the limitation of these research is that all selected participants do not capture entire communities, schools, and village government across the Central Lombok.

1.5 Research Significance

This research on the causes and implications of the loss of access to education among child marriage victims in central Lombok explores how child marriage phenomenon effects to the loss of access to education of the child marriage victims. Even though, many

researchers have conducted research on child marriage Central Lombok like Hidayana et al., 2016; Herliana et al., 2018; Colquhoun, 2020; Aulia et al., 2023).

However, those studies have primarily focused on contributing factors and negative impacts of child marriage, including a study conducted by Marcoes & Putri (2019) which discussed only about the responses and how educational institution's role for child marriage victims. The study about structural and socio-cultural barriers that prevent victims of child marriage continue their education are not fully explored yet. Hence, this research aims to fill the gaps by analyzing how the government' regulations and social norms are interpreted and influence the educational rights for child marriage victims in Central Lombok.

Therefore, theoretically, this research will contribute to the new comprehension and raise awareness of the community related to the importance of the rights to education for child marriage victims and reduce the conservative mindset or social stigma that neglects the cruciality of education for children who are affected by child marriage. Also, this research aims to bridge its imparity by analyzing the interaction among tradition, social norms, and policy implementation in regulating education access for the victims of child marriage.

Practically, this research aims to provide more concrete recommendations for local government and educational institutions to develop inclusive regulations that guarantee education rights for child marriage victims. Further, this research is expected to contribute to academic discourse and intervention for reducing imparity of educational access for child marriage victims without any discrimination.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

This chapter focuses on providing the literature review and developing a theoretical framework as a foundation and starting point for the researcher to do the study's next step. I will begin the discussion by providing information about the prevalence of underage marriage children and its impacts on educational rights. The information served in general to specify the rates of child marriage from the global to local findings, followed by an explanation of child marriage and educational rights based on various perspectives. I will then elaborate on how child marriage correlates with the children's educational rights. Child marriage can decrease school participation and reduce children's opportunities to get higher education. Girls can become the most vulnerable victims of the child marriage practice. After that, I will discuss child marriage as a barrier to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4). This part explains that SDG 4 supports inclusive education and lifelong learning, regardless of gender, socio-status, economic level, etc. However, child marriage is one of the biggest challenges to make this ambition come true. Further, this section elaborates on the factors contributing to child marriage and the loss of opportunity to access educational rights, followed by the effect of losing educational rights on child marriage victims. The second last part of this Chapter provides the theoretical framework. This research will use the human rights approach as the leading theory, and feminist intersectionality as the support theory.

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Definition of Child Marriage and its Negative Impacts

There are many definitions of child marriage. Child marriage is a practice that includes the permitted or customary union of two individuals, either or both of whom have not reached the age of 18 years. (UNFPA, 2012 cited in Strungaru, 2024). According to Unicef (2023), child marriage is a formal marriage or informal relationship between an adult or another child and someone who is under 18 years of age. Moreover, child marriage is a partnership between people who are not yet at a mature age in terms of thought, mental growth, physical preparedness, or mental maturity (Fatimah, 2023). Due to their immaturity in mental and emotional, most of them were married without involving their agreement. UNFPA (2012) defines child marriage as a practice conducted without involving children in the decision-making process which can include into a serious human rights infringement due to deprives children of education, work chances, and career options. Based on the

above definitions, in this thesis, I define child marriage as a relationship between two people, either one or both of them are under 19 years old who are physically and/or psychologically immature, carried out without considering children's best interest for their future development.

Nour (2009) argued that child marriage is as a human violation due to some of its detrimental impacts, such as limiting girls' education, increased physical and emotional health, depression, premature birth, sexually transmitted infection, and maternal and infant mortality. Besides, this practice is a barrier to children's well-being and opportunities for their future, especially for their continuity of education access, which is related to long-term socio-economic disadvantage. National Socio-Economic Survey (2016) found that Indonesia suffers an economic loss of 1.7% due to child marriage. It is aligned with World Bank Group (2017) that stated the persistence of child marriage imposes a substantial economic burden on developing nations, potentially reaching trillions of dollars by 2030.

Besides causing significant socio-economic and educational challenges, child marriage directly damages the international commitment to ensuring free and quality education rights for all children that have been declared in Conventional Rights for the Child (CRC). However, this right is often compromised for those who are victims of early marriage. Unicef Indonesia (2018) stated that all children have right to education, basic and higher education are free and accessible, adults responsible to encourage them to get education as high as possible, and schools must respect their rights and promote high-quality education.

2.1.2 Child Marriage Prevalence and Implication on Educational Rights

In accordance to previous discussion, several major risks such as in the areas of education, economy, and welfare are posed by the practice of child marriage. Child marriage practice occurs in many regions in the world with diverse prevalence. For example, in 2023, West Nusa Tenggara province is one of the highest rates of child marriages in Indonesia (Statistical Agency, 2022). In one last decade, from 2010 to 2020 West Nusa Tenggara province had 5.070.385 population. 1.7 million of the population are children and 255,000 of them are married under 18 years old (National Socio-Economic Survey et al., 2019). In Central Lombok, there are 947.488 people, 463.168 males and 484.320 females, and 19.32% or 93.551 females are married before 18 years old (the Statistics Agency of NTB province, 2020). High prevalence of child marriage in West Nusa Tenggara is notably in Central Lombok, indicates that this issue requires serious attention.

Child marriage practice can cause the cycle of inequality, poverty, limited chances for quality education, and preventing individuals from realizing their fundamental rights to

study and grow. This statement is supported by a study conducted in West Nusa Tenggara by Indrianingsih et al. (2020). The researchers found that child marriage causes health issues for mothers and infants, as well as issues in economic, social, educational, psychological and law. Child marriage also restricts female wellness, choice-making, financial involvement, and other chances to exercise their autonomy (McCleary-Sills et al., 2015, cited in Hindin & Fatusi, 2009; Parsons et al., 2015).

The discussion above concluded that child marriage directly undermines the rights to formal education in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly point 4 (Quality Education). Children lost opportunities to get an access to education because of marital status. In addressing this issue, Watch Human Rights (2018) found that, a similar pattern not only appears in Indonesia, but also in another continent like Africa, where social norms, structural perspectives, and local legality are significantly contributed to the loss of educational opportunities among child marriage victims. For instance, pregnant girls and adolescent mothers often encountered prejudice in accessing an education due to lack of regulation protecting their rights to continue schooling (Watch Human Rights, 2018).

This research intends to obtain a better awareness of the barriers faced by victims of child marriage in accessing education and contribute to actionable strategies to promote equal and quality education in the regions. In the Indonesian context, child marriage becomes a barrier to continuing education, particularly for girls. They are discriminating because of gender and marital status. Many girls who marry earlier are compelled to withdraw from school, which causes a significant loss of educational chances (Rizkianti & Sari, 2024). It is in line with Kurnia et al. (2024), and Nurmila and Windiana (2023) argued that social stigma is expecting girls to marry rather than to get an education. This study found that the social stigma is rooted from three factors: gender imparity, social norms and economic barriers. Gender imparity and social norms shape the mindset of society to view girls as needing to marry early, as their roles are predominantly seen as being wives and homemakers, with the perception that education is not as important for women. While economic factors play a significant role, as low-income families tend to prioritize the education of boys over girls, and marrying off daughters is frequently viewed as a way to ease economic difficulties. The cycles of this stigma strength the limitation of education for children who married early.

2.1.3 Relation of Child Marriage and Educational Rights.

Education is an individual rights essential to achieving other rights (UN Economic & Social Council, 1999). However, child marriage is potentially a barrier to achieving this right. Child marriage is regarded as an abuse of the rights of humanity due to its detrimental

effects on individuals, particularly girls, which might hinder their goals and ambitions (Dash & Sharma, 2019). This issue significantly affects children's access to education, limiting their potential and development. One of the primary rights of human beings is access to education, which is denied due to this harmful practice.

Other than that, child marriage will automatically decrease the number of school participants because, after marriage, it is rare for the children to go back to school due to their changes of status and responsibility, from a student responsible for studying to a spouse responsible for household duties. Central Statistical Agency et al. (2020) stated that 30.1% of Indonesian citizens are children, 11.2% of them become the victims of child marriage, and they are four times tend to quite school. This contributes to a decline in school enrolment, which can lead to failure to achieve inclusive education and leave early-married adolescents without the skills and development opportunities needed to improve their future quality of life.

Further, child marriage contradicts the fundamental freedoms of humans. Child marriage is proven brings harm for young generation, it is an obligation for parents, family, society, government, and the state to prevent it (Congress of Indonesian Women Ulama, 2017). Furthermore, based on the principles of international human rights ratified in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) endorsed by the United Nations (UN), Article 28 claims that every youngster has a right to an education. Elementary school must be completely free; all children deserve access to secondary and higher education, and we should encourage children to achieve their full academic potential. School discipline should prioritize respect for children's ' freedoms and refrain from using abuse (Unicef Indonesia, 2018). Other than that, children should be free from any kind of discrimination. Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that everybody deserves equal rights despite their status, geographical setting, language, faith, sexual orientation, limitation, socioeconomic situation, or family beliefs, and children ought to be mistreated for any explanation. Therefore, in the case of child marriage, no matter if the children are married, unmarried, or divorced, they still have the rights to get an education.

According the principles of the Convention Rights of Child elaborated above, underage individual protection and access to education are crucial. This is a global challenge, particularly for the underage divorced. Based on a report by Action on Child, Early, and Forced Marriage in Switzerland in 2018, there are 258 million divorced people around the world, and over 1.36 million are estimated to be underage divorced (girls under 18 years of age). The National Law of Switzerland protects underage divorce by applying and aligning global standards regarding child widows' human rights, such as the rights to

pass on their wealth, security from harassment and prejudice, and equal access to education (Watson, 2018). By providing equal education for children without discrimination, we can change the social and cultural mindset regarding child marriage and reduce the negative impact of child marriage.

2.1.4 Child Marriage as a Barrier to Achieve SDGs

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) promotes inclusive and high-quality education and encourages learning opportunities for all, regardless of gender, geographic location or socio-economic background. However, child marriage is broadly acknowledged as a significant obstacle to achieving the goal mentioned above. One in four girls under 18 is married, and more than 3000 girls under 18 are married every day in the world (Unicef for Every Child, 2016). When girls decide to marry at this age, their opportunity to have access to education is ended because they need to focus on the household job. For example, in Kenya, around 13,000 girls drop leave schools every single year because of pregnancies (Girls Not Bride, 2022). In the context of West Nusa Tenggara, in 2024, there are 17.32% of child marriage cases (Azmah, 2024). Particularly in West Lombok, there are 7% of child marriage cases, and none of the victims continue their education after marriage (SUARA NTB, 2024). Meanwhile, in Central Lombok, there are 362 cases of child marriage, which are female were students from junior and senior-level schools (Redaksi Koran Lombok, 2024).

In addition, child marriage and dropout of school lead to the broader issue of gender disparity since the most vulnerable effects will impact more girls than boys. It attacks girls' healthy safety and perpetuates gender inequality. It is confirmed by a study conducted in Pakistan by Hossain (2023); he found that child marriage leads to a high risk of teenage pregnancy, which increases high rate of maternal and infant mortality and psychological trauma, especially for girls who marry older men, domestic violence that is taken for granted, loss of fundamental rights such as education, freedom of choice and opportunities for development. Furthermore, Girls not Bride (2023) declared that the impacts of child marriage will affect at least nine of the SDGs, such as high standards of education, poverty alleviation, no starvation, health and wellness, gender equality, good jobs, and economic development, reduces inequality, climate actions, and peace, justice and institution will not be achieved unless child marriage is ended.

2.1.5 Factors Contributed to Child Marriage and the Loss of Access to Education

There are various factors which contribute to child marriage. Data from the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia stated that vulnerability and conflict, legal problems, parental

principles and conditions, faith, personal situations, values and knowledge, and norms of society are the six major variables influencing to child marriage. However, the most impacted are in several continents, where insufficient legal frameworks are enforced, which leads to vulnerability and conflict (Kohno et al., 2020). In the Indonesian context, based on the data of Central Statistical Agency et al. (2020), child marriage is induced by various variables, some of which are structural and stem from community, family, and individual capacity, which includes socioeconomic status, lack of education, welfare level, health, employment, and social protection. It is also in line with the National Socio-Economic Survey (2016) that girls from impoverished homes, girls with low education, and children from rural regions are tend to marry young.

In the context of Lombok, a comparative study by Hidayana et al. (2016) found that child marriage in West Lombok and Sukabumi is caused by similar factors, for instance, economic, family, and personal circumstances, belief, disinterest in education, and parental concern for preventing promiscuity, but the religious factor is the most influential, like insufficient comprehension of Islamic doctrines perpetuates customs which endorses child marriage (Fitri et al., 2022) or some religious parties justify child marriage based on the marriage between the Prophet and Lady Aisha, who was reported to be married at an early age (Abdol Malek & Samuri, 2022). Moreover, a study in Lombok found that local religious leaders or families use religious justification to encourage young boys to get married to avoid adultery and promiscuity. This is also because in Islamic teachings there is no clear minimum age of marriage. For example, Al-Qur'an verses 4:6, 24:31, 24:58-59 4:6, as primary references not specifically mention a minimum legal age for marriage, even though it prescribes that a married couple must be considered sexually matured and possess prudence (Colquhoun, 2020).

Meanwhile, a study in East Lombok found similar results. Child marriage happens because of the background of education, sexual misconduct, beliefs and traditions, socio-economic status, mass media, and parents' decisions (Aulia et al., 2023). Moreover, a unique study conducted in North Lombok, which focuses on boys, found that child marriage is driven because customary rules are more followed than government rules, traditional courtship practice, religion norms (avoiding promiscuities), poverty, marginalization, and gender norms where a man will be considered as masculine when he gets married no matter how the age is (Colquhoun, 2020). In Central Lombok, child marriage is common among both boys and girls, particularly in rural communities, and it is affected by longstanding cultural and religious customs, gender stereotypes, and intergenerational poverty (Herliana et al., 2018). Based on the discussion above, the factors

contributing to the child marrying in Lombok are societal norms, religion, culture, and economics, as mentioned before in the introduction

2.1.6 The Effect of Child Marriage on Educational Rights

Education is a potent instrument for personal advancement, empowering individuals regardless of gender or socioeconomic status. Education can foster social mobility, enhance societal cohesion, and promote equal opportunity (Walker et al., 2019). It is in line with Nurmila and Windiana (2023) that education is an essential measurement that significantly influences the success of human development. According to Dewey (1916), education is a necessity of life that raises immature members to belong to the social group that promotes democracy, intellectual curiosity, and involvement in society's evolution. It is also a life-long process that combines experience and growth.

Moreover, Landorf et al. (2008) argue that education is a sustainable human development practice that improves human well-being, including the expansion of agency and the ability of individuals to participate in democratic dialogue for both the present and future generations. This statement is in line with Marples (2012), that the goals of education are to prepare pupils cognitively to be autonomous persons capable of living independent lives. Based on the discussion above, education is a basic human need that is not only focused on how to get new information or knowledge, but education is a long journey that shapes a human to develop personally and professionally to contribute to society for the long term, today and in the future.

However, the definition and aims of education mentioned above will not be achieved if the children lose their educational opportunities due to child marriage. For example, a study in Africa conducted by Nguyen & Wodon (2014) stated that the impact of child marriage on education reduced 5.7% of women's literacy skills, 5.6% of students' participation in secondary school, and 3.5% of women who can complete secondary school. At the same time, a study in South Kalimantan conducted by Juhaidi and Umar (2020) found that child marriage has a significant correlation with education level ($0.005 < 0.55$) with a negative correlation. The less the child marriage practice, the higher the level of society's education and the higher life expectancy, and vice versa; the more the child marriage practice, the lower the level of society's education and the less the life expectancy will be. It is because after the children marry, they will focus more on domestic business, and soon become adolescent parents. On the other hand, society's mindset tends to be conservative that marriage means no need to continue school, which leads to lack of knowledge about health, and the low level of skills will create gaps to get a good job that

extends structural poverty. In other words, this research shows that reducing child marriage is the key to increasing society's education level and life expectancy.

Moreover, child marriage has an enormous potential to eliminate the opportunity for the children to get their necessary basic knowledge to help them gain improvement and quality of life in the future due to the shifting of their focuses and roles from students to becoming wives or husbands. They are forced to be early adults regarding responsibilities, such as taking care of the household and earning a living, which prevents them from attending formal or informal education. Responsibility for helping children get the rights to education has become crucial because it will impact many aspects of life, such as economics, health, social status, etc.

The loss of educational opportunity can affect the economic status of an individual life in the future. Poor levels of education impede economic development, hindering poverty alleviation (Walker et al., 2019). People with better education tend to have more opportunities to get jobs. OECD (2012) stated that education effectively protects against poverty, even during challenging economic periods. Countries that are included in OECD parties showed that in societies with higher education, 83% of them are working in Norway, Switzerland, and Switzerland; the average level of employment of individuals with tertiary education is more than 88% on average, 74% for secondary education, and 56% for those without secondary education (OECD, 2012). It is in line with finding in Tanzania that possessing a secondary school diminishes the likelihood of experiencing poverty as an adult by over 60% (Education for All, 2013). Referring to this data, it can be stated that children who marry early without better education and skills will have less chance to get a better life and better job. Education helps people enter appropriate market labour and social-development.

Other than that, the loss of educational opportunities will lead to gender inequality, especially for women. Women without enough skill and knowledge tend to depend more on their men. When they have unequal chances to get an education, the negative impact affects not only individuals but also society and the economy. UNESCO (2024) found that gender disparity causes a global loss of US\$160 trillion, twice the global Gross Domestic Product (Wodon et al., 2024). Enhancing the rights of girls and women to quality educational opportunities is essential for eradicating prejudice and attaining gender equality (UNESCO, 2023). It is in line with The Education Commission (2022), which stated that when young women are educated and climate literate, they are twice as capable of educating their families. Further, empowering women with education has enormous impacts, such as helping women increase their ability to make decisions, increasing their

life standard and health, and helping to stop child marriage and unintended adolescent pregnancy. However, this cannot be accomplished without robust national legal frameworks rooted in rights, gender-inclusive, and diversity (UNESCO, 2023). In the context of Lombok, a study by Rasyidi et al. (2023) found that well-educated women have an important role in spiritual transformation and societal progress. They impact many parts of the community, including increasing well-being, reinforcing Islamic character, and contributing to local financial growth. Another study conducted in Central Lombok found that increasing literacy through the Basic Literacy Education Program for women, particularly housewives, can improve social skills and confidence in participating in the social community (Syah et al., 2021).

