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“A woman is unstoppable after she realises she deserves better”- (Yene, 2019).

Research on the practice of child marriage has been extensive, with studies recommending local strategies that are peculiar to the countries involved. Rights’ based literature also recommend stringent laws; portraying the girls involved as helpless victims needing external agencies to rescue them from parochial and oppressive cultural practices. This chapter, however, presents their resilience as they navigate through the challenges and trauma of demeaning marriage practices. Their ability to rise above the challenges of child marriage contradicts the stereotypical perception of being passive and unable to develop agency and empower themselves. I also draw from the experiences of these young women to argue for RJ to tackling child marriage issues. Indeed, a restorative process is likely to prove far more effective in achieving social discipline than our current reliance on punishment and sanctions. More so, harm as a result of child marriage is a violation against the victim and not necessarily the state. Hence, Restorative justice, which is future focused with healing and prevention as key goals, would be more suitable.

Introduction

Child marriage is typically regarded as any formal or informal union before age 18 (UN, 2002). Though child marriage affects girls and boy, girls are involved to a greater degree. UNICEF (2020) estimated 720 million girls were married or in a union before ages 15, while 156 million boys were married or in a union before ages 18, with the highest prevalence in the ‘global south’. For this reason, this study will concentrate on the girl-child. Child marriage is highly associated with numerous health concerns, maternal morbidity and maternal death (Bello, Morhason-Bello & Ojengbede, 2020); elevated risk of HIV infection, and negative implications for mental health (Erulkar & Bello, 2007; James, 2010; Atchison, et al., 2018). Owing to this, some studies (Gaffney-Rhys, 2011) recommend local strategies that are peculiar to the countries involved, i.e., the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) emphasise legal and policy-based recognition of gender inequality, and expansion of educational access for girls (Callaghan, Gambo & Fellin, 2015). This approach is based on the argument that women educated beyond primary school are less likely to marry young or give their daughters out in marriage before age 18 (Erulkar, 2013; Field & Ambrus, 2008). However, the MDGs underestimate the complexity of gender equity in highly gender-determined settings (Eboka, 2017). Cultural change requires a more penetrating engagement with the gendered socioeconomic arrangements that characterise men’s and women’s lives than can be achieved through mere attention to principles like ‘fair access to education’ (Parpart, 2009).

Other initiatives at reducing child marriage practices include the creation of ‘rescue centres’ by large international development organisations and charities; these centres are specifically created to shelter, feed, and educate girls that have been rescued from child marriage. This initiative is underpinned by rights-based literature that position child-brides as helpless victims needing external agencies to rescue them from parochial and oppressive cultural practices (Archambault, 2011). Though child marriage practises are strengthened by patriarchal power structures (Eboka, 2017; Ntoimo & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2013; James, 2010 and Erulkar & Bello, 2007), ‘such representation of child-brides impose neoliberal constructs of ‘human rights’ and ‘gender equality’, it neglects sufficient engagement with the complexity and specificity of particular countries and regions, resulting in the tendency of development organisations to ‘teach’ gender to communities ... rather than to attempt to understand local gender movement’ (Palmary & Nunez, 2009:76). Thus, positioning the girls involved as passive victims would obscure girls’ own capacity for agency in their responses to child marriage.

Child marriage in Nigeria

Though child marriage is prohibited in Nigeria (Child Rights’ Act, 2003), it is a widespread, normative practice, particularly among Muslims in the northern region (Eboka, 2017; Ntoimo & Isiugo-Abanihe, 2013; James, 2010). UNICEF (2020) estimates there are 23.6 million child brides in Nigeria, 16% of these girls married before age 15 and 43% married before age 18; 76% of these marriages take place in the Northern region of the country. However, the prevalence of child marriage practises in Nigeria’s northern region should not be understood in purely religious or ethnic terms as it's also underpinned by other socio-economic disparities. Nigeria’s regional socioeconomic disparities are bolstered by a colonial past (more accessibility of the Southern coastal regions for trade) (Jacob & George, 2014), long history of military rule, an oil driven economy, political corruption, militarism and ethnonationalism (Metumara, 2010). The underdevelopment of the northern region has further contributed to deteriorating internal security, and strengthening of various militarist Islamist organisations, particularly the ‘Boko Haram’ sect (Onuoha, 2010). Indeed, the practise of child marriage in the region is shaped by a range of politico-socio-economic factors.

