

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Bangladesh holds a distressing position among the top 10 countries worldwide grappling with the highest rates of child marriage. This sobering statistic underscores the urgent need for comprehensive and effective strategies to address this pervasive issue and safeguard the rights and well-being of young girls (UNICEF, 2020). Bangladesh has the fourth highest rate of child marriage before the age of 18, globally. Child marriage has been prohibited in Bangladesh since 1929, with the minimum marriage age set at 18 for girls and 21 for males in the 1980s. Several factors contribute to the high rate of child marriage. Gender disparity produces attitudes and actions in society that girls experience over their lives, along with the country's high rates of teenage marriage. Bangladesh's reputation as one of the world's most impacted by emergencies and climate change exacerbates the difficulties encountered by many families, particularly those who live in the country's most disadvantaged and disaster-prone areas. Poverty is the primary driver of early marriage. Young girls are sometimes viewed as a cost by their families, and marriage to older men or other families is frequently a family sustainability strategy for financial stability.

Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina committed to ending child marriage under the age of 15 by 2021, followed by ending child marriage under the age of 18 for all girls by 2041. This was outlined in Bangladesh's first National Action Plan (NAP) to end child marriage, which is the political focus of the Bangladesh government. The NAP was developed with the help of United Nation of Children's Fund (UNICEF) to understand the national situation and conditions of child marriage in Bangladesh. The child marriage situation in Bangladesh currently ranks 4th in the world for women with young childbearing age, with the number of marriages of girls under the age of 18 at 38 million (UNICEF 2021).

Child marriage is frequently imposed on young girls, overtly breaching their rights and ability for choice. Like poor educational attainment this issue has an impact on the resources accessible to females later in life, in part because dropping out of school early limits the kind of employment that women may find in adulthood, and

hence their incomes. Child marriage and a lack of education have an impact on successes because they tend to limit women's past and future accomplishments to their responsibilities as wives and mothers. Finally, they have an impact on agency, particularly through the decline in capacity for decision-making within the home caused by child marriage and an absence of education. Recent empirical studies have revealed those many connections (Wodon et al, 2017).

Child marriage is a violation of human rights that is increasingly being acknowledged by international players as a predictor of a variety of other global health issues. Child marriage remains a global humanitarian and a serious offense that compromises the health, safety, and education of both boys and girls (UNFPA, 2022). This lengthy social issue largely caused by deep-seated gender disparities and prevalent belief systems that reinforce the notion that women and girls are subordinate to males. The causes of child marriage stretch beyond individual choices and are frequently impacted by larger socioeconomic circumstances such as poverty, restricted access to education, sexual violation and cultural traditions that favour early marriages. In many cases, families experiencing economic difficulties may see marrying off their daughters at an early age as a survival strategy or a way to relieve financial pressures, prolonging a cycle of poverty and restricted prospects.

A girl's vulnerability to child marriage is often shaped by a variety of background factors. Statistics show that child brides tend to be located in rural areas and often come from economically disadvantaged households. These areas typically lack adequate resources and opportunities, which can exacerbate the risk of child marriage. In addition, access to education plays an important role in reducing this risk. Child brides are less likely to be educated beyond the secondary school level, as limited access to school perpetuates their vulnerability. Therefore, addressing socio-economic disparities and improving educational opportunities for girls are important steps in preventing and reducing the prevalence of child marriage.

The Government of the Republic of Bangladesh has pledged to uphold all commitments, including membership in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) for the empowerment of women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the People's Republic of Bangladesh Constitution. To ensure the protection of children's rights, the government implemented the National Women Development Policy 2011, the National Children Policy 2011, the Children Act of 2013, and the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 2017. Bangladesh is one of the focal points of the UNICEF

Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, a four-year multi-donor, multi-stakeholder program that will be carried out in 12 countries.

Started in 2016 UNICEF has been actively involved in launching and supporting numerous projects in Bangladesh. In 2018, the Global Programme set up anti-sexual harassment committees in 72 secondary schools, educating committee members on preventing sexual harassment. Despite delays and challenges from resistance to regressive legal changes, the eagerly anticipated National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Marriage 2018-2030 (NAP) was finally launched in August 2018. This launch, spearheaded by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and supported by UNICEF, aimed to realize the Prime Minister's commitment and the Multi-Sectoral Programme.

UNICEF has made several initiatives to combat child marriage in Bangladesh. In 2018, a Plan of Action was announced in Bangladesh to eliminate child marriage, with the objective of stopping under 15 years old marriage for young girls lowering marriage rates for females aged 18 by one-third by 2021 (UNICEF, 2018). In 2020, UNICEF advocated for rapid efforts to stop child marriage in Bangladesh by 2030, citing the country's high prevalence and position among the top ten nations in the world with the highest rates. The organization has also developed a statistics brief on child marriage trends in Bangladesh from 1970, highlighting the progress made in lowering the rate of child marriage (UNICEF, 2020).