2.1.7 Child Marriage Situation in Central Lombok

The practice of child marriage in Central Lombok is still widespread to this day. As mentioned earlier, Central Lombok has a high prevalence of child marriage, reaching 93,551 cases in a decade. The findings of several studies confirm this fact. For example, research conducted by Putri (2021) found that child marriage in Central Lombok increased due to two factors: the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in Marriage Regulations Number 16/2019 on Amendment of Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning marriage. The pandemic led students to do online learning, which caused them to get bored. The pandemic also worsened the economic condition of the community, causing parents to allow their daughters to marry early, which was considered a solution to ease the economic burden.

While the amendment of marriage law increased dispensation requests for granting permission to marry off children under 19 years old, the new age limit was set by the state. Moreover, a study conducted by Putri (2021) stated that, before the new provision of the minimum age of marriage in the Marriage Law, there were 33 cases of marriage dispensation requests, and after the new provision of the minimum age of marriage into 19 years old, there were 156 requests. Similarly, a study conducted by Putra et al. (2023) found that child marriage in Central Lombok increased during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, there were 8% of child marriage cases, and in 2022, it jumped to 61% of cases during and after COVID-19 in 2020. This significant increase in child marriage has a number of severe impacts, especially in the area of education. One of the most negative impacts is the lack of opportunity to access an education. Many of them drop out of school. Most victims of child marriage in Central Lombok do not continue their education, especially formal schooling, because they feel ashamed and lack confidence due to their marital status at a young age (Umami & Wulandari, 2023). This situation emphasizes the need for policies and actions that protect the educational rights of child marriage victims

without discrimination, such as rules and regulations, formal learning programs, and community assistance efforts.

2.1.8 Child Marriage Prevention and Access to Education in Central Lombok

To prevent child marriage in Central Lombok, there are some interventions carried out. For example, the Village government collaborated with the local health staff and Posyandu members to provide socialization, discussion, and advocacy with local society (Mubarak et al., 2022). Moreover, Nurbaiti et al., (2023) in a study found that one of the strategies to prevent child marriage in Central Lombok is by providing socialization to the childbearing age women such as to Junior and Senior High School students. It is in line with Putri et al., (2024) who stated that counseling for underage teenagers is one of the ways to reduce the number of child marriage cases. In another study found that, one of the efforts to prevent child marriage in Central Lombok is by collaborating among Praya District Religious Affairs Office (KUA), the Central Lombok Child Protection Agency (LPA), and local religious and community leaders to share and discuss the implementation of Law Number 16 of 2019, pre-marriage training, and establish of a youth forum as a forum for counseling on child marriage.

Further, in terms of education access for child marriage victims, Central Lombok government collaborate with Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Family Planning, and Community Empowerment to provide informal school program such as Sekolah Terbuka and Paket A, B, and C as mentioned in regulation number 20 of 2003 Article 17 and 18 point 2 and 3 (Iswinarno & Varwati, 2025). However, the educational system of these programs is different from formal school, since it is an alternative for students who dropout of formal school but need a formal school certificate. Moreover, the process of teaching and learning of Sekolah Terbuka Program run independently by students using modules as the main lesson material (Maulipaksi, 2016). While for Paket A, B, and C program, the curriculum sets the learning process maximal by 2 meetings per week. Means, this kind of teaching and learning is not fulfilling the needs of the learning process where students can expand deeply and dig up their potential through some sort of learning process. As defined in National Education System Number 20/2003 Article 1 point 11 and 13 that education is an individual effort to develop their potential through teaching and learning process which is structured and tiered.

By this limitation within the alternative educational system, ensuring child marriage victims have access to their education is a challenge. The government is required to reorganize a more structured learning model, especially for learners who have been married, which may require different interventions and regulations. In addition, other

challenges that the government faces in encouraging child marriage victims to get their education opportunities are social stigma, lack of family support, and children's reluctance to leave the house (Yayasan Plan International Indonesia cited in Iswinarno and Varwati., 2025). Therefore, addressing these barriers requires extensive approaches, integrating tighter enforcement of laws, raising society awareness, and improving the education support system to ensure the effectiveness of child marriage prevention and protect the educational rights of the victims.

2.1.9 Research Gaps

Even though there are many studies related to child marriage, the majority of the studies tend to focus on the prevalence, causes, and effects of child marriage. The specific impact on victims' educational sustainability has not been sufficiently studied. My literature review about child marriage before doing this research found 33 articles from 2014 to 2024 from google scholar with the keywords of child marriage, early married, child married in Lombok, education, and rights of education. Sixteen of the articles study the contributing factors and impact of child marriage. Sixteen of them discuss the law perspective of child marriage, and one of them discusses the rights of education for child marriage victims. For example, research conducted by Marcoes & Putri (2019) analyses the role of institutions in accepting back married students but it does not examine deeply into the structural and social barriers that make the girls have less participation in education after marriage. Only a few research highlight how regulation of government and educational institution, and social norms and culture in Central Lombok support or hinder child marriage victims back to their education, the gap that this study will fill by providing elaboration of the impact of child marriage on the loss of access to education and by studying how government and educational institution's policy, social norms and culture contributed to the loss of access to education among child marriage victims in Central Lombok. Further, this research also intends to raise awareness of society, educators, and local policymakers to pay more attention on how they can create more inclusive policies for child marriage victims so that their rights to education are guaranteed regardless of their marital status.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Human Rights and Children

Human rights refer to the essential liberties required for individuals to lead an adequate life, obtain education, live free from violence, ensure safety, realize their full capabilities, and get equal treatment. For children, human rights include acknowledging

their perspectives on choices that influence them (Szabo & Edwards, 2020). According to the International Convention on the Rights of the Children, forty rights of the children must be protected. For example, children without discrimination, prioritize children's best interests, government making their rights real, having family, rights to be alive, owning their identity, not being separated from family, keeping contact with family if children are outside the country, protecting from kidnap and violence, respecting their opinions, joining groups, protecting their privacy, accessing information, being guarded by parents, supporting children with disabilities, etc. (UNESCO, 1995). The Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009, p.27; 2010, p.27; 2012, p.26; cited in Vaghri et al., 2022) has sought justification for any decline in child protection and asked States parties to reconsider in order to ensure that all children up to the age of 18 have to receive the full rights of the Convention. Children's rights are universal norms that require explicit entitlement and matching obligations from those granting the assurance (Vaghri et al., 2022).

However, according to UNICEF Armenia (2019), children's rights have four basic principles. First, children must enjoy their lives with no discrimination in terms of their parents, race, skin colour, sex, language, religion, ethnicity, nation, poverty, and disability. Second, focus on children's best interest, meaning in all acts involving children, either conducted by the government or private social welfare institutions, judicial courts, government agencies, or lawmakers, the paramount priority shall be the child's best interest. Third, the rights to survive and develop means the Convention's parties must guarantee the children's continued existence and growth to the greatest extent. Lastly, concerning children's opinions, children who can express their own opinions have the right to openly share them in every situation that influences them, the opportunity given due to their age and maturity. These principles also in line with National Education System number 20, article 4, point 1 stated that education is organized in a democratic, equitable, and non-discriminatory manner by upholding human rights, religious values, cultural values, and national pluralism (National Education Law, 2003). While regulation of 2014 number 35, article 1 point 2 stated that child protection encompasses all actions aimed at safeguarding youth and their rights, enabling them to enjoy life, develop, grow, and engage fully in line with human dignity while receiving safeguards from abuse and prejudice (Child Protection Law Number 35, 2014).

Based on the discussion above, international and national regulations guarantee children's safety and support children's rights to education without discrimination. They have their regulations to safeguard the rights of children. However, there are some challenges in terms of implementation. For example, poverty and disparity, health and

malnutrition, educational access, and child protection (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020). Poverty impacts on health, education, and children's safety, while women and rural populations particularly experience disparity. As stated by UNICEF Indonesia (2020), children from poor families are three times more likely to marry in childhood. To tackle this issue, the government of Indonesia implemented a regulation called STRANAS (National Strategies). The five strategies are already mentioned in the introduction.

In line with the discussion above, in analyzing the loss of access to education of child marriage victims, the main theoretical framework used in this research is the Human Rights Approach. Human rights are standards that recognize and protect the dignity of all human beings and govern the lives of individuals in society and the state (UNICEF Finland, 2015). Human rights are universal, timeless, unchanging, inalienable, absolute, and a freedom for all people worldwide because they are human beings, regardless of citizenship, socio-status, and background (Donnelly, 2013). Invernizzi and Williams (2016) define human rights as fundamental rights that every individual has to their human dignity, especially for children. They are authorized to live, grow, develop, protect and fulfill special needs, have the rights to participate in zero discrimination, and have priority to children's best interests. Generally, these definitions align with the forty principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Therefore, according to the context of human rights as a universal principle in protecting the dignity and well-being of individuals, especially vulnerable children, in this context are child marriage victims. Thus, the approach to analyze the case of loss of educational rights in child marriage in Lombok will be the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) emphasizes that all children get quality education and are free from exploitation and discrimination. In the context of Central Lombok, the rights of education are often neglected due to the tradition of *Merarik* or elopement and economic pressure which encourages families to let their daughter get married at an early age. Human Rights approach in this study aims to identify the violation of education rights, as well aims to analyses how local policies and educational institutions accommodate or hinder the rights of education for child marriage victims and/or underage divorcees.

2.2.2 The Role of Human Rights in Education for Children

The right to education is one of the fundamental human rights recognized by national and international conventions. UNESCO puts education as the top priority of fundamental rights of humans for promoting stability and sustainable growth (UNESCO, 2017). Education is the most influential tool to empower individuals, communities, and

children for a better future. Modi (2014) argued that education has a significant impact on empowering women, as lower social status is common among conservatives, such as child marriage, dowry, and status. Moreover, enhanced education for both girls and boys, which is measured by school enrolment and attendance, saves them from becoming victims or perpetrators of various sorts of violence, including childhood sexual violence, juvenile violence, domestic violence, and child marriage (World Health Organization, 2016). This statement is supported by findings in Zimbabwe that children who receive education supplies like fees, school supplies, and health products can decrease school dropouts by 82% and child marriage by 63% (Hallfors et al., 2011).

2.2.3 Regulation in Protecting Child Marriage Victims for Education

At the national level, children's rights are ruled in some regulations. For example, number 16, point 2, of 2019, stated that child marriage is hurting children's development; it affects the unfulfillment of children's fundamental rights such as protection from violence, discrimination, civil rights, health, education, and social rights (Regulation of Marry Number 16, 2019). Moreover, another regulation in article 10 point 1 stated that anybody who illegally requires or emphasizes somebody under his/her or any other person's authority or control to get into or allow a marriage with him/her or another person shall be punished for oppression of marriage with being imprisoned of up to 9 (nine) years and/or a maximum penalty of Rp200,000,000.00. (Two hundred million rupiahs) (Regulations of Criminal Acts of Sexual Violence Number 12, 2022). These regulations protect children from being married underage (before 18). However, suppose the marriage is done, or the children are divorced, they still have their rights as children to get their rights to education, as mentioned before in national and international regulations. This statement is in line with Congress of Indonesian Women Ulama, (2017) in the three of child marriage fatwa stated that child marriage victims are entitled to their rights of education, health, care, and protection. According to the discussion of national regulation about marriage and children and their rights, it cannot be denied that children regardless of their status of marriage can be prevented from continuing their education in or after marrying.

2.2.4 Intersectional Feminist Theory

The prevalence of child marriage and fewer opportunities for getting an education make a fragile future for children in the world, particularly for girls. The Global Girlhood Report stated that around 2.5 million girls worldwide are at risk of child marriage from 2020 to 2025. It rises in various forms of gender-based violence stemming from the COVID-19 epidemic (Szabo & Edwards, 2020). According to UN Women, this issue will

still exist till 2092 if we do not put our attention and action on it. With the girls/women as the most at-risk victims which reinforced gender disparities. For example, child marriage has terrible consequences for girls, as it strips them of their legal entitlements regarding wellness, schooling, safety, and participation. It discriminates against girls and women, denying their necessities, involvement, and liberties (Girls Not Brides, 2024). Child marriage also increased risk of girls/women experiencing sexual and physical abuse, as well as facing more challenges during pregnancy, childbirth, and potential HIV/AIDS infection (Save the Children, 2024).

In accordance with the discussion above, therefore, the second theory relevant to this research is intersectional feminism. The concept of intersectionality was introduced in 1981 and 1991 by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in two articles, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine” and “Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics”. This theory describes women as oppressed by multifactorial issues, such as those based on race and gender (Carastathis, 2018). Intersectional feminism is an oppression and discrimination structure that is shaped by various factors that are interrelated to each other, such as race, gender, social class, religion, age, ability, etc. (Evans, 2024). Relation of this theory to this research will help the researcher to analyze the factors contributing to the loss of access to education among underage child marriage victims, particularly girls. In the context of Central Lombok, this theory will be used for understanding why the girls are the most vulnerable victims in accessing their rights for education over the boys after marriage. In addition, this theory will be used to examine whether society and culture expect girls to be spouses and moms rather than getting their education, or whether regulation of government and educational institutions do not support married or divorced women to go back to school.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter highlights the methodology employed in this study. It contains some components, including study design and paradigm, data collection methodology, participant group involved, and data analysis processes. It presenting the reader with a detailed summary of the content addressed.

3.1 Research Design and Paradigm

This study adopts a constructivist paradigm which centers on understanding the particular contexts of individuals' lives and work, highlighting how society's historical and cultural backgrounds shape the interpretation of their personal, artistic, and historical experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Leavy (2017) stated that constructivism encompasses diverse perspectives, such as symbolic interactionism, dramaturgy, phenomenology, and ethnomethodology. Therefore, this paradigm applies to this research due to its focus on comprehending the tradition, norms, and social that form the issue of child marriage and its effects on the rights of children's education opportunities in Central Lombok from a diverse perspective. Furthermore, the paradigm enables me to study various perceptions of educators, government, and society on how they understand and response the issue of the loss of educational rights of child marriage victims which is emphasizing on subjective interpretation and social experiences.

In line with the paradigm of constructivism, this study applies qualitative methodology. According to Creswell, (2014), qualitative methodology is research for investigating and comprehending the significance that people or communities attribute to a social or human issue. This methodology is ideal because it will help the researcher understand more profoundly the phenomenon of the child marriage issue in central Lombok based on the interviewees' perceptions.

The design of this research is a case study. A case study is a thorough examination of a particular unit (like an individual or society) stressing development elements in connection with environmental influences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This design is appropriate because a case study is a detailed investigation of a single unit (such as a private or a group) that focuses on developmental characteristics and their relationship to the surroundings. Further, this design will enable the researcher to examine in detail the phenomenon of child marriage and its relationship with the loss of educational access among the victims in Central Lombok. By interviewing individuals and groups in the

community, this study not only focuses on the phenomenon in general but also provides a holistic comprehension of the issue which can raise the awareness of the community and stakeholders to tailor the intervention and policies that can protect the children's educational rights.

3.1.1 Research Subjects

This research utilizes purposive sampling in selecting participants. Purposive sampling is a standard method utilized in qualitative research (Gay et al., 2012, p. 141). Researchers use this method to choose a sample they consider typical of a specific community based on their expertise and previous involvement with the group, with explicit criteria guiding the selection procedure (Gay et al., 2012, p.142). The participants are selected in accordance with inclusive and exclusive criteria. The inclusion criteria include: (1) people with child marriage experience both school-age (under 18 years) and adult (over 20 years) and have no opportunity to continue their education; (2) educators who teach in schools where a high number of child marriage practices occur, and (3) local government bodies at the village stage who participate directly in child marriage regulations. Exclusion criteria include child marriage victims who continued higher education, educators who teach in school with no child marriage case, and the local government officials who are not regulating child marriage issues.

Further, the participants will be approached in two ways. Child marriage victim and parents will be approached through recommendation of community stakeholders. Meanwhile for educators and village government officials will be approached formally through school and organization by using letter of request provided by university. Estimated sample size includes 5-6 child marriage victims, 4-5 parents who have children who marry early and cannot continue their education, 4 educators from 4 different schools, and 4 government officials.

The sample size was determined according to purposive sampling to ensure diverse perceptions from key stakeholders involved or affected by the issue. The selection of four schools and four government organizations were influenced by feasibility considerations, including access to participants, time constraints, and ethical concerns. These locations were chosen due to the high prevalence of child marriage cases that represent various social contexts. In addition, the qualitative nature of this research favors in-depth understanding over large-scale samples, making these samples appropriate for capturing nuanced insights.

3.2 Methods of Data Collection

Data collection is gathering empirical information required to answer research questions in qualitative studies or evaluate concepts in statistical investigations (Salmia, 2023). It is a key stage in research since it considerably improves the reliability of findings by decreasing any errors that may arise during the study process (Taherdoost, 2021). According to Senekane, (2024) there are two kinds of data collection methods: primary and secondary. Primary data sources include questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observations, and surveys. Secondary data refers to gaining details from several places, such as library materials, professional journals, and municipal materials. I applied interview, observation, and document analysis as data collection methods in this research due to verify the consistency of findings. For example, the observations carried out sequentially, with an emphasis on critical factors such as the policy implemented for married students, the child marriage administrative both in schools and village government, and the installation of information board around village environment regarding the importance education. Each observation was then contrasted and combined with the interview findings to increase the data's validity (triangulation).

3.2.1. Interview

The researcher employs semi-structured interviews as the primary technique in collecting the data. A semi-structured interview is a one-on-one and in-depth conversation formation, unlike structured surveys. A semi-structured interview is flexible in terms of dialogue that assists the interviewer in exploring the topic deeply to get unique and detailed information applicable to investigating complex issues. However, it takes time and needs a skilled interviewer (Adams, 2015). Furthermore, in-depth interviews, according to Rutledge & Hogg (2020), are a qualitative research approach that engages comprehensive dialogues with a small group of respondents to learn about their standpoints, circumstances, thoughts, and understandings about a specific topic or issue. Question models used in semi-structured interviews are combination, grand tour questions, and floating prompts (Leech, 2002). This approach enables researchers to pose "presumption" questions, which allows participants to predict a portion of the answer less frighteningly, thus generating truthful answers from the respondents (Leech, 2002).

Therefore, the interviews were conducted offline to obtain valid and reliable data. The participants are from three groups: child marriage victims, educators, and the local government at the village level. More explanation can be seen below.

1. The first group is the child-marriage victim, both adults and children who are affected

by child marriage. This group of participants is chosen by the age of marriage, which is under 18 years old, either married or divorced, dropped out from school, and located in Central Lombok, where child marriage commonly happens. The interview aims to investigate the factors that led them to marry early and how they impacted their rights and opportunities for education.

2. The second group is parents. This group of participants are the parents whose children were married underage and could not access education because of their marital status. The interviews aimed to explore the impact of child marriage on access to education, how the community perceive child marriage and continuing education after marriage, whether there is policy from the government and schools which supports victims to continue their education, whether the local communities have been informed about to the danger of child marriage and the importance of education, and whether the culture, social norm and job types encourage child marriage practice.
3. The third group is the educators. The participants are from four private schools and two state schools. Participating schools have experienced a large number of students getting married while still in school. In this interview, I explored how regulations of schools can protect education rights for child marriage victims, whether schools collaborate with local government or NGO to support married students to get access for education, and whether schools provide learning schedules, extracurricular programs, and counselling services to support married students to keep participating in the learning process.
4. The last group is the village government. The participants are from four village-governments to collect data on how the village government implements regulations from the central government to local regulation in supporting education access for victims of child marriage, also to know whether village governments have collaborative programs with NGO, formal and informal educational institution, community and religious leader to prevent child marriage and support children education in or after marriage, and whether village governments provide financial assistance, health and physical service for child marriage victim.