Further, the prevalence of child marriage practices in northern Nigeria has led to high rates of OBSTETRIC FISTULA (OF) with over one million girls and young women affected (Bello, *et al.*, 2020). OF is an "abnormal opening between a woman's vagina and bladder and/or rectum through which urine (vesico-vaginal fistula) and/or faeces (recto-vaginal fistula) continually leak" (De Bernis, 2007:18). Eighty percent of the affected girls are age 10-20; 77% of these girls suffer OF in conjunction with their first vaginal delivery (Bello, *et al.*, 2020). Although the Nigerian government and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) gives aid to fistula patients, new cases of fistula occur faster than the existing ones awaiting repair (Bello, *et al.*, 2020; Amodu, Salami & Richter, 2017; UNDP, 2015). The situation is concerning, and it raises so many questions

for policy makers and for the wellbeing of the girls and young women involved. However, some non-governmental organisations have continued to create awareness, encouraging behaviour change in different communities, i.e., the Coalition of Civil Society to End Child Marriage in Nigeria was established in 2015. Similarly, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Nigeria launched a national strategy, in 2016, to end child marriage. The strategy's vision is to reduce child marriage by 40% by 2020 and end the practice entirely by 2030 (Mobolaji, Fatusi & Adedini, 2020). But the rate (11th highest prevalence of child marriage in the world) at which the practice continues suggest it's a very challenging and complex issue.

This study, however, attempts to: (1) present the hidden strength and resilience of the young women and girls as they navigate through the challenges and trauma of demeaning marriage practices. By doing this, I hope to dismantle the stereotypical views and perceptions of these women as helpless and unable to develop agency and empower themselves. (2) proffer Restorative Justice (RJ), as against punitive justice, to the issue of child marriage. By doing this, I hope to inspire a healthy debate in my readers and to offer them some ammunition for policy discussions. The pragmatism of RJ in tackling child marriage is revealed in the participants' narratives. Though what is offered in this chapter can only be a starting point, given the limit of space, it is a suggestive outline that I hope will provoke others to investigate further.

Resilience

I believe that rather than simply addressing the predicament of the girls and young women involved in child marriage, or highlighting the negative effects of the practice, a resilience-based approach would enable researchers and relevant organisations to focus more on how the personal strengths and agency of affected girls and young women can be nurtured and strengthened. Though there are different definitions of resilience, the underlying concepts of vulnerability, adversity, and coping are constant. In this context, Ungar's (2008) theoretical assumption of resilience is deemed suitable as it relates to interventions with child populations under stress, these may be children in families experiencing divorce, or youth who have grown up exposed to war, or recent immigrants coping with their displacement. In this case, girls and young women experiencing child marriage. According to Ungar, resilience is a concept that 're-orders an individual's focus from the breakdown and disorder that is more commonly found in a stressful environment to the individual characteristics and social processes associated with either normal, or unexpectedly positive psychosocial development' (Ungar, 2008:7). In other words, rather than giving in to despair in the face of trauma and adversity, some individuals respond in positive ways, relying on both environmental factors as well as personal traits to sustain their well-being. As we will see later in this chapter, these qualities are evident in some girls and young women experiencing child marriage.

Why RJ to the issue of Child marriage?