From the explanation above, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are bringing urgency for the problem of the marriage issue in Bangladesh to attract communities and community groups, the government and organizations related to children's and women's rights in Bangladesh to jointly address the problem of child marriage. In this program, UNICEF focuses on increasing awareness of families, community leaders and the government regarding the dangers of child marriage which has a long and lasting impact (UNICEF 2017). it can be underlined that the Bangladesh still struggling dealing in reducing the number of child marriages. Therefore, the role of the International Organization is needed to reduce the rate of child marriage.

B. Research Questions

From the background explanation of the problem above, the problem formulation that can be taken: How did the collaboration between United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Bangladesh government contribution to end child marriage in Bangladesh?

C. Research Objectives

The aim of this research is to:

1. Analyze the collaboration between the Government of Bangladesh and UNICEF in efforts to end child marriage in Bangladesh.
2. Assess the effectiveness of programs and initiatives implemented within the collaboration framework.
3. Evaluate the impact of this collaboration on reducing the number of child marriages in Bangladesh.
4. Make recommendations for improvements and increased future cooperation between the Government of Bangladesh and UNICEF in addressing child marriage.

D. Research Benefits

The benefits of this thesis research include:

1. Provides a deeper understanding of the efforts made by the Government of Bangladesh and UNICEF to address child marriage in Bangladesh.
2. Contribute empirical data that can be used as a basis for further policy development in efforts to combat child marriage in Bangladesh.
3. Provide inspiration and guidance for researchers or other institutions interested in conducting further studies or implementing similar programs in different contexts.
4. Able to strengthen local and international community awareness and support for the issue of child marriage, as well as supporting global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals related to gender equality and child protection.

E. Theoretical Framework

To help understand and know about the Collaboration between the Bangladesh government and the United Nations of Children Fund (UNICEF) to end child marriage in Bangladesh the basic framework that will be used is Public Diplomacy and International Regime.

1. Public Diplomacy Concept

Public diplomacy is a form of diplomatic effort that aims to influence public opinion abroad directly, without going through government intermediaries. It involves a variety of communication strategies designed to create understanding, trust, and support for a particular policy or goal of a country or international organization.

The globalization and advances are the era for information technology, public diplomacy has become increasingly important in strengthening relations between countries, promoting cross-border cooperation, and strengthening a country's positive image in the eyes of the international community. Through cultural exchanges, educational programs, social media, and various other activities, public diplomacy aims to build bridges between various societal groups throughout the world, encourage mutually beneficial dialogue, and strengthen the foundations of international cooperation. In his article Joshep S Nye Jr describes public diplomacy as a tool that used for the government to gather resources to reach out and attract the people of other nations, not only those in government (Nye Jr 2008).

Nicholas J. Cull emphasizes that public diplomacy actors may not only transmit the proper message, but also endeavour to establish the right environment for that message by implementing relevant international and local regulatory frameworks. But more fundamentally, public diplomacy actors can improve target audience connectivity by investing in wireless projects, establishing internet cafes, investing in real-time translation software, or assisting in the acquisition of basic language skills. This exemplifies how the past can be used to guide those navigating this new world. Particularly if public diplomats recognise their own limitations and the significance of exercising caution when establishing partnerships, the emergence of the network society presents new opportunities for public diplomacy.

especially if public diplomats recognize their own limitations and the significance of caution while forming alliances. These collaborations, that carry out ideas deemed crucial for policy, must also generate the answers required to alter those policies and steer toward a common future.

According to Nicholas J. Cull Public diplomacy is grouped into five, namely:

a. Listening

Listening is the capacity of an actor to manage the whole situation by collecting and evaluating information about foreign publics and their viewpoints, and subsequently using that data to successfully redirect its policy or overall approach to public diplomacy. Throughout history, audience and opinion research has consistently been a part of every aspect of public diplomacy. This includes lobbying, cultural diplomacy, exchange programs, and broadcasting organisations, each of which has its own responsibility for doing such research. Foreign public mood data is collected through traditional diplomatic and intelligence activities as a regular element of their operation (Cull, 2008).

b. Advocacy

Advocacy in public diplomacy refers to an actor's deliberate efforts to influence the international environment by participating in communication activities aimed at actively promoting a certain policy, idea, or the actor's broader interest among a foreign audience. Today, this includes both advocating for policies through embassy press relations and providing information, even if it doesn't completely coincide with specific policy goals. Advocacy is present in all areas of public diplomacy, and its usefulness has historically led to a preference for this aspect of public diplomacy and a motivation to place it at the core of every public diplomacy organization (Cull, 2008).

c. Cultural diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy refers to the deliberate efforts of a country or organisation to influence the international arena by showcasing and promoting its cultural assets and achievements abroad, as well as facilitating the exchange of cultural ideas and practices. Historically, cultural diplomacy denoted a nation's approach to supporting the dissemination of exemplars of its culture. Notable historical instances include the Greek construction of the extensive library in Alexandria and the Roman Republic's practice of allowing the sons of "friendly kings" from neighbouring regions to pursue their studies at Rome. Currently, organisations like the British Council and Italian Cultural Institute actively contribute to this endeavour (Cull, 2008).