3.2.2 Observation

Observation is a data-gathering method researchers employ to gather real-time data through their sensory perception in either structured or natural circumstances during a sequence of activities (Smritirekha, 2019). The observation was deemed the fundamental basis of consistent relationship building (Gay et al., 2012). Observation elevated to the

status of a scientific method must be conducted systematically, intentionally, and based on scientific principles (Ciesielska et al., 2018). There are two kinds of Observation: participant and non-participant, direct and indirect (Ciesielska et al., 2018). Participants mean the researcher actively participates in the events being observed, monitors and collects data concerning events, subjects, and the surroundings (Gay et al., 2012), while non-participant observation involves observing and recording behaviors without actively participating in the activities being investigated (Gay et al., 2012). In this study, I employed non-participation observation to collect data such as school environment and community environment. For example, in schools' environments, I observed how teachers and students treat married students, and how the classroom is designed to facilitate and support child marriage victims to learn. Meanwhile, for the community, I explored whether the community has been informed about the prohibition of child marriage and support for education, for example by using notice boards in each hamlet, how the community typically hold wedding ceremonies for underage children, and whether the community members commonly attend weddings of underage children.

3.2.3 Document Analysis

To collect the data related to child marriage and the loss of access to education, I employed document analysis. This kind of data collection is relying on subject matter, conceptually informed conversations with multiple documents and examples, and theoretical sampling for systematic and constant comparison (Altheide et al., 2008). Document analysis is important in qualitative research because it enhances qualitative case research by providing comprehensive explanations for particular phenomena, circumstances, institutions, or policies (Bowen, 2009). The documents that will be reviewed from school will include students' attendance and dropout recapitulation and school policy about child marriage. While documents from local government include data of children who married underage and regulation related to education and child marriage prevention. The document analysis applied to answer the research questions number three and number four about how the regulation of national and local government and educational institutions protect education rights for child marriage victims.

3.3 Data Analysis

3.3.1 Data Analysis Process

First step of analyzing the data is the researcher gathers the data from all the participants. Then the researcher transcribed the data in Indonesia, before translating it into English, since the participants are not speaking in English language. As a novice researcher,

the analysis was conducted manually. A thematic analysis was conducted. It is an analysis process that focuses on discovering, defining, reasoning, justification, and linking themes (Clarke and Braun, 2016). It is also a technique for methodically detecting, structuring, and providing comprehension of structures of significance (themes) in a set of data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). After the researcher categorizes the transcribed data into themes based on major points, words, and condensed sentences relating to the topic issues, the data are coded with different colors within each theme, observing connections, trends, commonalities, and contrasts. The green color will be for the theme of community (child marriage victims, parents, educators, local government) perceptions about educational rights for child marriage victims, the yellow one will be for the theme of the factors that prevent child marriage victims from receiving their rights to education, the blue one will be for the theme of regulation of national and local government and educational institutions to protect education rights for child marriage victims, and the red one will be for the theme of the effect of child marriage on the victims' educational and personal development.

After sorting the participant responses according to the relevant topics, I will study the dissimilarities and parallels of the participants' responses. This will be followed by analyzing the organized information in order to identify appropriate trends and mechanisms. To ensure secrecy, the interview participants were coded by, P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 for parents, VF1, VF2, VM3, VF4, VF5, VF6, VF7 for child marriage victims, E1, E2, E3, E4 for Schools participated, and G1, G2, G3, G4, G5, G6 for local government.

3.3.2 Trustworthiness of Data

Trustworthiness is a set of quality standards for evaluating research on interpretation, also called the standards for genuineness (Schwandt, 2001). According to Curtin and Fossey (2007), trustworthiness indicates how well the outcomes accurately represent personal knowledge or real-life events related to the phenomenon being studied. There are four primary elements of trustworthiness, reliability, dependability, reliability, and confirmability (Stahl & King, 2020). The standard for assessing the trustworthiness of a qualitative research project is the reliability of our findings and their readiness for further investigation (Maykut & Morehouse, 2002). To guarantee trustworthiness, this research employs the previously described triangulation technique, utilizing both Observation and interviews for data collection while also directed by two supervisors with expertise in education and society.

3.3.3 Ethical Consideration

Ethics is important in every aspect of life. Ethics is the way we behave and treat people appropriately. In doing research, ethics are the researcher's obligation to the participants. It is a branch of applied morality that pertains to the inquiries, challenges, and issues concerning the ethical conduct of scientific research (Resnik, 2013). Generally, research ethics is described as research conducted through the lens of scientific norms and research morality and within the framework of ethical rules (Joseph et al., 2013, cited in Gallegos Erazo et al., 2021). Israel & Hay (2006) stated that the researcher guaranteed that the participants could participate in the information interchange. The researcher guaranteed the privacy of participant details and the anonymity of their responses (Israel & Hay, 2006) In this research, to uphold ethical standards, all of the participants will be explained about the purpose of the research. The researcher will ask for participants' verbal consent, including the guardian if the participant is a minor. Since one of the sample groups is the victims of child marriage, participants will not be forced to tell the traumatic experiences, and to maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used.

3.3.4 Research Positionality

In this study, I am a researcher, originally from Lombok. I hold deep personal and academic interest in issues of child marriage and its connection with children's educational rights. I live and interact with people in rural areas, where the trend of child marriage. This sort of thing shaped my awareness of how this tradition of Merarik influences the phenomenon access to education for child marriage victims, in particular girls. I acknowledged that my background as an insider might affect how I perceived and interpreted the data from the respondents. To address this problem, I employed the triangulation method for data collection (Interviews, observation, and document analysis) for ensuring that the research findings were grounded in participants' experiences rather than my interpretations.

3.3.5 Research Timeline

Research stages	Description.	Time line
Preparation of Thesis Proposal	Compiling chapters I, II, and III, including refining research questions, theoretical framework, and methodology.	November 2024- January 2025

Research stages	Description.	Time line
Data Permission & Ethical Clearance	Applying for research permits from relevant institutions, obtaining ethical approval, and securing consent from participants. Addressing challenges, such as social sensitivity and access to vulnerable groups.	February 2025
Pilot and data Collection	Refine and feasibility and data collection instruments. Conduct in-depth interviews with child marriage victims, parents, educators and government officials.	April-May 2025
Data Processing (Cleansing & Validation)	Ensuring data completeness, transcription, verifying consistency and accuracy.	April 2025
Data Analysis	Conducting thematic analysis manually to identify patterns, themes, and correlations in the data.	May 2025
Interpretation of Findings & Drafting Results	Interpretation of findings & drafting results	June 2025
Finalization of Research Report	Revising thesis based on feedback from supervisors. Editing, formatting, and preparing for defense.	July 2025

CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This research took place in Central Lombok, a West Nusa Tenggara Province subdistrict. The areas involved only the remote territories where child marriage practices are common. The interviews were conducted directly with four groups of participants—first, the parents, either father or mother, whose children experience child marriage. The age of parents varies from 46 to 64 years. Most of the parents' jobs are farmers and have low education levels with four to six children. Each of them has one daughter married early, as shown in Table 4.1. Second, the victims of child marriage, male and female under 19 years old and who are now more than 19 years old. Their lowest level of education is 8th grade and the highest level of education is in the 12th grade. Four of seven victims were divorced after their first marriage, as shown in Table 4.2. Third, the schools which have students who become victims of child marriage. They consist of two public Senior High schools and two private Junior High Schools. The school's rate of students who marry early varies, such as one student per year, two to three students per year, or three to five students per year, as shown in Table 4.3.

The last is the village government. Six village governments participated in this study. These villages are where the community often practices child marriage. Five of six village governments already obtained their definitive status, and one of them is in the process of gaining definitive status or given unofficial authority. In addition, three governments have been established for less than ten years, and the rest have been established for more than twenty years.

The information of definitive status refers to villages that have been officially recognized by the provincial government and granted full administrative authority based on the regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia about Village Structuring Number 1 point 8 of 2017. Meanwhile, information on the age of the village government, which ranges from under 10 years to over 20 years, shows that the age of establishment and operational authority of village government does not ensure the existence of regulations that specifically support the fulfillment of education rights for child victims of child marriage. In other words, the legal status and operational age of a village does not guarantee attention to the protection and restoration of educational rights for child victims of child marriage. It shown in Table 4.4. In short, this research involved 22 participants, consisting five parents with child-child marriage victims, seven victims of child marriage, four schools which have students married before completing their study,

and six village governments where the community often practiced child marriage. To protect anonymity, all the participants' identities in this research are written in pseudonyms.

Table 4.1

Demographic Participants of Parents

Initials	Gender	Age	Job	Education	No. of Children	Children Entered Marry Early
P1	M	64	Farmer/Raising Cattle	Never attend school	6 (3M, 3F)	1 Daughter (14 years age)
P2	M	65	Farmer/Raising & selling cattle	Never attend School	6(2M, 4F)	1 Daughter (16 Years age)
P3	M	50	Farmer	Elementary School	6 (3M, 3F)	1 Daughter (14 Years old)
P4	F	46	Housewife & rattan craftsman	2 nd Grade Elementary School	4 (2M, 2F)	1 Daughter (17 Years old)
P5	F	50	Housewife, Farm Laborer & Raising Cattle	2 nd Grade Elementary School	4 (2M, 2F)	1 Daughter (14 Years old)

Table 4.2.

Demographic of Participants of Child Marriage Victims

Initials	Gender	Age	Age of First Marriage	Education	Marital Status
VF1	F	16	16	8 th Grade	Married

Initials	Gender	Age	Age of First Marriage	Education	Marital Status
VF2	F	15	15	10 th Grade	Married
VM3	M	18	16	12 th Grade	Divorced/Not remarried
VF4	F	26	17	11 th Grade	Divorced/Remarried
VF5	F	26	17	11 th Grade	Divorced/Remarried
VF6	F	32	15	9 th Grade	Married
VF7	F	24	17	Completed 9 th Grade	Divorced/Remarried

Table 4.3.

Demographic Profile of Schools with Students Who Married Early

Initials	School level	School Type	Students married early rate per year	Students' Grade
E1	Senior High School	Public	3- 5 students per year	12 th Grade
E2	Senior High School	Public	1 -3 student per year	12 th Grade
E3	Junior High School	Private	2-3 students per year	9 th Grade
E4	Junior High School	Private	1-2 students per year	9 th Grade

Table 4.4.

Demographic of Villages Government Where Child Marriages Often Occur

Initials	Status	Year of establishment
G1	Definitive	9 years
G2	Unofficial Authority	7 years
G3	Definitive	9 years
G4	Definitive	More than 20 years
G5	Definitive	More than 20 years
G6	Definitive	More than 20 Years

Data gathered from interviews were initially in two languages. All parents and half of the child marriage victims use the Lombok language, while the schools' staff and village governments use the Indonesian language. It is manually translated into English and analyzed using thematic analysis for coding, organizing, categorizing, summarizing themes, interpreting patterns, and reporting key findings. The finding of this study was organized based on the four research questions outlined in Chapter 1: (1) How does the local community perceive education rights for child marriage victims in Central Lombok? (2) What factors prevent child marriage victims from receiving their rights to education in Central Lombok? (3) How can national and local regulations and educational institutions protect the rights to education for child marriage victims in Central Lombok? (4) How do child marriages affect child marriage victims 's educational and personal development in Central Lombok?

Moreover, the findings of this research were collected through observation and document analysis. I observed the community's custom on child marriage practice, the school's environment and teaching and learning process on how teachers treat students with marital status. Meanwhile, the document analysis involved schools' policies and the recapitulation data on student's dropout caused by child marriage cases. For village governments, it includes regulation and/or program targeting child marriage victims and annual records of the number of students who practice child marriage each year.

4.1 Findings

In this section, the answers to the four research questions outlined in chapter one are presented: (1) community perceptions of the rights to education for child marriage victims in Central Lombok, (2) factors that prevent child marriage victims from obtaining their rights to education, (3) local and national regulations and educational institutions that can protect the rights to education for child marriage victims, and (4) the effect of child marriage on the academic and personal development of child marriage victims in Central Lombok. These findings will analyze in-line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) approach and intersectional feminist theory.

4.1.1 The Community's Perceptions of the Rights to Education for Child Marriage Victims in Central Lombok

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), there are forty-one children's rights, which are divided into four fundamental rights of the children. According to Unicef Armenia (2019), the four fundamental rights are that children must enjoy in their lives without discrimination based on parentage, race, color, gender, language, religion, ethnicity, nation, poverty, and disability. These are mentioned in Article 2, supported by Articles 7, 8, 23, and 30. The focus on children's best interest is mentioned in Article 3 and supported by Articles 9, 18, 20, 21, 25 and 37. In addition, children have their rights to life and development. This means all adults are responsible for maximally guaranteeing their survival, growth, and development, which is mentioned in Article 3 and supported by Articles 5, 18, 20, 21, and 25. Lastly, children are free to express their opinions and have the right to share them in every situation that influences their condition due to their age and maturity, which is presented in Article 12 and supported by Articles 5, 13, 14, and 17.

4.1.1.1 Normalization of Child Marriage

After conducting in-depth interviews with four groups of participants and observing social and community traditions related to child marriage practices, this study found that the Lombok community have a tendency to normalize child marriage practices because this practice is influenced most by the tradition of *Merarik* or elopement. *Merarik* is not just a tradition but a cultural heritage in the community that occurs from generation to generation. According to P2, *Merarik* is a sacred marriage proposal process with multiple meanings. First, a girl is precious and should not be obtained easily, so it is obtained by elopement. Second, parents seek to reduce the social stigma and negative assumptions of having child in unmarried relationship. Parents argue that if something happens to the

marriage in the future, it is the parents' fault. The last, maintaining a culturally accepted process for seeking permission for a boy to marry a girl is interpreted as a man having to respect his wife and hopefully ensures that he will not mistreat her in married life.

However, since this tradition is now practiced by many children at school, which results in the loss of education opportunities, people consider it as every day practice. Based on observational data, it is common for people to attend the weddings of family, relatives, or the community who married early, just like attending adult weddings. The community is generally enthusiastic and eager to witness the procession of the bride and groom, which the Lombok people call the "Nyongkolan" tradition as the last event of a series of wedding ceremonies. This means the phenomenon of child marriage is something familiar to the community. Either the parents or the victims of child marriage are not bullied due to this practice. Some parents, such as P1, P2, P3, and P5, approved that child marriage is a common thing in Lombok as expressed in P5's statements: "... We attend the children's marriage ceremony as we attend the adult wedding ceremony, and it is common for everyone to come because the parents will arrange the ceremony very well" (Author's interview with #P5, Lombok, April 24, 2025).

Nevertheless, the uncommon thing for according to local community is when there are children who have married or have ever married, have a desire to continue their education, or return to school, especially formal school. The surrounding community will judge them as no longer eligible to do so because becoming a student after getting married is rare. This is experienced by VF6 when she married in her last year of Junior High School. She went to school to attend the examination as a requirement to graduate. She was bullied by people at school, particularly her friends, because they considered returning to school after getting married as an unusual social practice, but she did not care about the perception. She finished school and received her certificate of graduation. It is in line VF2's experiences that she told: "... If I return to school after marriage, people will ask me with judgment. You already married; why do you want to return to school?" (Author's interview with #VF2, Lombok, April 26, 2025). The statements of VF2 expressed that she is excluded from school due to her marital status. On the other hand, parents such as P1, P4, and P5 expressed that marrying off a daughter who has already been taken by a man for proposing the girl through *Merarik* tradition, is seen as a way to protect the family's honour and safeguard the girls from promiscuity. These points of view indicate that child marriage is not only normalized, but also perceived as a culturally and morally acceptable act in Lombok cultures.

In addition, most of the parents agreed that child marriage prevents the children from opportunities to get further education due to switching responsibility from being a learner to being a housekeeper or breadwinner for the family. Moreover, the parents explained that child marriage prevents children from getting better jobs in the future because they have limited skills needed and do not have higher school certification. They can often only attain blue-collar jobs, such as farm laborers and for women the main job is a housewife. In short, children are discriminated against in obtaining education due to their marital status and gender, particularly for women. Children's development is often neglected in adherence to cultural norms: for example, their education, career, and mental health, is hindered, and the children tend to lose their opportunities in decision-making concerning their lives due to their age and gender. This is also particularly true for women based on their position as wives and daughters-in-law.

4.1.1.2 Acceptance of Child Marriage *Merarik* to Avoid Social Embarrassment

Central Lombok's *Merarik* tradition is widely regarded as a cultural identity. Most of Lombok's people chose *Merarik* tradition over religion to propose to the women. In this culture, if a girl is taken away by a male without her parent's approval, the family and community commonly urge the couple to marry right away. In the absence of parental consent, the family will feel embarrassed if their daughter is brought home after being taken away. This is not due to both parties' willingness to develop a marriage relationship but instead to prevent societal disgrace if the marriage does not take place. A couple of parents also asserted that the *Merarik* culture is an ancestral heritage which is not easy to be changed. This position also aligns with an official statement of the government:

Most people adhere to cultural and societal norms, which they call an ancestor's heritage, which is difficult to change. A man and a woman are forbidden to go out together till night; they must be married because parents will be embarrassed if the daughter returns home" (Author's interview with #G1, Lombok, April 22, 2025).

Girls cannot frequently resist or express their demands and wishes in real life due to strict social standards. They are not allowed to be heard, whether they approve or disapprove the marriage. As P3 stated, her daughter was compelled to accept the marriage without knowing why she was married after a man who liked her took her away without explanation. The community also encouraged the parents to agree with the marriage to avoid disgrace, even if the parents disagree with the decision but they lack the power to oppose it. Cultural standards exert pressure on both parents and children in this setting. The community is more concerned with preserving the family's good name over protecting the

children's fundamental rights or recognizing the detrimental influence of the forced marriage on the girls' rights for education. The Central Lombok administrative unit considers adult acceptance of the *Merarik* custom to be critically important.

This condition results from a lack of awareness among the community and stakeholder groups, such as local governments, religious or community leaders, or educational organizations, about children's best interests. Ultimately, only these stakeholder groups have the power to voice this issue but we find that support and awareness are rare due to the assumption that child marriage is a common thing to accept in society.