RJ has been around in one way or another for centuries, but as popularly known today, it's a relatively new practice, starting out in its modernised form in the 1970s (Aertsen, Daems & Robert, 2013). RJ is a process which enables communication between victims, offenders and community members in addressing the harms caused by crime (Braithwaite, 2016). It is typically adopted in resolving family abuse and minor crimes (such as petty thefts, rape, and alcohol related crimes). While public resource is reserved for those offences that the state deems to be more serious; it can also be deployed as a supplementary arrangement within the broader system of criminal justice (Woolford & Ratner, 2008). The objective here is to encourage local actors to participate in the resolution of their conflicts; family members, victims and wrongdoers, and other relevant community members are accorded prominent roles in resolving conflict. RJ is also flexible and can be modified to the specific nature of the conflict and its generative context (Braithwaite, 2016). For these reasons, RJ rather than punitive justice, will be more suitable in tackling child marriage.

As indicated above RJ is typically adopted in resolving family abuse which can also include child marriage. Notably, most child marriage decisions are made by parents, specifically the fathers or any male family member if the father of the bride is deceased (Eboka, 2018). Hence, adopting RJ to child marriage issues would not be out of place. Rather, it will be particularly productive in a highly gendered community where overt expression of dissent by women can place them in a precarious social position. Restorative process is also cost free (Aertsen, Daems & Robert, 2013), making it more inclusive and adaptable by all. More so, harm as a result of child marriage is a violation against the victim and not necessarily the state. Therefore, RJ which is evidenced to be beneficial to the victims' healing process, would be more appropriate. This is not in any way presenting RJ as a remedy to the health consequences of child marriage, indeed, the fact that it can also be adopted for girls and young women experiencing harm from child marriage makes it more suitable.

Research-based evidence (Carrie, 2017) also shows that RJ can reduce recidivism. In its most idealized form, RJ has five principles: relationship (strong relationships are important to living fulfilling lives in the community- the aim here is to repair the relationship broken down by harm); respect (respects for the victim's feelings/perspectives -the aim here is to listen to the victim); responsibility (both parties taking responsibility of their actions – the offender and the victim are expected to honestly consider if/how they have contributed to the harm); repair (healing process- though it may not all be able to be repaired, the offender is expected to repair the harm in a way that would resolve the feelings of anger/vengeance from the victim) and reintegrate (refers to how the offender should be allowed back into community following the other processes) (Carrie, 2017; Braithwaite, 2016).

However, not all the principles are necessary for the basis of all RJ cases, i.e., responsibility is the only principle that matters in murder cases and other heinous acts. But that does not imply that the restorative process is less successful - the success is dependent on the victim (i.e., parents/family members are secondary victims in murder cases) and the offender's feelings after the process is finished. Three RJ principles are however applicable in tackling child marriage, especially respect, responsibility and repair. The principle of respect would enable the girls to freely talk about their feelings and how they have been affected by the early marriage, during mediation, in the presence of everyone involved in their marriage decision without intimidation or anyone dominating the discussion. Such *rare* conversation could bring about a deep reflection by everyone present and deter the continuity of such marriage decisions. Further, as expected in 'procedural justice' (Daly, 1995), respect for the victim's feelings would lead to responsibility. Everyone involved in the marriage decision will be expected to take responsibility for their actions. Responsibility or accountability for child marriage decisions would lead to repair or restitution of some sort. As we will see later in the participants' narratives, repair can include a monetary compensation, the opportunity to complete their education, or learn a trade.

Importantly, the systematic use of restorative processes on child marriage issues would have a collective impact and create what can be described as a restorative milieu—an environment that consistently fosters awareness, empathy and responsibility in a way that is likely to prove far more effective in achieving social discipline than our current reliance on punishment and sanctions.