f. Exchange diplomacy

Exchange diplomacy refers to an actor's effort to manage the international environment by sending its residents abroad and accepting citizens from other nations for the goal of education and cultural assimilation. Although it may appear to be a one-sided process, the presence of reciprocity has made this particular facet of public diplomacy a strong advocate for the concept of "mutuality": the idea of an international educational opportunity that benefits and changes all parties involved (Cull, 2008).

g. International News Broadcasting (IB)

IB refers to the strategic efforts made by actors in the entertainment industry to exert influence on the global community by utilising radio, television, and Internet technologies to connect with viewers worldwide. IB work, when implemented by governments, can intersect with various other functions of public diplomacy. These include activities like gathering information through monitoring and audience research, promoting certain viewpoints through editorials or regulations broadcasts, engaging in cultural diplomacy through cultural content, and facilitating exchanges of programming and personnel with other broadcasters (Cull, 2008).

According to the explanation above, this study investigates the Government of Bangladesh's communication advocacy strategy with UNICEF in raising global awareness of the issue of child marriage, as well as how they mobilize international support to implement policies and concrete steps to address this problem at the national and international level. This study will investigate the elements that determine the success of the Bangladesh government's outreach efforts to reduce child marriage rates, as well as their impact on the global community's perceptions and actions on the subject.

2. International Regime Concept

International regimes are characterized as principles, norms, regulations, and processes for decision-making that align actor intentions in a certain issue area. As the beginning, regimes have been viewed as intervening variables that lie between basic causal elements and outcomes and behaviour. This concept presents two main questions: First, how do basic causative elements like power, interest, and values relate to regimes? Second, what is the link between regimes and their associated results and behaviour? The first question refers to a variety of fundamental paradigmatic arguments regarding the basis of international relations. (Krasner 1982). More specifically, regime theory argues that international organizations or regimes impact the behaviour of nations and other international players. According to the thesis, cooperation is conceivable in an anarchic world system since regimes emerge from international cooperation.

This theory makes it possible to examine how international relations influence preferences, perceptions, and interactions around nations in context of international relations.

Human Rights Protection and International Regimes are essential concepts in UNICEF's approach to child marriage in Bangladesh. Child marriage constitutes a major violation of human rights since it entails compulsion, oppression, and gender inequality. Here, UNICEF operates under a framework that prioritizes children's rights and human rights values. They work to offer safety, education, health, and psychological support services to children who are endangered or victimized by child marriage. UNICEF's human rights-based strategy is supported by international regimes, including treaties and standards such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which ban child marriage and uphold children's rights. UNICEF's collaboration with the Bangladesh government and other

organizations aims to strengthen the implementation of these treaties and norms, demonstrating the importance of cooperation between countries and international organizations in protecting human rights, particularly children's rights, worldwide.

F. Research Arguments

1. By using the Advocacy analysis adopted from the concept of Public Diplomacy, this thesis will capture the difficulty faced by Bangladesh government effort in ending child marriage is based on the inability and weakness of the Bangladeshi state in dealing with the issue of child marriage. This is due to child marriage being too widespread. The situation requires urgent need for the country to grab the attention of some international organizations in handling cases in the country.
2. Through analysis of International Regime theory, the success of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in reducing child marriage in Bangladesh highlights the role of cooperation and coordination between state and non-state actors. UNICEF has demonstrated success in contributing to the formulation of shared norms and practices aimed at addressing the issue of child marriage in Bangladesh which has also led to increased protection and empowerment of girls to encourage women to assert their rights to end this practice in Bangladesh.

G. Research Methodology

This study applied the qualitative methodology, namely by presenting current facts supported by historical data and subsequently drawing conclusions. The data was acquired using library research methods. The data was obtained from several sources such as books, scientific publications, websites, newspapers, reports, online news, international treaty documents, and other electronic and print media that were crucial for this research.

H. Systematic Research

The systematics of writing in this research are divided into three chapters. In **CHAPTER I** there is an introductory section consisting of problem background, problem formulation, theoretical framework, main argument, methodology and outline.

Then, in **CHAPTER 2 The growing issue of child marriage in Bangladesh and the approaches by UNICEF**, it contains a discussion of the research and analyzes the situation of the widespread issue of child marriage in Bangladesh and the factors causing it and the efforts of the government of Bangladesh to end these issues.

In **CHAPTER 3: implementation results of UNICEF's support and sustainability strategy on the issue of child marriage in Bangladesh**, this research chapter will contain a role of UNICEF respond implementing strategies and evaluation of cooperation through the program between the Bangladesh government and UNICEF in overcoming child marriage.

Finally, the **CONCLUSION** contains a summary about the explanation of the main fundings that has been discussed in several previous chapters, annexation and recommendation.