4.1.2 Factors Preventing Child Marriage Victims from Obtaining their Rights to Education in Central Lombok

4.1.2.1 Discrimination against Victims of Child Marriage

Most parents stated that there is no difference in the treatment between their children who marry at an early age and their children who marry at an adult age in terms of affection and attention. However, in the context of education, there is implicit discrimination where the children who marry early considered no longer appropriate or impossible to continue their education because of their marital status, especially for women. Every decision in their life is based on their husband. These children are considered to have already become adults regarding responsibilities and behavior. In this case, most people opine that education is no longer necessary after the children get married, as articulated by P1:

I wouldn't say that I will support her education after marriage because once I give her husband a permit to marry my daughter, all of the things related to my daughter will be her husband's decision. Besides, she is busy with domestic business, such as caring for the family and helping her husband on the farm (Author's interview with #P1, Lombok, April 17, 2025)

What P1 expressed above was that children who marry early, particularly women, will have limited opportunity to get their education because every decision will depend on the husband's permission. P2, P3, and P4 supported P1's statement and said that when a daughter is married, all the needs related to her will automatically be her husband's responsibility. In addition, girls are busier after being wives. Besides taking care of the family, some of them also help the husband with financial stability. This means the parents believe that the decision to get an education after marriage is no longer necessary unless the husband allows it.

Besides that, reattending school or regaining an education after marriage is regarded to be uncommon in society. The children will be bullied either by their friends or

the surrounding community. They will be mocked by their peers that she someone who already married no need to attend schools anymore. As expressed by victims of child marriage, both boys and girls such as #VF2 who says: "...People will bully me if I attend school after married; my husband also stated that my school is in the kitchen (Author's interview with #VF2, Lombok April 26, 2025). According to victim #VF2, attend school after marriage is a quite a challenge due to intense bullying from people surrounding them. VF3, VF4, and VF6 faced similar treatments. In other hand, P3 stated that: "...The challenge for my daughter to return to school after marriage is her obtaining her husband's permission. He must not allow her, and the community will bully her (Author's interview with #P3 Lombok, April 18, 2025)

However, each of them responded to the social stigma differently. For instance, VF2 gave up on continuing their education due to bullying and no husband's permission. VM3 chooses not to continue school because he is embarrassed that his friends know he is married and has decided to work in Malaysia. Meanwhile, VF4 and VF6 were indifferent toward the social stigma that considered them no longer suitable for returning to school after marriage. They tried to go back to school no matter the situation. However, VF4 was being rejected by the school due to her marital status, and VF6 was permitted to return to school only to have her last examination since she was married in her last year of Junior High school. Other discrimination also indirectly stated by one of the educators in a school who said: "...If we accept married students back to school, especially girls, I don't think they can manage their school because, after marriage, they will be busy with domestic business" (Author's interview with #E2, Lombok April 19, 2025)

Based on the explanation above, it quite clear that education, one of the fundamental children's rights, is lost. This injustice is based on their marital status: people assume education is only for those who are not married yet because after marriage, women are expected to stay at home, become a mother, take care of the family, and help the husband balance the finances. Unfortunately, this expectation mostly comes from the closest family, such as parents and husbands.

4.1.2.2 Neglecting Children's Interest

In many cases, the adult's decision to marry off the children often overlooks the children's educational rights. Still, it was usually motivated by cultural pressure, social norms, or embarrassment because the children had already practiced the *Merarik* tradition. For children who marry early, it is called *Merarik kodeq*, or marry at a young age. *Merarik* refers to the condition when the girls are brought to some places for more than 24 hours without parental approval as symbolic of the proposal. In this case, the perpetrators of child

marriage do so without any consideration of emotional, psychological, economic, and/or educational maturity. However, the parents decide to approve the children's marriage no matter how young they are to avoid society's judgment and to respect for the culture, as stated by P1:

At that time, I married my daughter, which means I permitted her the position of the guardian of marriage because I felt pressure from the surroundings because the boy had already brought her for more than 24 hours while the man was still part of the relatives that made me reluctant if I rejected, even though knowing that she was in underage (Author's interview with # P1, Lombok, April 17, 2025).

The statement above reveals that social pressure, cultural norms, and a sense of society and family reluctance are the factors that lead parents to marry off their children. P2 and P4 expressed identical opinions. They realize that marrying off their children will ruin their education. Even though the children are still at a very young age, they had no choice except to embrace the culture that shaped the social norms: when a boy and a girl are together for more than a day, they must be married, sometimes without asking the children's opinions. Besides respecting the culture, the parents permit their daughter to marry to maintain the family's relationship. A similar experience happened to VF5 when her parents forced her to marry one of her mother's relatives, not only to improve her life, but also to maintain family relationships, but the marriage ended up divorced. Another witness came from VM3 when he was unintentionally proposing to a girl without any consideration and maturity in all aspects, such as mental, emotional, and material. The VM3 uttered:

I proposed to a girl to marry me via cellphone; it was just kidding, but then the girl accepted me. I brought her to my grandma's house for one day and then to my parents' house. My mother rejected the girl and me, but they were embarrassed by society's opinion of returning the girl after taking her more than a day; my parents married us only for a month and divorced, and I couldn't go back to school after that, I was shy due to people will bully me, now I regret it a lot that I cannot continue my school (Author's interview #VM3, Lombok, April 20, 2025).

VF1 also told me that she did not have the intention to marry early; she wanted to continue her school, but her parents' behavior led her to marry early. Her parents did not directly command her to marry, but they did not prioritize the children's best interests, as VF1 claimed:

I did not mean to marry early. I wanted to go to school, but people around me recommended to do so, because my parents did not support me at all. I spent more time at the farm than at school because I am a girl. My parents said there was no need for higher education since I would end up in the kitchen. I often got domestic violence from my parents. One day, I tried to suicide, but I failed

(Author's interview with # VF1, Lombok, April 16, 2025).

The explanation above can be seen from two sides. First, the loss of educational opportunities for child marriage victims is caused by pressure either from society or the parents that prioritize the stigma of society and relationships rather than the interests of children, allowed by the immaturity of children and violent experiences. In most cases, the children lose their access to education because the interests of the children are not being prioritized over the adult's interests.

4.1.2.3 Lack of Support to Continue Education

One of the fundamental rights of children is to have a good life, grow, and develop intellectually. This right can be obtained through education. However, children with child marriage status are exceptional. Their educational opportunities are limited. The majority of parents with children who are married at the early age claimed that there was no option to continue their children's education after marriage. One of the primary obstacles for children who marry early to get back to school, particularly for women, is the prohibition from husband and/or parents-in-law, household burdens, early pregnancy, and no concrete regulations or policies from the school or government which support victims of child marriage to continue their studies, as stated by P1: "... I don't think that she can go to school because everything will depend on her husband's agreement, and it is almost impossible to go to school after marriage due to taking care of the twin babies (Author's interview with #P1, Lombok, April 17, 2025).

P1's statement aligns with parents like P2, P3, and P4, who share similar views regarding their daughters' educational futures. They believe their children will not receive support from their husbands and will be overwhelmed with domestic responsibilities. Nonetheless, a few parents still show a degree of support by allowing their daughters to enroll in "Sekolah Terbuka," a school alternative designed for students who have dropped out of formal education.

In addition, according to the majority of child marriage victims, school is something difficult either for those who are in married status or divorced status, as uttered by VF5 and VF4: "... Marriage means women taking care of the house, no school, no permission from my husband, even my social life is restricted (Author's interview with #VF5, Lombok, April 19, 2025). While VF4 stated that "... I was pressured in my marriage. I had no chance to share my opinion, whatever it was."(Author's interview with #VF4, Lombok, April 16, 2025).

The two statements above show how women are deprived of their rights, not only their chance for personal growth but also autonomy in making life decisions. Furthermore, similar experiences are shared by VF1, VF2, and VF7, who view pursuing education after marriage as a complex matter. In addition to their husbands' disapproval, their in-laws also oppose such efforts since some of the victims of child marriage expressed their regret at being married and still desired to return to school.

4.1.2.4 Silencing Children's Voices

Some of the child marriage victims are being married off without their approval, particularly in *Merarik* tradition". P2 said that her daughter was taken away for shopping, but in fact her daughter was taken to another place to be eloped. She was taken without an agreement, with no chance to ask where and why she was in that situation. Furthermore, most girls have no freedom to decide what is better for their life, such as their education or career. The loss of their freedom, particularly in education, is a combination of some factors such as gender, age, and marital status.

1. Gender: A woman, after marriage, mostly will become a housewife responsible for taking care of their family and become a mother. According to all of the parents and all women victims of child marriage, after marriage, their daily dominant routine is domestic business, while male victims of child marriage prefer to go to Malaysia to earn money. Women can earn their income only from simple jobs around their home, such as becoming farm laborers or craftswomen or assisting their husbands in the rice fields, as stated by P1: "... Her main role is a housewife and help her husband earn a living through any kind of job, whatever it is, as long as it is simple and still around the neighborhood" (Author's interview with #P1, Lombok, April 17, 2025).

The explanation above is aligned with the VF2, VF4, VF5, and VF7. Most of the husbands of child marriage victims do not support them both for education or career. Two of them stated that they were more depressed when they were still in a married relationship. They often feel depressed because they have no opportunity to express their opinions and needs. The victims of child marriage were demanded to focus only on household duties. VF4 said that the marriage influenced her mental health. Her ex-husband's family mistreated her by getting angry at her most of the time, her voice was heard less which caused her more depressed and decided to escape from marriage relationship. She tried to return to school but she was rejected by the school she applied, primarily to due to her marital status, as she was already an adolescent widow.

Meanwhile, other child marriage victims like VF7 stated that the marriage burdened her mind. She was expected to focus solely on domestic tasks, which caused her to disregard the necessity of education. VF2 and VF5 tended to be prohibited by their husbands from engaging in personal development, such as getting work and education. VF2 told me that her husband said to her: "... Better stay at home rather than work; your school is in the kitchen" (Author's interview with #VF2, Lombok, April 26, 2025). VF5 added similar statement "...Once I had a job, my ex-husband prohibited me from working or even getting an education. He asked me to remain at home, taking care of my children, as he believed marriage for women meant becoming a housewife" (Author's interview with #VF5, Lombok, April 19, 2025). This explanation reflects an apparent injustice against women. They are not listened to solely because they are women. They lose their intellectual development by being restricted from jobs and education and are also almost deprived of a significant part of life by not being heard.

2. Age: child marriage victims' voice is less likely to be heard due to the age. Frequently, the community underestimated the children because of their age. They are considered as too young to make their own decision. Both male and female victims of child marriage stated that their voices are heard less. VF3 noted that his parents consider him too young to decide everything by himself since his parents still cover his finances. This situation is aligned with VF7's experiences when her opinion was disrespected by people surrounding her due to her age, which is too young. "... My views are rarely be taken into consideration because I was married too young" (Author's interview with #VF7, Lombok, April 20, 2025). This statement indicates that she lacked the authority to determine what was best for her life. If she wished to pursue her education after marriage, it would be challenging, as she was deemed too young to take part in any decisions.
3. Marital Status: Once children are in a marriage relationship, they are no longer eligible to re-enroll for school. It can result from society's stigma, lack of permission from parents, husbands (for females), or rejection from the educational institution. School institutions tend to reject them due to their marital status because the schools claim that there is no regulation from the central government to accept child marriage victims to study. Other schools rejected the child-married victim solely because of the status of marriage, without being more critical of different aspects, such as eagerness to return to school, school age, and children's rights to grow and develop, as stated by VF4: "... I was married when I was in eleventh class, it was only for 3 weeks and divorced. My

parents and I requested to allow me to re-enroll in the school where I used to, but they rejected me only because of my marital status” (Author’s interview with #VF4, Lombok, April 16, 2025). VF7 added that she was also treated as no longer appropriate to have an education due to her marital status. She stated “... I was unable to pursue my schooling after being married. people treated me as an adult because of my marital status. However, I was just entering my 16th. They stated that I was no longer qualified to re-enroll in school because I was married (Author’s interview with #VF7, Lombok, April 20, 2025).

According to the explanation above, the children are no longer eligible for educational rights solely because they are married or have ever been married, even though they are still in the school age. Females, in particular, are prevented from attaining an education due to their status as a wife who is expected to primarily responsible for household jobs. This indicated that traditional gender norms and patriarchal structures placed the girls only in domestic roles, not as individuals with rights for intellectual growth. This contradicts the ideals of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which defends children's rights.

4.1.3 National, Local, and Educational Institutions Regulations that Protect the Rights to Education for Child Marriage Victims in Central Lombok.

4.1.3.1 National Regulations

Indonesia guaranteed children's education rights without any discrimination stated in some laws—for example, National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003. Point 3 stated that the national education system ought to be capable of ensuring equal access to educational opportunities, advancement of quality, as well as the appropriateness and efficacy of education management to confront difficulties that arise by the demands of changes in local, national, and global life so that modifications to education must be carried out in an envisioned, instructed and sustainable approach.

Moreover, Child Protection Law Number 35 of 2024 in Article 1, points 1 and 2 stated that children are defined as anyone under the age of 18, including little ones in the womb, who must be secured and ensured their rights to live, grow, develop, and participate entirely consistent with human dignity, as well as be protected from violence and discrimination. This law is aligned with the National Regulation of the Minister of Women's and Children's Empowerment Number 4 of 2024 about implementing services to fulfill children's rights. Point 1 stated that every child is blessed with the inherent rights to flourish, succeed, and grow while being safe from prejudice and abuse, including access to services that uphold children's rights and advance their best interests. Article 2 expressed

that the regulation on Point 1 serves as a guideline for ministries, institutions, province governments, district or municipal governments, and communities in the provision of Child Rights Fulfilment services, which means that all government levels must adopt this regulation, including village government. Means, education is the right for all children. They should not be discriminated against in any form, including social status. Either government or educators must give the best education service for children as long as they are under 18 years old. Education opportunities must be equal in access or quality. They must be secured from any violence as well.

However, the findings of this research show that national regulations that preserve children's educational rights are not adequately executed in practical contexts, whether at school or local government level. The majority of participants, including both victims of child marriage and parents of children who have experienced child marriage, indicated that they never heard of any school's regulations permitting students with marital or divorced status to re-enroll in schools. Meanwhile, in the context of village governance, they asserted as well that they had never heard any policies that facilitate access to education for victims of child marriage.

The data from schools and village government in the interview session confirmed that both school and village government stated that they do not have any official regulation or policy that supports child marriage victims to return to school. In addition, neither public nor private schools have Memorandum of Understanding or cooperation with the village government that promotes child marriage victims to reobtain their access to education, as stated by E1, one of the educators: "...Legally, schools do not have any official regulations yet for accepting child marriage victims to return to school, and I don't think that any formal educational institution has been proactive to cooperate with village government to make such regulation" (Author's interview with #E1. Lombok, April 23, 2025).

The above statement is in line with findings from some other village government's statements. All of the village government participants expressed that there is no official legislation from the central government that they can use as a reference to create legal protection for victims of child marriage in case they want to regain their access to education after marriage. Some efforts that have been trying was reaching out to schools and ask them to make the victims of child marriage be able to access education. This study found a few private schools are more open to accept child marriage victims, while state schools prefer to reject.

Furthermore, due to the lack of national regulation on this issue, the village government prefers to put all education responsibility to the family or spouse of the child

marriage victims, or it is dependent on the school's policy. Furthermore, the local government stated they had no legal authority to require the schools to accept child marriage victims. Aside from that, the village authority has never provided financial aid, and emotional and psychological support for married students due to fund limitations.

In summary, national legislation concerning children and education asserts that education is universal, free from discrimination, and that every child, including victims of child marriage, possesses equal rights to receive education. However, these regulations are not being implemented at schools and local government due to the lack of formal policy from the central government, insufficient intervention, and the absence of school policy. It highlights a disparity between legal norms and reality. Consequently, victims of child marriage experience injustice by not being able to access their educational rights and other rights, such as protection and development for a promising future.

4.1.3.2 No National Regulations' Enforcement at the Village Government Level

In providing access to education for child marriage victims, the village governments have at least three challenges such as (1) the absence of statistical data on child marriage victims, (2) village governments emphasis on the prevention of child marriage, neglecting educational intervention, and (3) no legal basis for village governments to reintegrate child marriage victims into education.

1. The Absence of Statistical Data on Child Marriage Victims

One of the primary challenges in providing education rights for victims of child marriage in Central Lombok is a lack of reliable data at the local government level. Generally, governments lack a specific system or mechanism for recording early marriage victims, particularly those who drop out of school. The absence of this data prevents victims of child marriage from receiving effective intervention about their rights to education, child protection, and social support, as stated by G4: "...We don't have specific numbers on how many children marry and drop out of school (Author's interview with #G4, Lombok, April 21, 2025).

This information is synchronous with the document analysis results which show that there is no official data on the number of child marriage victims. Furthermore, most village governments said that most of child marriage ceremonies are conducted off the record or unofficially. These facts have underlying causes. First, no parents have ever reported their children's marriage to the local authorities. Second, the village government's officials, including the head of the community do not register child marriage because the

children do not reach the legal age of marriage, which is 19. In addition, according to all the participants, the village government's staff will not attend the marriage ceremony due to government sanctions, as uttered by G2: "... The lowest level of local authorities is not allowed to participate in managing child marriage ceremonies due to a sanction from the central government" (Author's interview with #G2, Lombok, April 21, 2025).

This situation raises both negative and positive implications. The absence of data manifests the village government staff's obedience to show that they are against the child marriage practice. On the other hand, this causes the lack of early and proper intervention for the child marriage victims regarding their access to education, either counseling, socialization, or service that can facilitate them to reach out to the school or alternative education such as "Paket C." As VM3 experienced, when he wanted to return to school after the divorce, the school commanded the victim to wait for the information, but there was no clear information. The victim ends up waiting without any decision from the school or help from the government.

2. Village Governments Emphasis on the Prevention of Child Marriage, Neglecting Educational Intervention

This research found that in Central Lombok, most of the village governments' policies emphasize the prevention of child marriage through public education. For instance, socialization, reproductive health counseling, and *Posyandu* cadre engagement. This sort of initiative is essential. However, the approaches tend to focus merely on prevention. They lack restorative actions, particularly in giving access to education for the victim of child marriage. When the children are married, the village governments have no strategy or follow-up program that can assist and ensure that the child marriage victims will get access to education. This indicated of policy emptiness and the lack of attention for children's rights at the village government level. Moreover, the majority of the village government does not pay much attention to education for children after marriage, particularly for girls. All things related to education become the responsibility of her family or husband. They are often left without any guidance, counseling, administration support, and/or access to alternative education such as "Paket C" from the village government, as stated by G1: "...If they are already married, all matters depend on their family, and if the women wish to pursue their education, it will be conditional upon their husband's approval" (Author's interview with #G1, Lombok, April 22, 2025). This statement indicates that village governments are not implementing the child rights-based approaches as mandated in child protection law. As a result, children who marry early not only lose their childhood but also

their fundamental rights and self-development. The rights of education for the victims of child marriage do not receive serious attention. In that case, child marriage leads to negative influences either to the children's personal development, contribute to structural poverty, or worsen gender parity.