Method

The theoretical assumption that we are all “storied individuals”—holding our own narratives and life stories about our experiences (Denzin, 2001) underpin the use of narrative inquiry in this study. Narrative inquiry can help to reveal unique perspectives and deeper understanding of a situation or life experience (Polkinghorne, 1995). In this context, the lived experiences of child marriage. Story makes the hidden seen, the unformed formed, the implicit explicit, and the confusing clear (Chou, Tu, & Huang, 2013). The narrative approach to data collection not only helped to reveal the hidden strength and resilience of the women, but it also helped in identifying the efficacy of RJ in tackling child marriage issues. Though some studies (Riessman and Speedy 2007) argue that some participants' narratives are flawed as they are relied upon to narrate their stories and give interpretations to their lived experiences in interviews, the interpretive stance recognises that each participant's experience varies and, in some cases, may not always cohere, however, they remain important (Denzin, 1989; 2001). Particularly, in this study where I do not aim to impose my interpretation over the voices of the research participants, the participants and I are co-producers of the narratives. Regardless of my knowledge of the literature, the participants are the experts on their own situation.

The data for this study were obtained during my fieldwork in northern-Nigeria for a PhD thesis (2016-2017) on ‘understanding the practice of child marriage in northern Nigeria’. The three participants in this study were part of the 31 participants recruited in northern Nigeria using snowball sampling technique (Etikan, Alkassim & Abubakar, 2016). The PhD research was designed to focus on Northerners living in Kano (a state in the Northern region); though Kano state was chosen for recruitment and data collection based on ‘opportunity or convenience research setting’ (see i.e., Stahler and Cohen 2000), it should not suggest any bias in the nature of the choice made because child marriage is widespread in all the Northern states in Nigeria. More so, Kano state is believed to be the most populous state in Nigeria with a population of more than 9.3 million; Kano city is the commercial nerve centre of Kano state and, indeed, the whole of Northern Nigeria (NPC, 2017). Recruitment criterion was focused on women (above age 18) who have either experienced child marriage or have been involved in child marriage decisions. The data collection process for the study went through all the vigour and scrutiny expected in the ethics approval of a PhD thesis at the University of Northampton (respect; competence; responsibility and integrity). Participation was voluntary- an information sheet, which explains the aims and nature of the research, was provided, and consent forms were completed by the participants. Anonymity is paramount to this study; the identities of research participants are anonymised and where quotes are used, all identifying details have been removed. As Josselson (1995) recognise, storytelling can be an emotional experience and, as such, care and respect for each participant was paramount throughout the data collection.

One of the most noticeable shortcomings in this study is my reliance on a relatively small sample (three participants). This is particularly so because of the sensitivity of the research topic. However, I have adopted an interpretive approach, which is characterised by a small sample size, a qualitative interpretation of data, and exploratory nature of enquiry (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Indeed, one of the strengths of this study lies in its detailed qualitative analyses of the participants’ narratives. Further, concept-driven coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was adopted for data analysis due to the aim of this study - to reveal the ‘resilience’ of child marriage victims and to proffer RJ to tackling child marriage. Hence, the emphasis was on identifying priori themes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), specifically *‘resilience and three RJ principles (respect, responsibility, and repair)*, from the participants’ narratives. The participants responded to the question- How have you been affected by child marriage?

Analysis and Discussion

Whilst there are little differences in each participant's restorative process, all their narratives demonstrate strength and resilience. The three participants were married before age 18 - Hafsah got married at 15, Idayah at 16, and Fathima at age 12. Each participant was forced to drop out of secondary school following their marriage. Analysis of the participants' narratives reveal that some young women and girls are able to cope with challenges and respond in positive ways. However, the ability to cope links not only to their individual's personal growth and well-being, but also to their ability to develop agency and empower themselves. This is particularly important in the discussion of child marriage issues. The analysis and discussion of the participants' narratives is presented thematically, specifically '*resilience and the suitability of RJ (respect, responsibility, and repair)*'.

Resilience

Though some literature on resilience (see, i.e., Bernard, 2014: 5) claim that "we are all born with an innate capacity for resilience by which we can develop social competence, problem-solving skills, a critical consciousness, autonomy, and a sense of purpose," recovery from trauma is not an individual capacity alone, but also a function of the individual's social ecology to facilitate recovery and growth. Implicit in Ungar's socio-ecological theory is the idea that resilience is not a predictive trait, but rather a dynamic process that enables an individual experiencing a traumatic or stressful events to demonstrate specific attributes that enable them to cope amid their struggles. As seen in the excerpts below, each participants' resilience present itself to a differing degree across multiple domains of life.