3. No Legal Basis for Village Governments to Reintegrate Child Marriage Victims into Education.

Another reason for victims of child marriage who cannot access education is because the village governments predominantly have no official legislation to regulate the rights of education for children with marital or divorced status. This result is confirmed by finding in document analysis procedure. The document analysis process is aimed to gather data on the recapitulation of child marriage cases and the regulations implemented by the village governments to prevent early marriage and to ensure the victims of child marriage can get their right to education. The data gathered comprises village regulations, decrees signed by the village head, and other formal directives specifically designed to facilitate educational support for child marriage.

The document analysis revealed that no written policies nor a notice board within the village government existed which addressed the educational rights of children who become victims of child marriage. Most village governments, which have already been established for more than 20 years and less than 20 years, only provide undocumented rules, guidelines, and temporary programs, as stated by G4:

Currently, we are lacking of written regulations. However, we anticipate addressing this issue in the future. We cannot formulate any policy without explicit regulations from the central government. Previously, we provided life skills education, encompassing culinary workshops and rattan crafts, designed to assist youths who have discontinued their education for various reasons (Author's interview with #G4, Lombok, April 24, 2025).

Based on the explanation above, the lack of formal regulation by most village governments is the result of the shortage of a definitive legal code from central government mandating village administrations to guarantee educational access for child marriage victims. Therefore, restoring educational rights for child marriage victims is typically individualistic and becomes the family's responsibility. Furthermore, most village governments do not have a system to identify children who drop out of school because of early marriage, nor do they facilitate their return to formal or informal education. The

approach taken by the village government is more general and does not explicitly make victims of child marriage the subject in determining policies.

4.1.3.3 Lack of National Education Regulations Enforcement in Formal Schools

National regulations already mentioned in chapter two, explicitly guaranteed the rights of children to access education without any discrimination, including children with married status. Such as Law Number 35 of 2014 on the Protection of Children, Law Number 82 of 2015 Minister of Education and Culture, and Law Number 20 of 2003 about the National Education system. Some examples of the regulations' contents above are all children have the rights to education regardless of their social and family circumstances; there should be no discrimination in school areas based on social status, including the marital status of students, and local governments and educational institutions are responsible for maintaining access to education for all children.

However, based on the findings of this study, no school openly accepts students with a married or divorced status to enroll in early grades, except for students who are already registered for the final exam. They must be accepted to return to school due to responsibility for completing examination. To avoid bullying in terms of mocking from peers, the counseling teacher is responsible for assisting the student concern.

In addition, the observation results show that schools refuse married students due to most schools not having facilities or classroom designs to support married students returning to school. They have no flexible schedule or material specifically designed for married students. The main reason for refusing married students is that national regulations are not well socialized and enforced. Both in educational institutions and at the village government level. There are at least three reasons for schools not to accept students with marital status or divorced status who return to school: no clear regulation from the central government or educational officer, fear that married students will be bullied, and social stigma.

1. No Clear Regulation from the Central Government or Educational Officer

Most of the schools that participated in this study stated that they do not have the authority to make their policy to accept child marriage victims to return to school openly and officially registered due to no explicit instruction from the Ministry of Education. The government also does not provide policies prohibiting married students from enrolling in school. No policies officially indicate that married students are permitted to enroll in school. However, this research found that most schools create their own standard regulation for

accepting or rejecting married students to enroll. For example, E2's policies state that students are prohibited from dating in school, marrying, and getting pregnant.

According to the educators E1, E3, and E4, these schools may have regulation refusing the students with marital status to return to school. However, they are still supportive if students desire to return to school after marriage. They will accept them on condition that the identity of students' marital status should not be exposed. This means the schools placed themselves in a democratic position. The policies depend on the central government's regulations but the schools try to be moderate, as uttered by E1:

No clarity of the central government's regulation allowing formal schools to accept the students with marital or divorced status to return to school. I am unsure if there is a legality to do so or only accommodated by regulation of *Paket C*". But we had married students enroll at our school from the beginning of class, on condition that they conceal their marital status. (Author's interview with #E1, Lombok, April 23, 2025).

2. Fear that Married Students Will be Bullied

Fear that married students will be bullied is one of the reasons formal educational institutions refuse to accommodate students with marital status. Teachers are concerned with students' psychological wellness especially girls who are more vulnerable to being bullied by their peers due to their marital status, as stated by E2:

The majority of bullying takes place in schools and seriously impacts on the students' psychology. Girls are more vulnerable to being bullied because they tend to be shyer. If they enroll in school after marriage or in widow status and they are pretty people, the chance of being bullied is increased (Author's interview with #E2, Lombok, April 19, 2025).

Educators E1, E3, and E4 further support this statement. These schools neither have an agreement to openly accept students who have been married or divorced to return to school nor establish formal policies to support them. They claimed that this aimed at securing the students' well-being. They believe that every student has different capabilities to bear bullying due to the many bullying cases that happen most in educational institutions. such as teasing or different treatment from classmate. Therefore, schools recommend the students who drop out of school to *Sekolah Terbuka* to continue their educational access as an alternative. However, it is not as maximal as a formal education environment, but according to the educators, *Sekolah Terbuka* is safer for the students mentally and psychologically.

3. Social Stigma

This research finds that local social norms affected the majority of schools' perspectives and regulations in responding to children who marry at a very young age and have a desire to return to school, especially girls. Some worries for reaccepting them will be considered as disobeying regulations and normalizing child marriage. The educators from some of the schools stated that society perceives that when children are married, it will be the ending point of their formal education, particularly for girls. In patriarchal social structure and cultural context, when girls are married, it is frequently viewed as a transition from childhood to the roles of mothers or wives, leading society to think that formal education is no longer necessary for them.

This perception leads to hesitation within educational institutions to welcome married students back to schools. Schools are worried if they accept married students, they may be interpreted by the public as allowing or approving child marriage. The morality of the local community serves as the criterion for policy determination, overshadowing the rights of children and national regulations that ensure non-discriminatory access to education. This is stated by E2:

If we accept children who are married, it will hurt other students. Society will assume that we schools approve child marriage and allow them to continue their school. While for the girl, they become wife and soon become mother, they will not only be busy with domestic business but also with lessons in the school, it will be so complicated (Author's interview with #E2, Lombok, 19 April, 2025).

The above perception is consistent with the information from G1, G2, and G4. Most of the village government confirmed that when children marry, society perceives and expects them to behave as adults, whether in their profession, mental state, or thoughts. The society also regards schooling as unnecessary for child marriage victims, regardless of their age. As a result, child marriage victims lose access to school. Furthermore, the doctrine that states "Married people are automatically being adults" has already been ingrained in society's attitude, which led youngsters who married early not to have such a strong motivation to return to school; yet, some of them still want to regain their education. In short, schools in Central Lombok tend to refuse children with marital or divorced status due to the absence of formal regulation, fear that married students will be bullied, and social stigma as a measure to determine the rules.

4.1.4 The Effect of Child Marriage on Children's Educational and Personality Development in Central Lombok

Child marriage has lasting negative effects on children's development, particularly in terms of education and personality advancement. Educational institutions, families, and

communities often fail to provide the necessary support for child marriage victims to access their development and personal growth. Based on the findings of this study, the victims of child marriages face complex challenges regarding their educational access due to aspects of structural, social and cultural, and institutional regulations.

There are multiple effects of child marriage on educational and personal development faced by victims of child marriage such as child marriage restricts educational access and intellectual advancement, causes mental pressure, obstructs children from accessing better employment opportunities, and inhibits financial autonomy and reduces women's independence.

4.1.4.1 Child Marriage Restricts Educational Access and Intellectual Development

This research finds that child marriage practice results in students discontinuing their education. All child marriage victims, regardless of gender, claimed that their educational options are constrained after marriage. Their educational opportunities are automatically terminated. This occurs due to several factors, including rigid school policies, the lack of spousal and in-law consent for women, and societal pressure or stigma which caused the loss of their self-confidence in pursuing education after marriage. Therefore, they are insecure regarding the pursuit of education post-marriage, as stated by VF5: "... It is impossible to return to school after marriage; my husband prohibits me, even forbids me from working, and limits my socialization circle. After getting married, I felt insecure when I met my friends; some went to university and worked while I was only a housewife" (Author's interview with #VF5, April 19, 2025).

Most of the parents support this statement. They confirmed that once their children have married, they cannot access to education. The most challenging issue is getting approval from husbands and parents-in-law. After marriage, their priorities are shifted. The girls will look after the house and family, including early pregnancy and baby care. At the same time, the boys work to earn money. Most boys go to Malaysia after marriage to support their family life. It means child marriage significantly obstructed the process of children's intellectual development, mainly due to the disconnection from formal education. As a result, children lose access to learning space as fundamental cognitive ability advancement—for instance, the capability of critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication. Moreover, formal schools provide academic knowledge and a place to build social relations and intellect, which can stimulate children to be reflective and open-minded. After marriage, children will be trapped in unprepared domestic routines

without access to the above conducive development. They have no opportunities to explore their potential fully. This condition also restricted their talent and intellectual and financial independence in the future, as stated by the parents, P4: "... After marriage, my daughter clearly cannot continue her education; she has no permission from her husband and no graduate certificate because she married in 12th grade. It will be difficult for her to get a good job. Now she is taking care of her children" (Author's interview with #P4, Lombok, April 18, 2025).

The above quote shows how child marriages disrupt education and block the young generation from shaping a better future. It is not simply a social issue but a quality human resource improvement crisis that needs action to reduce this practice. In addition, it requires the awareness of the stakeholders responsible for establishing any regulation to end this phenomenon. The above negative effect of child marriage harms children and the nation if it is not appropriately addressed.

4.1.4.2 Child Marriage Causes Mental Pressure for Children

Child marriage is a trap for the children. They play adult roles without biological and psychological readiness. Most of them are not ready to confront household conflicts. Notably, the girls are expected to behave like adults. They are placed in adult roles, such as becoming wives, mothers, and daughters-in-law, without any preparation for emotional and social knowledge. Adolescence is a period of self-exploration, strengthened personal identity, and emotional maturation, but it is distracted by familial obligation and emotional pressure in marriage.

Furthermore, adolescents who enter into marriage prematurely lack consistent emotional management. Consequently, when confronted with household conflicts, they tend to be unable to resolve the issues and instead they choose silence. They conceal their feelings from their closest family, such as their parents, to avoid being accused, deemed immature, or causing embarrassment to their family. This can induce significant psychological stress, including anxiety, chronic stress, and depression. This study indicated that 3 out of 6 girls who married early are stressful because of their marriage relationships and inevitably end up being divorced, as stated by VF4: "... I was married because I wished to fix my economic problem, but I was married only for 3 weeks. I was under pressure, and I wasn't happy. It broke my mentality and psychologically. My husband and his family mistreated me. I escaped from that relationship and ended up being divorced" (Author's interview with #VF4, Lombok, April 16, 2025) The statement of VF4 is aligned with P5: "... My daughter married due to a lack of school motivation. When she had a

problem in her marital relationship, she concealed it and kept silent due to being worried that her parents would blame her. Now she is divorced" (Author's Interview with #P5, April 24, 2025).

These two statements indicated that the children entered into marriage due to her emotional immaturity. One was motivated to marry off to enhance their financial conditions and another one is due to her lack of motivation to study. These children believed that marriage might resolve their problems, but marriage brought them from one issue to another. They end up stressed out and depressed and not bold enough to share their problem, which leads them to divorce. They need support from their spouse, family, or institution, such as school or local government, to escape from the circle of mentality pressure traps.

4.1.4.3 Early Marriage Obstructs Children from Accessing Better Employment Opportunities

Children who marry early miss the opportunity to pursue further education and to gain the skills required to navigate the formal employment market. Child marriage puts Indonesia at risk of not achieving some of the SDGs' goals, such as access to education, gender equality, and decent jobs. Children who marry early have less opportunity to obtain higher education and receive skills training relevant to job market requirements. Most child marriage victims can only work in informal jobs with uncertain income, as expressed by VM3: "... I have been waiting for information from a school on whether I can return to school or not after get married, but I get nothing. So, I will go to Malaysia to work as a laborer" (Autor's interview with #VM3, Lombok, April 20, 2025).

The statement above aligns with the findings from most parents, such as P1, P2, P3, and P4 stated that the girls who married early ended up as housewives and took care of the family. Women are limited in their careers. They are financially dependent on their husband. They are allowed to have their income only from the simple job around their neighborhood; it often relies on the local community's livelihood. For instance, women work as farm laborers and rattan crafters. Meanwhile, men immigrate to Malaysia without the appropriate skills.

This situation contradicts the SDG's principles, which targeted exclusive and quality educational access in SDG 4, emphasizing the necessity of women empowerment and elimination of gender-based inequalities in SDG 5, and targeted the creation of productive and decent work opportunities for all without discrimination in SDG 8. The practice of child marriage adversely affects multiple facets of a child's life and, more broadly, impedes national progress, as these youngsters represent the productive demographic that will succeed the nation.

4.1.4.4 Child Marriage Inhibits Financial Autonomy and Reduces Women's Independence

This research indicates that child marriages decrease financial autonomy for both boys and girls. As they are not completing their schooling, they lack adequate skills. When children get into marriage at a very young age, their financial stability is inherently reliant on their parents, or, for girls, it relies on their husbands. Besides, their emotional and psychological immaturity discourages them from doing what is best for themselves; this independence places them in vulnerable positions such as child exploitation, under control, and even domestic violence. In addition, according to the participants, most girls are financially reliant on their husbands. As stated by the P5:

My daughter has been married for several years. Her husband provided her a limited living allowance. She was a full-time housewife and had no other source of income. She concealed all of her problems from us as parents until she couldn't longer endure it and ended up divorced (Author's interview with #P5, Lombok, April 24, 2025).

Furthermore, the female child marriage victims also stated that their autonomy regarding financial and other vital decisions relied on parents or husbands. VF3 claimed that after getting married and divorced, most decisions were determined by his parents. Worse than that, 5 of 6 stated that their husbands dominated most decisions, parents-in-law sometimes participate. Their voices are not heard; for example, when they are supposed to have a job, they get almost no permission from their husband. The spouse argues that women should stay at home to manage home responsibilities while he is the primary breadwinner.

This situation demonstrates how power dynamics within child marriage practices display a significant gender gap between men and women. The children have no space to voice their needs or desires. This situation can affect emotional and psychological health. As shared by parents, girls often conceal problem in their marriage, both related to their economic and other issues. They kept the problem to themselves without having someone to share it with. Their psychological condition was not well, which led them to depression and divorce.

Further consequences of child marriage reveal that many children enter marriage without adequate readiness biologically, emotionally, and economically. They lack independent living and financial abilities to support their marriage. In many cases, being unprepared leads to divorce. According to this research, 4 of 7 child marriage victims divorced from their first marriage. When children do not have adequate financial and emotional support, they become closed in a cycle of dependence, return to their parents,

and remain a burden for them. As the majority of them do not work, leaving the parents responsible for them, implying that child marriage contributes to the perpetuation of structural poverty, since the majority of child marriage victims are from a lower-middle-class family.

In summary, child marriage is profoundly destructive to children's development. It constrains their advancement in several facets, specifically, cognitive advancement. Child marriage obstructs access to education, which is essential for future opportunities, including improved employment prospects, social connection, and liberation from patriarchal norms. This phenomenon obstructs opportunities for self-discovery and the identification of life's values. This matter warrants discussion to ensure children receive an education that enables them to perceive the world differently and lead a more valuable life.

4.2 Discussion

This discussion section addresses previous study findings by connecting, linking and evaluating each component using the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Intersectional Feminist theory.

4.2.1 The Community's Perceptions of the Rights to Education for Child marriage victims in Central Lombok

To answer the first research question about how the local community perceive education rights for child marriage victims in Central Lombok, this study finds that there are at least two types of community's perceptions regarding educational rights for child marriage victims: (1) Normalization of child marriage and (2) acceptance of child marriage *Merarik* to avoid social embarrassment.

4.2.1.1 Normalization of Child Marriage

This research revealed that child marriages are considered something normal and common among the local community in central Lombok, particularly due to being strongly influenced by the tradition of *Merarik*. Derived from detailed interviews and observations, this study finds that child marriage practice is not only regarded as usual, but local people also celebrate the ceremony like an adult's wedding, despite the couple being still of school age. Generally, everyone is welcome to attend the event. The impact of this practice is children tend to lose access to further education. When the children are willing to continue or return to school after marriage, local people will perceive it as something uncommon, which means an individual who gets married is regarded to be no need to attend school because they are considered mature and adult people regardless of how young they are.

This research reveals that child marriage practice reflected a strong culture that placed tradition first over children's rights, such as education rights. The tradition of

Merarik is perceived as a sacred event that represents respect and family honor. As explained by one of the parents, the *Merarik* tradition means that when a woman is taken away without her parent's approval, she is precious, uneasy to obtain, and a symbol of parents' honor that women must be respected. However, when this practice is conducted by a couple of children or an adult with children, it is categorized as violence because it can eliminate the fundamental rights of an individual.

The worst of this fact is that child marriage practice leads to the loss of education opportunities, and local people considered as something normal. This study's finding aligned with a study by Hidayana et al. (2016) and Colquhoun (2020), who mentioned that in Lombok, the tradition of *Merarik* practiced by children is accepted or legitimated under cultural and religious rationalizations. Fitri et al. (2022) found a similar that local values combined with religious interpretation led the majority of people to normalize child marriage. Meanwhile, Anggraeny (2017) found that *Merarik* is a marriage tradition practiced by the majority of the Sasak tribe in Lombok is considered legally valid. based on religious perspective and Law number 1 of 1974. The main difference is in the customary process of picking up the bride by elopement, but the complete series of marriage ceremonies adheres to Islamic laws and regulations as outlined in the Law Number 1 of 1974.

The discussion above means the local community in Lombok perceived *Merarik* and child marriage as two widespread and acceptable practices as long as they followed Islamic rules. However, the problem emerges when the participants involved in the marriage are young and still of school age. They instantaneously lose their educational opportunities, and when children with marital or divorced status want to return to school, the social community stigmatizes them, particularly female victims. It is aligned with a study conducted by Kim (2019) that married students are excluded from educational rights due to institutional practice labeled them as "unfit for school," which is influenced by administration and politics. Similar things happen in Indonesia, particularly in Central Lombok. According to the findings of this research, child marriage victims are excluded from schooling not only due to social stigma but also due to the absence of precise central government regulation that allows children with marital status to obtain their education.

Child marriage normalization within the local society and exclusion of the victims from educational opportunities contradict the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These two elements are classified as violations of the rights of children. Article 1 and Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child assert that children possess their right to education and shall not be subjected to discrimination. Nonetheless, the research results

found that normalization of the practice of child marriage poses a significant barrier to children's access to education after marriage, especially for females. To return to school after getting marital status is not easy. As experienced by VF2, returning to school after marriage is considered an uncommon thing by the people around and causes mental pressure as well since the victims of child marriage will be bullied.