"I was too young to carry the burden of a mother. I went through several years of brutal rapes, physical and mental abuse. However, my husband was wealthy, so feeding and the supply of other basic needs was never a problem. At 21 years and after my second son, I was determined to learn a trade, I wanted to fulfil my dreams of being a fashion designer. So, I spoke to my mother-in law who helped to convince my husband to allow me, but I could not complete my apprenticeship in fashion, it was very difficult. But I am now a business owner with two clothing shops in Kano (she smiles)" - (Hafsah).

"I was 12 years old when I was given out in marriage to Yusef. I did not really understand what marriage was all about, but my uncle and my mum explained that it was important I got married. I felt very sad and lonely, my dad was dead, no one to talk to. On my wedding night, my husband forcefully penetrated me, this was very painful, and I cried most of the time. It became a regular occurrence, I got beaten each time he wanted to have sex with me, and this made me hate him. I told my mom and some of Yusef's family members about this, but nothing changed, no one ever stuck up for me. This abuse continued until after my third child, I knew I couldn't take it anymore. So, I started saving some money and planning for an escape. I ran away to the city at age 20 with the help of some friends. I left with my youngest child – she was a-year-old at the time. Whilst in the city, I was able to do some menial jobs, i.e., I worked as a cleaner in some restaurants. I also worked in a bakery, it was there that I was able to save some money and successfully completed evening adult education classes. I passed my teacher's training certificate after two attempts. You see, it's been a long journey (she wiped her tears). I teach in this primary school

(referring to the school where the interview took place) and I have been doing my best for other young girls” - (Fathima).

Indeed, the participants’ narratives demonstrate strengths, resilience, and agency. Whilst both participants went through distress and demeaning marital experiences, they were both able to re-direct their focus from the situation. Rather than giving in to despair, Fathima and Hafsa responded in positive ways with the help of some friends and family members, they adapted and bounced back after the challenges, setbacks and trauma. Fathima’s strength is particularly commendable considering she married at age 12. Despite the limited resource and very unhelpful family members, she was determined and made a lot of sacrifices to achieve her dream. For example, leaving for the city with her youngest child is very crucial to my discussion of resilience. Resilience involves developing thoughts, behaviours, and actions that allow you to recover from traumatic or stressful events in life (Ungar, 2008). Fathima’s capacity to make realistic plans and carry out the plans depicts resilience; going on such a journey with a one-year-old child would have been very awkward but this did not deter her determination to change her situation and achieve her goals. In the same vein, Hafsa’s achievement as an entrepreneur with two clothing shops is quite remarkable. Though she could not complete her secondary education and did not achieve her dreams of becoming a fashion designer; with the help of her mother-in law, she was able to make choices and act upon them.

The participants’ excerpts reveal that some people have the potential to be resilient if basic adaptive systems and protective factors such as community and family supports are in place. This is not to make light of these women’s experiences, but, by focusing on resilience and adopting strength-based approaches, individuals, communities and groups can learn how to function well and succeed in spite of adversity. Many individuals who undergo traumatic events - such as some child marriage victims do - can overcome these experiences with appropriate support and intervention. Though a personal attitude is central to becoming resilient, some vital factors such as having a reliable social network can also promote resilient qualities, not only in individuals, but also in groups and communities.

Importantly, the fact that both women were assisted by family (Hafsa by her mother-in-law) and friends (Fathima by some friends) reveals available local networking in the community. Fathima also emphasised a willingness to assist young girls in similar situations. Such networking and resistance challenge the preconception that women in the ‘global south’, particularly Muslim women, need external agencies to rescue them from primitive and oppressive cultural practices. Discourses that portray child marriage this way obscure the complex structural and socioeconomic factors that perpetuate such marriage practices. It refracts attention from important policy interventions that could more effectively address the issue.

The suitability of RJ to child marriage (respect, responsibility, and repair)

Implicit in some of the participants' narratives is the pragmatism of RJ in tackling child marriage issues. A closer look at the data reveals the nuances of a restorative process, particularly the suitability of 'respect, responsibility, and repair'. It is however important to note here that, in this context, the restorative process was not formal, it was not pre-planned or premeditated as required in 'procedural justice'. But this does not void the restorative process – as previously emphasised the success of a restorative process is dependent on the victim and the offender's feelings after the process is finished (Daly, 1995). Whilst the restorative process was not deliberate, it was particularly beneficial to the victims' healing process. The excerpts are presented below.

“After my employment as a teacher, I went home to see my mom and to pick my older children from Yousef. Oh, you need to see the admiration on my mother's face. She was very proud of me. I also told her how I felt about the marriage – it took away my youth and delayed my career. My mother apologised. Before leaving for the city, my mom and I also had a very long discussion with my uncle and husband's family about why I ran away. We were able to reach an agreement. This made me really happy. Yousef gave me a very big capital that I have since used to start a side business with my teaching job” - (Fathima).

“Though I was meant to get married at 13 years, I got married at 16 because I have a very small stature and look very fragile. My dad was too worried to marry me out that early (she smiles). But my marriage did not last long, was married for six years, as I couldn't bear a child. I was taken to the hospital and took several medications but didn't get pregnant. So, my husband took another wife who got pregnant almost immediately. I also became very sick and had to go back to my parents' house to recover. My father now requested that my husband give me some money to learn a trade (hairdresser). I have a few months to go with my training. I probably will go back to my husband's house after my training (she smiles). But I'm satisfied with the way my dad handled the situation” - (Idayah).

Respect:

Though minimal, the women's narratives demonstrate the efficacy of RJ to the harm caused by child marriage. Fathima's ability to talk about her feelings and how she was affected by the early marriage can be related to the principle of respect in a restorative process. Similarly, Idayah's father spoke on her behalf due to her health condition. Though the opportunity to talk about their feelings, in both cases, were not premeditated, it was beneficial to their healing process. It is also interesting to see Idayah's dad, who made the marriage decision, speak up for his daughter. Showing that child marriage is not necessarily a problem between progressive daughters and traditional patriarchs, i.e., the father also delayed Idayah's marriage by three years suggesting he's aware of early marriage consequences. Idayah's father's request for financial support from her husband identifies the root cause of child marriage as economic insecurity. Economic security would reduce the pressure on the institution of marriage as a means of enhanced security and prohibit the need to marry daughters into more supportive homes. Nonetheless, whilst parental authority is highly valued and entrenched in

Nigeria, it is important to note that young people find ways to exercise their will. Fathima is an obvious reminder of such agency. Also, the discussion or listening process in both cases is vital in this analysis. It suggests a direct and concrete restorative process took place, a process where the parties participate voluntarily and each one has a capacity to engage fully and safely in a process of dialogue and negotiation (Clamp, 2013), this is evidenced in the outcome – an agreement was reached to decide how best to repair the harm which can be seen as responsibility in RJ.

Responsibility:

Similar to a formal restorative process, all the parties involved in the marriage decisions took responsibility for their actions, i.e., Fathima's mother apologised whilst Idayah's father took it upon himself to request compensation for his daughter. However, the process of the discussion is not clear, particularly in Fathima's case. For example, it is not clear if there was a discussion of the physical and mental abuse Fathima suffered in the marriage, and if it was discussed, it's not certain if Fathima was coerced to forgive her husband for the abuse he perpetrated. Evidence (see i.e., Acorn 2004, Brown 1994) shows that some victims of domestic abuse find it difficult to forget and forego (desires for revenge or other retributivist goals). But Fathima also highlighted that she was happy with the agreement, such feeling is important in any restorative process. As expected, responsibility for the child marriage decisions in both cases led to some sort of compensation, or repair.