Meanwhile, from the standpoint of intersectional feminist theory, the two local community's responses (normalizing child marriage and marginalizing the victims) exemplify patriarchal structures that reinforce social control over women's futures and their identities as individuals. The *Merarik* tradition posits that women are valuable and difficult to acquire, perceiving them as objects and symbols of familial pride rather than autonomous individuals with equal rights to men. Aside from that, female victims of child marriage are perceived as passive individuals. Tradition and social perceptions control them, and their rights are not prioritized. Thus, intersectionality reveals that multiple identities interact to limit women's access to education and liberation

4.2.1.2 Acceptance of Child Marriage *Merarik* to Avoid Social Embarrassment

This research discovered that child marriage is allowed by the local communities in Central Lombok due to the tradition of *Merarik*. As mentioned earlier, this ritual is a form of elopement process that involves bringing the prospective wife to be proposed. Therefore, when a couple performs *Merarik*, the female cannot return to her parents. When the guy has brought the girl, they must be married, even the couple are physically and emotionally unprepared. This is to avert familial embarrassment. The process of elopement is when a man takes a girl away without parental approval, and it fosters pressure on the girl's family to approve the proposal to secure the family's reputation. Refusing the marriage would be considered as humiliating the girl's family. Regardless the participants are teens or adults.

This study finds that the acceptance of child marriage is actually to avert embarrassment. It reflected how a culture's values and family honor are prioritized over a child's rights and well-being. The children are not allowed to approve or disapprove of the marriage, as stated by participant P3. The daughter was brought up and must be married without being allowed to know why she is being married, and the parents must agree to the marriage due to cultural norms. This evidence shows that the girls' voices are not being heard in making decisions. Resulting, either the parents or the daughter feeling compelled to follow the culture expectations.

This finding is aligned with the study conducted by Hidayana et al. (2016) and Colquhoun (2020), who find that *Merarik* was initially a customary practice among the

Sasak tribe in Lombok. However, it frequently results in forced marriages of young women. This approach is employed to uphold social order, particularly in patriarchal settings. An example of patriarchy can be seen in pre-marriage situations, where a man takes a woman away without parental consent, but traditional norms protect the practice. After marriage, women are often burdened with greater domestic responsibilities than men (Suhastini, 2021). This confirms that the *Merarik* tradition is part of patriarchal structures from the beginning. However, the community solely sees this practice from a cultural norm's perspective, they neglect children's and women's rights.

This situation contradicts the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including Articles 3, 12, and 28, which grant children's rights to education, participation, and protection in children best interest. In Central Lombok, societal norms often disregard these rights, as the *Merarik* culture prioritizes marriage over education. While analyzing child marriage through the lens of intersectional feminism, this research found that the social identities such as, marital status, age, and gender are structurally disadvantageous women. Crenshaw (1991) argued that when systems of racism, gender, and class-based domination intersect, intervention based on the experiences of women who do not share the same class or race are unlikely to be appropriate or effective.

In the context of child marriage, the girls are the primary victims of patriarchal norms that attribute their values to virginity and family honor. When a woman elopes with a man, society instantly considers them impure, except that the male must marry her, regardless of age or agreement. This means society does not punish the man for his actions, instead stigmatizing the women. Yllo & Straus, (2017) stated that patriarchy or violence is higher when men get normative or cultural support from society. This sort of situation leads women's voices to be indirectly silenced. When the community accepts tradition of *Merarik* as normal behavior, they have no chance to make their own life decisions.

According to intersectionality theory, girls' vulnerabilities are shaped by a combination of gender stereotypes, social constraints on family prestige, and their current age. When girls are rushed into the *Merarik* custom, they not only lose control of their physical beings and destinies, but they are also sacrificed to maintain familial integrity based on gender standards. This demonstrates how social and cultural processes produce various inequities, putting females in a structurally disadvantaged position.

4.2.2 Factors Preventing Child Marriage Victims from Obtaining their Rights to Education in Central Lombok

4.2.2.1 Discrimination against Victims of Child Marriage

Children who are the victims of early marriage, both boys and girls, are discriminated to access education after marriage. The local community will consider them as adults, who no longer needs an education even though education is a fundamental necessity. In particular, girls experienced more discrimination rather than boys, as their roles switch to domestic duties, and their access to education is predominantly conditional upon the approval of their spouses. Beside excluding from education, they are also being bullied or even rejecting from educational institutions.

This finding reflects local society's mindset that once a child, particularly a girl, is married, she is no longer part of the educational system. Marriage redefines their identities: from being children into becoming adults as wives and housewives, regardless of their biological age or motivation to continue learning. As P1 pointed out, a girl's educational decisions are totally up to her husband, and domestic tasks are regarded as contradictory to schooling. The victims demonstrated (VF2, VM3, VF4, and VF6) how the stigma of community and institutional limitations hindered their access to education. According to VF4, they were bullied, received no support from their husbands, and were directly rejected by the educational institution, as explained earlier by VF4.

The above finding is similar with the report from UNICEF (2020) which discovers that marriage significantly contributes to children's school dropout rates. It confined child marriage victims to re-enroll to education. Girls Not Brides (2023) highlights that societal norm often restrict married girls to focus solely on domestic roles and their endeavors to pursue education are perceived as against conventional expectations. Davis et al. (2013) also stated that societal conventions frequently discriminate against child marriage victims, inhibiting their reintegration into school settings.

These scenarios conflict with major elements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including Articles 2, 12, and 28, which protect equal treatment, the right to freedom of expression, and the right to education. When schools reject away married children and communities devalue them, their rights are clearly violated.

Viewed this practice through the lens of intersectional feminist theory, discrimination encountered by married children, particularly girls, arises from the overlapping effects of gender, age, and marriage status. Once married, girls are no longer viewed as children with rights, but rather as spouses required to perform domestic duties. Their access to education is commonly reliant on their husbands, demonstrating how

patriarchal standards limit women individuality. As participant VF2 mentioned, her husband believed that a wife's education "belongs in the kitchen." These intersecting identities lead to layered marginalization, in which becoming young, female, and married severely limits girls' opportunities to return to school and rebuild their lives.

4.2.2.2 Neglecting Children's Interest

In many situations of child marriage, adults make judgments on child marriage decisions based on societal expectations and cultural standards rather than the children's academic future. The *Merarik* tradition, particularly child elopement, takes place irrespective of the children's emotional, psychological, economic, or intellectual readiness. Parents feel socially pressured to give consent to the marriage, even though their children are still very young. Parents tend to agree to marry off their children after elopement due to the ingrained tradition of Lombok, which set that it would be a disgrace if they do not marry off their children after elopement, even if they have to marry them in a very short time. For example, VM3 married only one month and VF4 married only three weeks which automatically interrupts their education.

The explanation above implies that community norms and customs are deeply entrenched that children's rights and interests are frequently abandoned. P1 and VM3 illustrate that both parents and children are compelled to decide that prioritizing the family's image is more important than the children's best interests. This indicates that children's independence is overlooked, and their education is compromised to serve adult objectives, including societal status, fear of humiliation, and the preservation of familial relationships. The majority of victims sacrifice their access to school, face an excessive workload, and encounter a patriarchal system set up by spouses and sometimes by parents-in-law. These are consequences of a system prioritizing cultural conformity above a child's development.

These activities obviously offend the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), involving Articles 3, 12, 19, and 28, which emphasize the child's best interests, right to be heard, protection from violence, and access to education. This study discovered that youngsters are frequently denied the opportunity to express their opinions or further their education due to cultural pressures and family decisions, indicating a systemic failure to protect these fundamental rights. As experienced by VF1, her parents neglect her educational needs, and forced her to work, which ultimately compelled her to marry young and abandon her education. Conversely, VM3 recognized the detrimental effects of early marriage and sought to cancel it; however, her parents insisted on proceeding with the marriage due to their embarrassment over the social stigma resulting from the *Merarik* custom. Besides, due to the girl had been brought to the boy's parents' house, therefore the

marriage must be conducted. This indicates that the environment fails to defend children's rights.

Moreover, analysis through the lens of intersectional feminism reveals that age, gender, and cultural identity are key drivers of this vulnerability. VF1's testimony showed that her status as a woman in a rural environment, in a patriarchal family, without educational support, forced labor, and emotional neglect caused her to attempt suicide and decide to marry early. Women are the most affected because their value is associated with adherence to social roles as daughters, domestic workers, and guardians of family honor. On the other hand, men like VM3 are also caught up in the pressure, expected to "take responsibility" for bringing a girl to his parents' house without the girl's parents' approval. This boy is not even emotionally and socially mature, but his action leads to marriage and ends up in divorce. When he wants to return to school, he is ignored because of his marital status. This illustrates that children's rights are frequently violated, not by a single factor, but by a combination of societal, institutional, and familial factors.

4.2.2.3 Lack of Support to Continue Education

The majority of children who experienced early marriage, particularly girls, lacked support from their closest relatives to pursue their education. Rejection from spouses and disapproval of parents-in-laws are a few of the primary challenges for the victims of child marriage to access education. Despite educational options like "Sekolah Terbuka," few people can access these educational options.

Child marriage restricts educational opportunities and undermines children's autonomy. Decisions about their future are no longer under their control but are determined by their husbands and parents-in-law. P1 and P5 indicated that education ceases to be a priority post-marriage and is often deemed irrelevant. In contrast, girls are anticipated to assume parenting roles and do household tasks. The testimonies of victims like VF4 and VF5 indicate that marriage constrains their freedom of expression, education, and professional opportunities.

Similarly, a study in Nepal by Mahato (2016) also revealed that one barrier preventing child marriage victims from returning to school was their in-laws, including their obligations to assist their mothers-in-law with household tasks. Furthermore, UNICEF (2020) showed that married girls are less inclined to return to school due to home responsibilities and husband's control. The domestic tasks and husband's control become barriers to access education for child marriage victims. Similar research in Bangladesh assessed that society's economic status, literacy levels, and residential location disclosed

that girls who married under 18 of age and began living with their husbands had limited opportunities for educational advancement after marriage (Howlader et al., 2023).

Lack support for child marriage victims to pursue education contradicts the Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 5, 12, 18, and 28, which asserts that all children deserve education, guarantees children the freedom to express their thoughts freely, and parents are responsible to fulfill their children's rights for education. However, when family members limit their children's access to education, they neglect responsibilities to maintain the children's fundamental needs. As articulated by numerous participants that most of them are relying on the consent of husbands or in-laws' decisions which indicated that children's rights are subjected to external authority, which contradicts with these principles.

Viewing this situation through the theory of intersectional feminism, the lack of support for victims of child marriage to continue their education is not just caused by one factor, but by the intersection of gender, age, marital status, and power relations within the family. These are the primary obstacles preventing girls from accessing education. After marriage, they become entrenched in a patriarchal framework that imposes burdens upon them while denying them the right to education. Girls are positioned as wives and daughters-in-law who must submit to the decisions of their husbands and in-laws, which reinforces structural inequality. Their identity means that their educational rights are often neglected, as education is deemed irrelevant to household duties. As VF2, VF5, and VF7 demonstrated, they were unable to acquire education or pursue career advancement due to restrictions placed on them by their husbands and the demands of household responsibilities. Not only the burden of patriarchy as a husband towards his wife, but also the patriarchal system imposed by in-laws on the daughter-in-law. This exemplifies how patriarchal standards isolate women in the home realm, obstruct intellectual advancement, and promote an unjust system. This is experienced by VF4, whose case exemplifies how marriage oppression destroys her autonomy and mental health.

4.2.2.4 Silencing Children's Voices

The victims of early marriage, particularly girls, are married without being asked for consent or provided an opportunity to voice their views. Marriages in *the Merarik* tradition are frequently spontaneous due to the elopement with some of the children's approval. After marriage, their voices are overlooked due to some factors. First, age, the victims are considered too young to participate in decisions affecting their lives, such as completing their education. Second, gender, especially for females, society considers that

their primary role will end as housekeepers. Society often assumes that girls are no longer need formal education after marriage. This stigma is further perpetuated when educational institutions reject their attempts to return to school. The schools stated that accepting married students to re-enroll in formal school will mess up the educational system; besides, they can refer to no precise central government regulation. The last is social norms. Children are worried about being bullied if they enter schools after marriage, even though they are willing to continue their education. Fear of being bullied keeps children silent from voicing their needs to continue their studies.

The findings unveiled that children, particularly married girls are seldom treated as subjects with a voice and the right to shape their own lives. As wives, they are expected to focus on the household rather than school or work. Furthermore, when children attempt to return to school, they are rejected by the community and schools, demonstrating how children's voices and aspirations have been entirely ignored.

This discussion confirms that child marriage victims often lose their rights to express their thoughts due to their age, gender, marital status, and societal expectations. This is in line with Crenshaw's (1991) idea of intersectional feminism, which posits that young women the most frequently encounter various pressures from age, gender, and cultural standards. It is similar to what happened to the children who experienced child marriage in Central Lombok which typically occurs before individuals reach full maturity and affects their ability to express opinions. Young brides often lack the life experience and confidence to assert themselves (Muham et al., 2024). Therefore, child marriage victims are often found difficulties to express their opinions due to their age, gender inequality, marital status, and societal norms. These factors contribute to their vulnerability, limiting their ability to advocate for themselves and their needs (Muham et al., 2024).

This situation breaks some declarations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). For example, Article 3, 12, and 18. However, child marriage victims lose their voice and access to education since spouses and in-laws make decisions, particularly for girls. Boys tend to lose their educational access due to school regulations and unclear central government laws that do not support them to continue their education. As stated by E2, if the school accepts students with marital status to enroll in a class, they are afraid of the social stigma that schools support early marriage, and it will mess up the system of education. In fact, this has violated children's rights that schools should fulfill, as stated in Articles 3, 12, and 28.

Examining this situation through the lens of intersectional feminism, the silence of child marriage victims represents that age, gender, marital status, and cultural standards

intersect to create systemic injustice. In particular, girls are frequently married off without their approval. Once they married, their voice becomes even less powerful due to perceived immaturity, submissive gender norms, and the stigma associated with their new status. This suggests marginalization is not the result of a single issue, but rather the convergence across multiple social identities that place them at a structural disadvantage.

As Crenshaw (1991) argues, the intersection of gendered, age-based and institutionalized power creates unique forms of oppression. As stated by VF4 and VF7, they were refused for reenrollment to school not only because they were young and immature married girls, but also because of their marital status. Despite their desire to continue their schooling, institutional rules, societal judgments, and family control silenced their wishes. This confirms that the intersection of identities-as girls, wives, and minors-results in the erosion of their rights, including the right to voice their opinions and access education. This layered exclusion is in line with the findings of Muham et al. (2024), who note that young brides often lack the confidence, support and social legitimacy to advocate for themselves. As such, intersectional feminist theory allows us to see how multi-layered inequalities occur in a structured way.

4.2.3 National, Local, and Educational Institutions Regulation that Protect the Rights to Education for Child Marriage Victims in Central Lombok

4.2.3.1 National Regulations

National Education Law Number 20 of 2003, Article 1, point 5, declares that all educational workers are community members dedicated to aiding the implementation of education. Article 11, point 1, stipulates that the government and subordinate authorities are responsible for providing services, ensuring accessibility, and guaranteeing quality education for the nation without racial prejudice (National Education Law, 2003). This means these regulations emphasize that all stakeholders, including school policies and governmental legislation, must support education for all children. This encompasses schooling for individuals who are currently married or have previously been married.

However, this study revealed a significant disparity between national legal standards and their application throughout the community. In practice, child marriage victims frequently face barriers to access formal education. Victims, parents, educational institutions, and local governments assume that there are no official policies which facilitate the continuation of education for married or divorced children. In addition, public schools and village administrations generally have no official mechanisms or programs to facilitate the reintegration of students who are married or have previously been married

into the educational system. This is in line with the findings of the study conducted by Marcoes and Putri (2019), which state that schools tend to reject students with marital status due to the absence of precise regulation by the central government. Only a few private schools accept married students based on the schools' regulations.

In addition, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia No. 4 (2024) Point 1 emphasize that every child has right to grow, succeed and develop, free from discrimination and violence, including access to services that can protect his or her rights and advance his or her best interests. Nonetheless, implementation of these rights is hindered by the absence of formal guidelines or technical standards that schools and communities can refer to facilitate the reintegration of married or formerly child marriage victims into schooling.

4.2.3.2 No National Regulations' Enforcement at the Village Government Level

There are some regulations that Indonesia adopts to protect educational rights for the children such as national regulations Child Protection Law No 23/2002 and Marriage Law No 16/2019. These two of laws are the example to combat child marriage and protect children's right to education. Yet, the implementation at the village level seems constrained and ineffective. All village governments participated in this research stated not be able to guarantee the educational rights of child marriage victims. This lack of ability can be seen in the major challenges encountered by the local government. The challenges include the absence of statistical data on children who married early, the lack of educational intervention after child marriage, and lack of legal basis implementation from the central government to local government to regulate the restoration of educational rights for children who marry or divorce. This highlights significant structural limitations at the village level.

The absence of official data on victims of child marriage means that interventions are undirected. Most village governments do not have a recording system or monitoring mechanism for children who marry and drop out of school, as this study attempted to see through document analysis. In addition, the village administration, particularly heads of the village, have limited involvement in child marriage cases due to the administrative sanctions from the central government. This results in the absence of protection of the rights of education of children who are victims of child marriage.

Furthermore, village governments tend to concentrate on the prevention of child marriage, for example, socialization and counseling, rather than intervention programs to ensure that victims of child marriage can complete their schooling. Means, local

governments are lack of awareness on their regulatory responsibilities or they are likely failing to see education as a crucial need for students regardless their social status. Indeed, the village governments do not prevent the victims of child marriage to get their access to education after married or after divorced. However, they hand all the education decision to the family, specifically to the spouse for girls. As pointed out by G1, the decision to continue the education is totally up to the family and the husband for girls. This puts girls at the highest risk of missing out the possibilities of personal growth and wellness. This result is confirmed by research by Cameron et al. (2023) involving 40,800 females and males more than a couple of decades, which showed that children, both male and female, who were married at an early have low authority in household decision-making, which also leads women to lose their well-being and empowerment.

Responding to this situation, Save the Children (2024) confirmed that a nation will be more vulnerable if it lacks control and responsibility to set up regulations. It means the government indirectly contributed to the nation's weakening by not providing clear regulations to ensure the fulfilment of educational rights for victims of child marriage. In this case, children, regardless of their marital status, are the generation of the nation who need education. Furthermore, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Article 4 declared that children's rights must be implemented through regulation and institutional support. When village administrations lack clear rules or have no legal basis, then the government fails to meet the CRC obligation of ensuring the rights to education for all.

4.2.3.3 Lack of National Education Regulations Enforcement in Formal Schools

Laws of National Education System Number 20 of 2003, which ensure the rights of education for children without discrimination, including for those who marry early, this study revealed that formal schools in Central Lombok have not fully enforced those laws. Married or divorced children are not permitted yet to re-enroll in school unless they are already registered for final examinations to complete their education. However, some schools not literally prevent the victims of child marriage to return to school on the condition that their marital status remained private among the public as mentioned by E1. Additionally, schools fear that public will perceive schools legitimize child marriage if they accept students with marital status. This demonstrates a lack of clear operational advice and safeguards for schools to assist child marriage victims, one of the vulnerable groups. Additionally, the lack of local legislation that operationalizes the national mandate increases to the ambiguity. Without particular technical guidance and support structures,

schools are hesitant to take action, extended discrimination and denying victims of child marriage their educational rights.

Other than that, educational institutions ordinarily rejected the victim of child marriage return to school due to lean on family's decision and clear regulation from central government. This represents that local or schools' regulation do not fully support children, but often subject to social stigma which results denial in children fundamental rights. Support statement from Gilbert Carroll (1961) uttered that some educational institutions lack explicit policies concerning married students, resulting in inconsistent practices such as exclusion from academic activities or distinction schooling.

Moreover, the outcomes of this research underscored the substantial disparity between national laws and their implementation at the local school. Educational institutions encounter a conflict between committing to the principle of inclusivity and responding to societal pressures, compounded by a lack of clear direction from the central government. As stated by the educator E2, due to the lack of clear guidelines or technical policies from the central government, schools are making their own rules such as forbidding marriage, dating, and pregnancy (E2). At the same time, E1 attempts to "moderate" school's regulation by secretly permitting married students to enroll in schools (E1). It indicated that schools have no clear policies regarding married students, leading to varied practices of exclusion or inclusion in rejecting or accepting married students to re-enroll into schools.

This situation shows the importance of increasing awareness among educators, parents, and governments that accepting married students to re-enroll school does not mean that schools support child marriage but to fulfill children's right to education. As stated in Article 31 paragraph 1 of the 1945 Constitution that every citizen is entitled to receive an education. This statement is in line with Article 12 and Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to education. Children's rights-based education can support children to be empowered with critical skills and connected to a wider and better world, helping them becoming global citizens and act in ways that shows empathy and commitment to diversity, dignity and equality (Manion & Jones, 2020).

In addition, the lack of classrooms facilities and attention to the students' psychological well-being is the reason for refusing married students to return to school. The victims of child marriage are potentially being bullied by their peers, which affect self-confidence and learning motivation. Syilfa Nirwana (2024) discovered that bullying in school significantly decreases students' learning motivation and class participation and reduces self-confidence in students' academic capability. Because of this situation, schools feel unable to protect students from bullying, especially girls who are considered more

emotionally vulnerable. They will be subjected to verbal teasing by their male peers, stemming from gender-based and marital status discrimination.

On the other hand, refusing students to re-enroll in school due to their marital status is an injustice to victims of child as experienced by VF4. She asked the school to permit her to enroll school after the divorce, but the stakeholders firmly rejected her due to her divorce status. It is clearly contradicting the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children preserve their rights without considering any personal or social standing, including marital status. Avoiding them from bullying is good, but rejecting them from accessing education is discrimination and violence as well. Article 28 asserts that every child is entitled to education without prejudice.

Moreover, if this situation is analyzed through the intersectional feminism, rejecting girls-child married victims from schools due to fear of bullying and their marital status is indirectly reinforcing gender inequality and restricting them from rights to education. This condition is in line with the statement of UNICEF (2020), that marital status eliminated children from education. A comparable study in India highlighted that gender and marital status hinder women from obtaining education rights (Khamo, 2023). In addition, the perception of rejecting married students to return to school for avoiding them from bullying will also strengthen the community's assumption that education for child marriage victims is no longer a necessity because the mindset of society tends to follow the higher authority. According to an experiment study conducted in 1963, 1965, and 1974 by psychologist Stanley Milgram, people often defer to authority figures and follow instructions even if it conflicts with personal morals (Burger, 2011). People often refer to what they see and receive from people or groups with higher authority. In this case, school stakeholders are the figures to whom the local community refers.

4.2.4. The Effect of Child Marriage on Children's Educational and Personality Development in Central Lombok

4.2.4.1 Child Marriage Restricts Educational Access and Intellectual Development

Child marriage directly affect both girls' and boys' access to formal education. All married respondents claimed that their educational paths were disrupted and they failed to continue their studies because of a lack of school policies, a lack of consent from spouses or in-laws, particularly for women, and social status humiliation. This indicates a significant disparity between the idealities of national and international laws which protect children rights for education and the realities in which child marriage victims cannot access their educational entitlements. Girls-child married victims are demanded to do traditional

gender roles and take the position of homemakers, while males are tasked with the responsibility of family finances. As a results, the opportunities for intellectual improvement, personal growth, and social engagement are significantly limited.

The victims of child marriage are treated as adults and being given adults' responsibilities rather than being given opportunities to continue accessing formal education. This also affects children's psychology such as, girls suffer humiliation, social withdrawal, and lower self-esteem when comparing themselves with their friends who have good educations and careers. Realizing her limited opportunities, VF7 expressed insecurity upon encountering a friend with a decent education and employment. This is aligned with Kombat et al. (2023) that girl-child marriage victims tend to feel isolated, depressed, and anxious and, in general, lose their self-esteem and well-being. A report from the World Health Organization (2017) found a similar finding that girl-child marriage victims can suffer emotions of loneliness, stress, and anxiousness resulting from constrained autonomy and the absence of freedom in decision-making. Girls Not Brides (2023) reported that one of the primary repercussions of child marriage is a loss of possibilities for education, which has an influence on employment, health consciousness, and poverty across generations.

The principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Article 13 and 28 confirmed that all children possess their right to education, and the federal government is mandated to guarantee accessibility to fundamental education for all and children freely share their thoughts. However, eliminating opportunities to enhance personal development due to marital status is clearly against this principle. They will be more dependent on other people's thoughts and reduce critical thinking skills. Eliminating education support and opportunities for disadvantaged students leads to fewer skill and job opportunities. Consequently, they will depend more on external support and social perceptions (Anger & Plünnecke, 2023). Further, education stimulates critical thinking and empowers children to enhance their abilities and freely express their ideas and beliefs (Anger & Plünnecke, 2023). As a results, if these children do not have access to school, they will not only economically marginalized, but will also miss out opportunities to contribute to society.

From the point of view of intersectional feminist theory, in this situation girls face double prejudice in education due to their gender and status as spouses and daughters-in-law to new family members. This multifaceted identity puts them at risk compared to males, whose responsibilities are better aligned with societal and financial demands. VF5's statement demonstrates how a girl's freedom is significantly decreased when she marries underage. The situation extensively affects both individual and national development goals

(SDG 4) about quality education for all and gender equality (SDG 5). Girls who drop out of school face lower expected earnings in the future, leading to economic dependence, which contributes to structural poverty for households (Wodon et al., 2018).

4.2.4.2 Child Marriage Causes Mental Pressure for Children

Child marriage severely delays intellectual development and adversely affects children's emotional health. They feel obliged to carry out adult responsibilities as spouses and adolescent parents without psychological or emotional preparedness. In particular situations, these marriages induce psychological pain that ends up in divorce. Four out of seven victims of child marriage had divorced during their first marriage. Burden and mental pressure are both experienced by female brides and also by male brides such as feeling alone and isolated. They tend to spend most of their time on domestic tasks, and they have less time to socialize due to the adult responsibilities they are not ready to take on, such as earning a living to support the family or doing work beyond their physical and emotional capabilities. This finding supporting by Hossain (2023) state that mental illness and burden not only experienced by female child marriage victims but also male, due to the financial burden of supporting the family at a younger age, which can lead the male often do domestic violence.

Child marriage is a sudden and unplanned duty shift. It limits adolescent development, including emotional stability and self-exploration. When confronted with domestic conflict, many of them choose to remain silent and hide feelings for fear of being accused or embarrassing the family. This condition raises depression and mental illness. A study in Zimbabwe found similar that 68% of participants in child marriage experienced mental illness due to unprepared pregnancy and financial conflict (Shibani et al., 2023). This finding was confirmed by Burgess et al. (2022), who analyzed data from 12 countries, that child marriage contributes to depression, mental illness, domestic violence, poverty, childbirth difficulties, and social isolation. It is against the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), that asserts every child is entitled to be safeguarded from any kind of abuse, including emotional assault, guarantee children's rights to achieve maximum intellectual, physical, and emotional growth. Unfortunately, when children marry, they sacrifice the secure environment for healthy emotional development and growth.

In accordance to intersectional feminist perspective, the psychological distress encountered by girls in marriage arises from intersecting kinds of oppression related to age, gender, and social status. Girls who marry early experience multiple burdens: they are still too young, yet are forced into adult roles as wives and mothers, without being emotionally or psychologically readiness. Their identity as young women exacerbate this vulnerability

as social norms demand adherence to domestic roles, while their voices and needs are ignored. It is aligned with some parents confirmed that their daughters received unjust treatment from their husbands and families. Nonetheless, the girls, the victims of child marriage avoid voicing their concerns due to the fear of being perceived as failed in their marriage and causing embarrassment to their parents. This means child marriage through *the Merarik* tradition fosters an enduring patriarchal system where everyone who marries, including children, is expected to succeed in their married. This situation silenced women and encouraged silent suffering.

4.2.4.3 Early Marriage Obstructs Children from Accessing Better Employment Opportunities

Children who marry early have fewer chance to continue their education and improve the necessary skills to succeed in official labor jobs. They are obstructed from better access to employment opportunities. They are driven to the informal sector with unpredictable earnings or might take on the role of housewives, entirely reliant on their partners for income. Child marriage not only obstructs academic advantages but also hinders the children's long-term economic potential. Individuals who engage in child marriage are typically eliminated from education and then enter the informal sector, aligning with the dominant livelihood customs within their local community.

Since this research was undertaken in Central Lombok, it revealed that the predominant livelihoods are farming and rattan craftsmanship. The majority of girl-child marriage victims will be employed in these occupations, whereas the boys will work as laborers in Malaysia. Colquhoun (2020) asserted that child marriage in Lombok causes women to be responsible to do housework and constrains the chances for economic and social growth. This evidence stated that early marriage adversely affected both personal lives and also obstructed children's involvement in sustainable national economic development.

Girls Not Brides (2023) states that child marriage directly drives to poverty by hindering access to quality employment, as the child marriage victims miss out on opportunities for higher education and vocational training. In addition, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as girls' education, financial security, national improvement, and development are unlikely be achieved in countries with high rates of child marriage cases (Filani & Fateropa, 2023). Accelerating about 23% of child marriage elimination is required to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Pourtaheri et al., 2023).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) declares that children possess the rights to maximum growth, containing the rights to education and the ability to live independently, as articulated in Articles 6 and 27. However, early marriage obstructs this process, preventing children from acquiring labor skills, securing job satisfaction, and achieving economic independence.

Examining this discourse through the theory of intersectional feminism, as mentioned initially that child marriage leads women to face multiple injustices resulting from gender, age, and marital status. Most married women lose the autonomy to decide whether to work and which profession to pursue. Post marriage, majority of them are excluded from formal education, pushing them into uncertain low-earning and precarious informal work. Their autonomy in career choice is ordinarily derived by their husbands or in-laws, reinforcing patriarchal dependency. This not only sustains economic inequality and structural poverty, but also impedes progress towards SDG 5 on gender equality and economic empowerment. In short, child marriage reinforces poverty and patriarchy, thereby excluding women from enhanced economic prospects.

4.1.4.4 Child Marriage Inhibits Financial Autonomy and Reduces Women's Independence

According to this study, marriage at an early age has a direct negative impact on financial autonomy. Child marriage leads to children's failure to complete their education and therefore, they have no suitable employment skill. As a result, victims of child marriage become financially reliant. In particular, females who financially depend only on their husbands or parents. They are restricted in terms of resources and independent life choices. Child marriage promotes a cycle of lack of resources and weakness in a marriage. Girls who marry young typically fail to earn money of their own. Their activities are limited to doing household tasks, and have no authorization to pursue a career. They can work only around the neighborhood, with low and uncertain income.

Meanwhile, the boy victims of child marriage tend to be farm laborers or go to Malaysia to look for the job. If not, they will financially depend on their parents. As stated by VF3, either during marriage or after divorce, he does not have income; instead, his parents support him because he is still too young and has not completed school yet, which means he has no appropriate job yet to earn money.

Moreover, child marriage is a violation of human rights, which fundamentally grounded in gender inequity, weakens women's financial independence, and hinders social and economic improvement (Parsons et al., 2015). It also robs the childhood phase of having chance to develop physically, psychologically, and intellectually. Child marriage

harms girls, forces them to live a life of domestic and sexual submission, makes the girls become young mothers who face risks such as maternal death, and deprives them from accessing education (Van Coller, 2024). Research conducted in Nigeria and the Republic of Congo by Wodon et al. (2017) discovered that if child marriage is eliminated, it will increase productivity and significantly decrease women's financial independence toward spouses and parents. Further, it will increase national income by around 1.44% to 15.60% per year. In addition, if child marriage is eliminated, Sustainable Development Goals 1: poverty reduction, SDG 4: education with high standards, SDG 5: gender equity, and SDG 8: worthy employment and financial expansion will be easier to achieve.

Analyzing this phenomenon from the views of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, child marriage is contradicted Article 27, which declares that all children have the right to achieve a satisfactory standard of moral, emotional, physical, social, and spiritual well-being. Nevertheless, when children marry without any job and dependent income, they tend to lose control of their lives; they will be trapped in sustainable subordination and structural poverty.

Meanwhile, Crenshaw (1991) in the theory of intersectional feminism explains that when a system of power, such as race, gender, and class intersect, it will create unique and complex forms of discrimination that cannot be addressed separately. This means, if child marriage is analyzed from the theory of intersectional feminism, girls are not only subordinated because of their gender, but due to their age, and social stigma. Further, patriarchal gender norms force the inequality of power in households, restricting women's autonomy to choose their path in life. Young married girls are left financially dependent. Their daily needs are controlled by their husbands and in-laws, they almost lose half of their life's independence. Their husbands determine their professional or life options. This type of reliance reflects patriarchal family relationships in which women's employment is restricted to the domestic sphere and informal job with low and uncertain earn. This situation will lead to economic violence and negatively affect mental health. Further, child marriage intensifies marginalization and limit access to basic rights, including education, economic and autonomy.

In conclusion, this chapter has elaborated on the local community's perceptions of education rights for child marriage victims in Central Lombok, the factors that hinder these children from receiving their educational rights, the role of national and local regulations and educational institutions in safeguarding the educational rights of child marriage victims, and the impact of child marriage on both children's educational outcomes and personal development. The primary reasons the victims of child marriage lose their access to

education are the lack of support from the community and the closest family, such as the husband and in-laws. In addition, the lack of clear regulation from the central government which can support victims of child marriage to obtain access to education. The study highlights the negative impacts of limiting the victims of child marriage from access to education: it will restrict intellectual development, cause mental pressure between both male and female victims, obstruct children from obtaining better employment in the future, and perpetuate financial autonomy and gender disparity. The findings emphasize the need to involve stakeholders from customary, religious, and women's groups in order to support child marriage victims in regaining access to education. Village governments are expected to be proactive in making regulations and collaborating with schools and NGOs to support and facilitate child marriage victims to get inclusive education opportunities without discrimination.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter of this thesis presents a thorough conclusion to the research. It concludes the key findings and suggestions for future research. This chapter will also address the limitations of this research, give recommendations for further research, and emphasize the necessity of enhancing community understanding regarding the importance of education for victims of child marriage.

5.1 Conclusion

This research examined the causes and implications of the loss of access to education among child marriage victims: a case study in central Lombok. This study answers four research questions: (1) Perception of the local community toward education rights for child marriage victims in Central Lombok; (2) Factors that prevent child marriage victims from receiving their rights to education in Central Lombok; (3) National, local and educational institution regulations in protecting the rights to education for child marriage victims in Central Lombok; and (4) How child marriages affect child marriage victims' educational and personal development in Central Lombok. The conclusion of this study is as follows:

1. This research highlights two main perceptions of the local community toward education rights for child marriage victims in Central Lombok. First, the majority of the local community considers child marriage as a normal thing due to the strong local culture of *Merarik* tradition. As discussed earlier, *Merarik* is the act of taking the girl without her parent's permission with the intention of marriage before the whole process of marriage is formally carried out. The community views this practice as a sacred heritage and a symbol of honor and respect. This perception encourages the community to accept child marriage as something normal, even though it is practiced by adolescents who are still of school age, which directly affects their access to education. This research found that parents or the local community play a role in preserving this cultural norm. In addition, attending a child marriage wedding and celebrating it like an adult wedding is also understood as common behavior. However, what is considered uncommon by the local community is when children who are married or have been married want to continue their education, particularly girls. Society will stigmatize and even bully them. They believe that someone who is already married is no longer suitable for an education;

they will be busier with household business rather than schooling.

Second, *Merarik's* tradition is generally accepted in the Central Lombok community to avoid social disgrace. Traditionally, social communities think that marriage is a must when a girl is brought by a man, regardless of whether the girl agrees or disagrees. It would be an embarrassment for both parts of the family if the girls being brought to the male home's family are returned to their parents. It is deemed far more burdensome than addressing the child's right to education, welfare, or preparedness.

Moreover, sometimes, when the parents disagree with their children's marriage, they are still under the pressure of social norms and the community's expectations, which leads them to marry off their children without any preparation. This research indicated that the strong culture influences Central Lombok society's behavior in perceiving child marriage. It is shown that the lack of awareness of the long-term negative impact of child marriage practices can restrict education rights for children. At the same time, the lack of educational and government institutions in protecting children's education rights also plays a crucial role.

2. There are four factors which prevent the victims of child marriage in Central Lombok from obtaining the right to education. Firstly, there is discrimination against children, particularly girls, who attempt to re-enter education after marriage. Their marital status leads to the perception that they are unworthy of regaining access to education, as they are expected to focus solely on domestic duties. Therefore, society perceives returning to school after marriage as abnormal, leading to bullying, particularly from peers. These factors contribute to a loss of confidence for child marriage victims in returning to school, which ultimately leads to a loss of educational rights because marriage is mistakenly viewed as incompatible with education.

Secondly, there is lack of awareness among parents and the social community about prioritizing children's best interests. In this case, children are often married off to respect the *Merarik* culture and avoid embarrassment for parents, not because the child needs marriage. Thus, parents tend to sacrifice children's education, which is a child's human right, because the decision to marry off the children relies on the interests of adults, not the children. The next challenge is child marriage victims' difficulty in regaining their rights to education because of the lack of support from the closest family, especially for women. The biggest obstacles come from husbands and in-laws. Women are often constrained only to do household chores,

serve her husband's need and take care of their children. This situation placed children in isolation. As a result, child marriage victims, particularly females, lose their chance to develop intellectually and socially.