Repair:

In this context, the 'big capital' mentioned by Fathima and the opportunity to learn a trade in Idayah's case can be seen as repair in a restorative process. Whilst it might not be possible to repair all the harm, the offender is expected to repair the harm in a way that would resolve the feelings of anger/revenge from the victim (Clamp, 2013). As seen in the narratives, both participants appear to be satisfied with the outcomes. What is however not clear is the valuation of the compensation. Though the two participants did not state how much they were given as compensation, it's possible they could have received more if some government officials and other RJ practitioners were involved in the dialogue. But this will also depend on the resources of the husband or/and the people involved in decision making. However, we can say that the restorative process is a success because the primary aim of restorative practice is to address and repair harm, and this took place in both cases.

As attempted to demonstrate above, RJ 'processes are richer at expressing a variety of often competing justice values simultaneously— acknowledgment of fault, recognition of consequences that flow from wrongful activity (punishment, remorse), compensation to victims, social learning and healing, mercy, as well as moral judgment—and are thus more creative and flexible and represent a form of responsive justice' (Nonet & Selznick 1978: 5) that is humanely civilized and not as brittle as formal adversarial justice structures. Though some criminologists (see i.e., Shapland, *et al.*, 2006)

argue that restitution commodifies crime and wrongdoing by allowing offenders to buy their way out if they can. They also worry that RJ will encourage subjective and nonrational assessment of harm and need and will result in imbalances for both victims and offenders. In other words, what is tolerable for one victim might be extremely painful for another. However, the success of a restorative process is dependent on the victim feelings after the process is finished (Carrie, 2017), as seen in the above cases, the participants felt satisfied with the process. Also, in this context, the restitution or compensation is not dependent on the quality of the offense, but on the resources of the offender. Ideally, providing recompense for harm caused by child marriage, as seen in the above cases, will help to ensure that girls are not alone, as they often are, in shouldering the responsibilities and implications of child marriage. However, care needs to be taken to ensure that the restorative process is not manipulated for bad ends. I encourage the involvement of mediators and other RJ practitioners in the dialogue to avoid corruptions and the process being deformed to produce more oppression for the girls and young women involved. The restorative process should involve nonmanipulative and well-intentioned mediators to allow genuine encounters and negotiation to occur.

Importantly, adopting RJ to tackling child marriage would further enhance community building, community norm development, and women's agency. As seen in the participants' narratives, the women were able to express resistance to the construct of early marriage, they described child marriage as challenging because 'it took away their youth and delayed their career'. Hence, the prevalent representation of 'young brides' as passive and in need of rescue is challenged when we consider their capacity to make decisions that matter to them and carry out their plans. They can articulate their lived experiences of child marriage and resist the problematic aspects of such marriage. Therefore, focusing only on a very limited notion of liberation for women risks missing their resilience. Consequently, I encourage a shift from viewing young women experiencing child marriage as hapless victims, to perceiving them as women who can develop resiliency born of adversity. I also argue that focusing on the resilience and strengths of these women fundamentally links to female empowerment and helps to improve their sociocultural status, and in doing so, begin to invoke change.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to present the resilience of three young women as they navigate through the challenges and trauma of demeaning marriage practices. The chapter acknowledges the small, yet powerful contribution that these women make to sociocultural change as they become more resilient and demonstrate agency. The chapter also draws on the experiences of these women to argue for RJ approach in tackling child marriage issues. Whilst the restorative process in this study is unpremeditated, it was particularly beneficial to the women's healing process. Though there are few limitations to adopting RJ in tackling child marriage, one of the most constraining factors being the

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valuation of the received compensation in comparison to the harm done, receiving compensation is not dependent on the quality of the offense, but on the resources of the people involved in the marriage. Importantly, the standpoint of these women offers critical insights into the lived experiences of some people involved in child marriage, particularly their resilience that often lay hidden and unseen. Whilst also demonstrating the pragmatism of RJ, with a reparative outcome, to tackling child marriage issues. Adopting a restorative process would enable these women to reconcile their experiences and build their lives.

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