Thirdly, children could not voice their needs due to age, gender, or marital status. They are often seen as objects whose lives are designed by adults, including deciding their education. Their young age led their opinions be ignored, while gender norms constrained girls to the expectation of becoming housewives who are not considered to require formal education, and their marital status were considered as the end of the educational journey. When children are married, they are automatically viewed as adults. Actually, they are still immature either physically, emotionally, or psychologically and marriage cannot change the children to become adults. This discovery indicates a violation of the rights of children as delineated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and shows structural disparities that perpetually disfavor females.

3. In several national laws and regulations, the central government guarantees children's rights to education without discrimination. For example, the Law of National Education System Number 20 of 2003, point 3; the Law of Child Protection R Number 35 of 2024 in Article 1, points 1 and 2; and the Regulation of the Minister of Women and Children's Empowerment Number 4 of 2024. However, in the real context, specifically village government laws, no explicit policies have been established to facilitate the acceptance of child marriage victims into the educational system. This results in the lack of explicit technical regulations from the central government, the lack of registration of child marriages at the level of the community, and the lack of financial support. Most village administrations prioritize early marriage prevention over restoring educational rights for child marriage victims. Besides, educational decisions frequently rely on the girl's family or spouse. Therefore, women are most at risk of losing their right to education and self-development.

Furthermore, data of educational institutions and village governments are found similar. whether public or private schools have no regulations to ensure the fulfillment of children's rights for education due to lack of technical instructions from the federal government. Consequently, formal schools tend to not openly permit married students to return to schools. Likewise, several factors contribute to schools' rejection is student's well-being due to potential bullying from peers, the belief that accepting married individuals may disrupt the educational system, and

concerns about community perceptions that schools would be perceived as approving the practice of child marriage if they accepted married students to re-enrol in school. These scenarios result in schools declining to admit married students. This denotes that the regulation of the right to education has not been comprehensively implemented, reflecting the government's inability to uphold its commitment to protecting children's rights.

4. Child marriage adversely affects children's education and personality development. This study demonstrates that this practice prevents access to education and intellectual growth for both boys and girls due to boundaries imposed by their spouses, home responsibilities, and societal shame. The absence of access to formal education reduces learning possibilities and impedes the cultivation of critical thinking, communication, and personal growth. This circumstance harms children's futures and potentially affects the quality of human capital in Indonesia.

Moreover, child marriage triggers psychological distress in both male and female victims. They are compelled to deal with adult responsibilities while struggling with immature emotions, which jeopardizes their mental health, domestic violence, and divorce. Economic strains and societal expectations worsen this problem, particularly for women. They frequently prefer silence when confronted with problems within their homes. This situation undermines the rights to child safety, proper development, and advancement, as the Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines. Besides, it sustains patriarchal systems and diminishes the well-being of young women.

Lastly, child marriage constrains children's prospects for securing decent jobs in the future, as it hinders their educational attainment and deprives them of the required formal skills. Victims of child marriage are often confined to the informal sector, posing a significant obstacle to both individual and national economic advancement. This fosters financial dependence, either on parents or partners. Women are more inclined to lose control over their life decisions. This practice violates the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 27. Moreover, child marriage can create a cycle of subordination that obstructs Sustainable Development Goals related to points 1) no poverty, 4) quality education, 5) gender equality, and 8) decent work and economic growth.

5.2 Recommendation

This study examines the issues that restrict educational rights for victims of child marriage in Central Lombok. Lombok region comprises four distinct areas: West, East,

North, and Central Lombok. This study does not aim to generalize its findings to all participants within Lombok. Consequently, future researchers must examine diverse aspects of this subject with varying focuses, such as dynamic comparisons across different regions in Lombok, to discern similarities and disparities in the factors affecting educational access for victims of child marriage, thereby facilitating the identification of suitable solutions to overcome this issue.

Moreover, this study recommends that the local community increase awareness and shift perceptions surrounding child marriage. It advocates for ending the normalization of this practice and emphasizes the importance of ensuring equal access to education for all, especially for girls and women, regardless of their marital status.

Moreover, this study recommends the local community enhance awareness and shift their perceptions regarding this issue. It advocates to end the normalization of child marriage and promotes the importance of education for all, particularly women, regardless their social or marital status. As long as they are of school age, they deserve access to education. Engaging local customary, religious, and female stakeholders as agents of change is essential to foster awareness and decrease stigma and bullying. Additionally, close family members, including spouses and parents, must actively support victims of child marriage, regardless of gender, to facilitate their re-entry into education without discrimination.

This study also recommends the village government to establish policies to help child marriage victims to regain their access to education, such as: (1) Community figures and parents are required to register children who marry underage to local authorities; (2) Village governments provide funding for supporting child marriage victim return to their education through scholarship; (3) Village government cooperate with schools and NGO to provide technical, financial, and psychological resources; (4) Village governments develop formation to monitor, evaluate, and follow up on child marriage cases; (5) Village governments are responsible to install billboard contains educational messages about the legal age of marriage, consequences of child marriage, and the importance of education in public areas. While recommendation for schools is to facilitate educational access for victims of child marriage by establishing inclusive and adaptable regulations. For example (1) Schools develop local policies to accept students with marital status, in condition they do not have children yet (Author's interview with #E1 Lombok, April 23, 2025). (2) Schools establish peer groups or the agents of anti-bullying to support students with marital status feel welcomed and comfortable studying with their friends; (3) Schools provide monthly counseling services through collaboration between teachers, psychologist, or

NGO based on students' needs. These efforts are to ensure that child marriage victims have equal learning opportunities without discrimination. Furthermore, providing consultation services and collaboration with the village government and NGOs to assist victims of child marriage in securing a safe and supportive environment.

Lastly, the recommendations to permit child marriage victims to re-enroll school does not mean that schools support child marriage. Rather, it implies a commitment to help children get their rights to education as guaranteed by national and international laws, including Article 31 paragraph 1 of the 1945 Constitution and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which claimed that every citizen is entitled to receive an education without any discrimination. Children's rights-based education can support children to be empowered with critical skills and connected to a wider and better world, helping them become global citizens and act in ways that shows empathy and commitment to diversity, dignity and equality (Manion & Jones, 2020).

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APPENDICES

The Questions are generated from the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) approach and Intersectional Feminism theory

Appendix 1 The Instrument (English Version)

Questions for Parents

1. Are the children having opportunities to continue their education or get a job after getting married
2. Did you consider the impact of early marriage on your children's education and future before marrying them off?
3. Do boys have more opportunities to get higher education than girls?
4. Why Are the children who marry early treated equally within the family compared to the children who don't?

Questions for Child Marriage Victims

1. Do you experience a limit of information regarding the importance of education and the danger of child marriage before marriage?
2. Do your circumstances, like family, schools, and community around you, support your education after marriage?
3. Do you feel that you have the freedom to decide about your education or your career after marriage?
4. Is the stigma that women should marry early and men should pursue higher education influencing your marriage decision?

Questions for Village

1. Does the village government provide counseling space for children who potentially marry early?
2. Does the village government provide an offline platform for children to express their opinions?
3. How does the village government cooperate with women and religious leaders to prevent child marriage?
4. How does the village government encourage social changes to decrease stigma on child marriage victims who want to continue their schools?

Questions for Schools

1. What are the school's primary challenges in supporting students to return to school after marriage?
2. Does the school cooperate with local government or NGOs to support married students to return to school after marriage?
3. Is dropout of schools due to child marriage experienced more by the girls than the boys?
4. Do married students get bullied or stigmatized by their peers or teachers if they return to school after marriage?

Appendix 2 The Research Instrument (Bahasa Indonesia version)

Pertanyaan untuk orang tua

1. Apakah anak yang menikah dini masih memiliki kesempatan yang sama untuk

- melanjutkan pendidikan atau mencari pekerjaan?
2. Apakah Ibu/Bapak mempertimbangkan dampak pernikahan dini terhadap pendidikan dan masa depan anak sebelum menikahkan mereka
 3. Apakah anak-anak laki-laki cenderung berpendidikan lebih tinggi dibanding Perempuan? Mengapa?
 4. Apakah anak yang menikah dini diperlakukan berbeda dalam keluarga dibandingkan saudara mereka yang tidak menikah dini?

Pertanyaan untuk Korban Pernikahan Anak

1. Apakah Kamu mengalami keterbatasan akses informasi atau bimbingan tentang pentingnya pendidikan dan bahaya pernikahan anak sebelum menikah?
2. Apakah keluarga, sekolah, atau masyarakat mendukung pendidikanmu setelah menikah?
3. Apakah Kamu merasa memiliki kebebasan untuk mengambil keputusan tentang pendidikan atau karier setelah menikah?
4. Apakah keputusan Kamu menikah dipengaruhi oleh pandangan misalnya perempuan lebih didukung untuk segera menikah, sementara laki-laki lebih didukung untuk sekolah

Pertanyaan untuk Pemerintah Desa

1. Apakah pemerintah desa menyediakan ruang konseling untuk anak-anak yang berisiko menikah dini?
2. Apakah ada forum di pemerintah desa yang memungkinkan anak yang menikah menyampaikan pendapatnya?
3. Bagaimana kerja sama desa dengan tokoh agama atau kader perempuan dalam mencegah pernikahan anak?
4. Bagaimana desa mendorong perubahan sosial untuk mengurangi stigma terhadap anak yang menikah tetapi tetap ingin bersekolah?

Pertanyaan untuk Pendidik

1. Bagaimana sekolah mencegah siswa yang menikah agar tidak putus sekolah?
2. Apakah sekolah bekerja sama dengan pemerintah atau organisasi lain untuk mendukung siswa yang sudah menikah?
3. Apakah siswa perempuan lebih banyak yang putus sekolah karena menikah dibandingkan siswa laki-laki?
4. Apakah siswa menikah mengalami tekanan sosial seperti bullying atau stigma dari guru atau teman?

Appendix 3 Observation Template (English Version)

The observation results from the schools and local community

No	Observed Aspects	Description Results Observation
A	School Environment	

	1. How the teachers treat married and non-married students?	Teachers treat both married students and non-married students equally.
	2. How students treat married and non-married students.	Generally, non-married students treat married students differently. Especially the girls. They will get more bullied over the boys.
	3. How do classroom designs and facilities support married students to learn?	The classroom is neither designed nor has the facility to support married students to return to school.
	4. Do the teachers treat married students equally as well as non-married students in terms of providing material and giving motivation to learn?	Yes, teachers treat married students equally both in providing material and providing motivation. In this case, students who return to school with marital status are those who have registered for the national exam.
B	Community Environment	Description Results Observation
	1. Does every hamlet have public notice boards displaying information about the prohibition of underage marriage and support for education?	No village government has a notice board for displaying information about the prohibition of underage marriage and support for education.
	2. How does the community typically hold wedding ceremonies for underage children?	In general, child marriage in Central Lombok typically celebrated lively.
	3. Is it common for community members to attend weddings of underage children?	It is common for local community attend child marriage wedding like adults' wedding.

Appendix 4 Observation Template (Bahasa Indonesia Version)

Hasil Observasi Dari Sekolah dan Masyarakat Local

No	Aspek yang diamati	Deskripsi Hasil Pengamatan
A	Lingkungan Sekolah	
	1. Bagaimana guru memperlakukan siswa yang sudah menikah dan belum menikah ?	Guru memperlakukan siswa yang sudah menikah dan siswa yang belum menikah dengan perlakuan yang sama

	2. Bagaimana siswa memperlakukan siswa yang sudah menikah dan belum menikah.	Umumnya, siswa yang belum menikah memperlakukan siswa yang sudah menikah secara berbeda. Terutama siswa perempuan. Mereka akan lebih banyak di-bully daripada siswa laki-laki.
	3. Bagaimana desain dan fasilitas kelas mendukung siswa yang sudah menikah untuk belajar ?	Tidak di temukan sekolah yang memiliki fasilitas dan kelas yang dirancang untuk mendukung siswa yang sudah menikah untuk kembali bersekolah.
	4. Apakah guru memperlakukan siswa yang sudah menikah sama halnya dengan siswa yang belum menikah dalam hal pemberian materi dan pemberian motivasi belajar?	Ya, guru memperlakukan siswa yang sudah menikah secara setara baik dalam memberikan materi maupun memberikan motivasi. Dalam hal ini, siswa yang kembali bersekolah dengan status menikah adalah mereka yang telah mendaftar ujian nasional.
B	Lingkungan Komunitas	Keterangan Hasil Pengamatan
	1. Apakah setiap desa memiliki papan pengumuman umum yang menampilkan informasi tentang larangan pernikahan di bawah umur dan dukungan untuk pendidikan ?	Tidak ada pemerintah desa yang memiliki papan pengumuman untuk memajang informasi tentang larangan pernikahan di bawah umur dan dukungan terhadap pendidikan.
	2. Bagaimana masyarakat biasanya mengadakan upacara pernikahan untuk anak di bawah umur?	Secara umum, pernikahan anak di Lombok Tengah biasanya dirayakan secara meriah seperti merayakan pernikahan orang dewasa.
	3. Apakah umum bagi anggota masyarakat untuk menghadiri pernikahan anak di bawah umur?	Ya, hal yang lumrah bagi masyarakat setempat menghadiri pernikahan anak seperti halnya menghadiri pernikahan orang dewasa.

Appendix 5 Transcription (English Version)

Assalamualaikum Warahamatullah Wabarkatuh

Thank you for your time, in this interview. First, I would like to introduce myself, I am Suliwana, I am a master's student at Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII) and presently doing a study on causes and implication of the loss of access to education among child marriage victims in Central Lombok. To be noted that all information about participants will remain private. The interviewee may skip the question, in case the participants feel that question is too sensitive.

Participants	Questions	Responses
Parents	Do children who marry early still have the same	Well, I don't know much about that. Whether there is an opportunity for her to work or not.

	opportunities to continue their education or find work?	It is based on her and her husband's decision. For her education, there is no opportunity because after getting married, she is busy with household chores.
Victims of Child Marriage	Was your decision to get married influenced by views such as that women are more encouraged to get married early, while men are more supported to have higher education?	Yes, because I was not supported to continue my education. My parents said that women would only end up in the kitchen. In addition, I was depressed so much at home, my parents often scolded me. I spent more time in the fields than at school.
Schools	Does this school have a policy to support married students to remain in school?	The school does not have a program to help married students return to school, except for those who dropped out due to economic reasons. We facilitate them so they can continue their schooling.
Village Government	Does the village government cooperate with schools or other educational institutions to support child marriage victims so that the victims of child marriage can continue their education?	I see there is no communication yet about this matter. We will keep this as our homework as a member of LPAD (Village Child Protection Agency).

Appendix 6 Transcription (Indonesia Version)

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullah Wabarkatuh

Terima kasih atas waktu yang telah diberikan, pada wawancara kali ini, pertama, saya ingin memperkenalkan diri, saya Suliyana, saya adalah mahasiswa S2 di Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII) yang saat ini sedang melakukan penelitian mengenai penyebab dan implikasi hilangnya akses pendidikan pada anak korban perkawinan usia anak di Lombok Tengah. Sebagai catatan, semua informasi mengenai partisipan akan dirahasiakan. Orang yang diwawancarai dapat melewati pertanyaan, jika partisipan merasa pertanyaan tersebut terlalu sensitif.

Participants	Questions	Responses
Parents	Apakah anak yang menikah dini masih memiliki kesempatan yang sama untuk melanjutkan pendidikan atau mencari pekerjaan?	Nah itu saya kurang tau tentang hal itu. Apakah ada kesempatan atau tidaknya untuk bekerja. Dia saja yang memutuskan. Tapi untuk pendidikan jelas tidak ada kesempatan karena sibuk dengan urusan rumah tangga.

Victims of Child Marriage	Apakah keputusan Kamu menikah dipengaruhi oleh pandangan misalnya perempuan lebih didukung untuk segera menikah, sementara laki-laki lebih didukung untuk sekolah??	Ia, karena saya tidak didukung untuk melanjutkan sekolah. Orang tua saya mengatakan bahwa perempuan hanya akan berakhir di dapur. Selain itu, saya tertekan di rumah, orang tua sering memarahi saya. Saya lebih banyak membantu di sawah di sawah dari pada di sekolah.
Schools	Apakah sekolah memiliki kebijakan untuk mendukung siswa yang sudah menikah agar tetap bisa bersekolah?	Sekolah itu tidak ada program mengakomodir anak yang menikah. Yang drop out karena menikah. Kecuali siswa yang drop out karena alasan ekonomi. kami jemput dia untuk bisa kembali lagi ke sekolah. Tapi kalau siswa yang menikah, kami memang tidak memarginalkan mereka, cuman karena dia sudah berkeluarga. Kami tidak ada program khusus untuk mengakomodir yang sudah menikah.
Village Government	Apakah Ibu/Bapak sebagai pemerintah desa bekerja sama dengan sekolah atau lembaga pendidikan lain untuk mendukung anak yang menikah agar bisa melanjutkan pendidikan?	Saya lihat belum ada komunikasi Belum ada komunikasi untuk hal tersebut ini. Ini menjadi PR bagi saya juga sebagai anggota LPAD (Lembaga Perlindungan Anak Desa)

Appendix 7 Document Analysis (English Version)

Document analyses are used to triangulate data, verify data gathered from interviews and observations, for increasing validity and reliability

Categories	Document Analyzed	Result
School document	Number of students' dropout due to child marriage recapitulation	Every school has a varying number of students who drop out of school due to child marriage. Such as 1 to 2, 2 to 4, or 3 to 5 students are married in a year. According to the document analysis, the majority of the students are girls.
	School policies on child marriage	Most school has no written policy that supports married students returning to school.

Local Government	Data of children who married underage	Most of the village governments have no official data on children who marry underage.
	Child marriage policy	The majority of village governments have no official regulations regarding child marriage, either prevention or intervention. The current regulation is a recommendation.

Appendix 8 Document Analysis (Indonesia Version)

Analisis dokumen digunakan untuk triangulasi data, memverifikasi data yang dikumpulkan dari wawancara dan observasi yaitu untuk meningkatkan validitas dan reliabilitas.

Kategori	Dokumen Dianalisis	Hasil
Dokumen sekolah	Rekapitulasi Jumlah Siswa Putus Sekolah Akibat Pernikahan Anak	Jumlah siswa yang putus sekolah karena menikah dini bervariasi di setiap sekolah. Misalnya, 1 hingga 2 siswa per tahun, 2 hingga 4 siswa, atau 3 hingga 5 siswa menikah per tahun. Berdasarkan dokumen tersebut, mayoritas siswa adalah perempuan.
	Kebijakan sekolah tentang pernikahan anak	Sebagian besar sekolah tidak memiliki kebijakan yang mendukung siswa yang sudah menikah untuk kembali ke sekolah.
Pemerintahan Daerah	Data anak yang menikah di bawah umur	Semua pemerintahan desa tidak memiliki data resmi tentang anak yang menikah di bawah umur.
	Kebijakan pernikahan anak	Mayoritas pemerintahan desa belum memiliki peraturan resmi terkait perkawinan anak, baik pencegahan maupun intervensi, hanya berupa himbauan.