Addressing discourses in texts/manuals on male engagement in ending child marriage

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Abstract

For this thesis I have conducted a discourse analysis on which discourses that are being reproduced in texts on the issue of male engagement in ending child marriage. I am looking at the agency of both males and females, what is taken for granted, words that carry norms and how these are maintain or challenging the dominant discourse on the topic.

In the thesis I have analysed manuals/briefs on male engagement in ending child marriage using Fairclough’s approach to discourse. Fairclough uses the concept of discourse in three ways. First, discourse refers to language use as social practice. Secondly, discourse is explained as language used within a specific field, such as a scientific discourse. Thirdly discourse is used as a count noun referring to a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a specific perspective (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). Per Fairclough, discourse constructs social identities, social relations as well as knowledge and meaning (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002).

Norms that shape discourses are a crucial for my analysis in this thesis. Norms can either be maintained or challenged and the norm critical approach is suitable for investing power relations.

I found that there is not just one relevant discourse being reproduced in the texts. Some segments are displaying the girls as more passive, maintaining a stereotype. While others use an approach that may challenge the normal assumption. All texts emphasize on working towards changing a potential harmful masculine gender norm for men and boys which in the end can affect the likeliness of child marriage and empowerment of the females. They are assumed to not be equal on their own, they need to be encouraged to change their behaviours and open up to a more inclusive masculine gender norm. Overall, the language that is used in the manuals is “soft” in its approach and not judgemental or critical. This possibly to be sensitive and not create aggression. The texts claim that they wish to shift norms and behaviours on the issue. The risk is that the texts may not condemn child marriage or emphasize the downsides enough when they are more focused on turning men into allies.
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Foreword

I wished to write about something important in relation to communication for development. I choose the subject of male engagement in ending child marriage since I find it to be an interesting issue, especially the discourses surrounding it. The approach is not black or white but is something people have opinions about. Should women be more empowered and liberated and break free from oppression? Is it possible for men to be supporters and advocates or do they “take over” the issue? What strategies are considered successful or less so? Should girls and women represent themselves or be represented by others? A co-worker of mine sighed “Why should women solve a problem that men created?” “Why should the victim figure everything out themselves?” It is like the problem with aid itself. Who has the agency? Who gives and who receives aid?

Thanks to Ronald Stade, Bojana Romic and UNFPA.
Acronyms

ICRW - International Center for Research on Women
UNFPA – United Nations Populations Fund
UNICEF – United Nations Childrens Fund
USAID - United States Agency for International Development
Introduction

I have analysed three manuals/texts on male engagement in ending child marriage to further investigate discourses and taken for granted knowledge on the subject. Are the discourses being challenged and progressive or maintaining the dominant perspective?

About child marriages

Child marriage is, according to UNICEF, defined as a formal marriage or informal union before the of age 18 (UNICEF, 2019). Child marriage is considered a harmful traditional practise and is a reality for both boys and girls, but girls are the most affected and suffer the consequences which may lead to a lifetime of disadvantages (USAID, 2015) (Ferreira & Kamal, 2017). In this Thesis, when I talk about child marriage I will do it from a “child bride” perspective with girls in mind. Girls who marry as children are less likely to remain in school and more likely to experience domestic violence, abuse and exploitation (Ferreira & Kamal, 2017) (Early Marriage, 2005). Child brides are often separated from their family, friends and lacks freedom to participate in community activities. Moreover, they are more likely to die due to complications in pregnancy or childbirth and their infants are at a greater risk to be stillborn or die during the first month. Even if the child survives, the baby is more likely to suffer from low birth weight, under nutrition and late development (UNICEF, 2019) (Early Marriage, 2005).

Child marriage functions as a social norm in some communities and marrying as a young girl is rooted in gender discrimination (Ferreira & Kamal, 2017). Child marriage is sometimes a strategy for economic survival as families marry off their daughters at an early age to reduce their economic burden (UNICEF, 2019). Indicators for why child marriages are being used vary but some reasons are that parents want to secure their daughters’ and the family’s finances through marriage (due to poverty) and that they fear the risk of shame for the daughter’s potential promiscuity (Promises, 2011). Parents' fear of girls' sexuality, which often is supported by both religious tradition and religious leaders, has traditionally encouraged them to arrange a child marriage before or soon after puberty. To marry off the girls at an early age ensures that the girls will not dishonour the family (Ending Child Marriage, 2016). Another reason for child marriage is that parents and communities are not valuing girls' education, as they see girls as either mothers or potential child bearers (Ending
Child Marriage, 2016). However, there is considerable variation between social settings regarding the benefits of education for girls.

UNFPA states that child marriage is almost universally banned (Child marriage, 2019). However, there is an association between consistent minimum age laws (the general minimum age of marriage, the minimum age with parental consent, and the age of sexual consent for girls all set at or above 18) and rates of marriage below 18 among females (Arthur et al. 2018). Child marriage was 40% lower in countries with consistent laws against child marriage than countries with inconsistent (Arthur et al. 2018). More than 650 million women alive today were married as children and about 12 million girls under the age of 18 are married every year (UNICEF, 2019). Women who were married as children decreased by 15 per cent in the last decade, from 1 in 4 to approximately 1 in 5. This is a significant improvement but without action from all parts of society, hundreds of millions more girls will suffer from the harm of child marriage (UNICEF, 2019). Addressing child marriage requires recognition of a range of factors that contribute to the preservation of the practice such as economic, structural and social factors (UNICEF, 2019).

Per UNFPA, child marriages that take place before age 15 are considered very early marriages, however it is more common that children are married at 16 and 17 (Child marriage, 2019). During circumstances where parents are under more pressure to marry off their daughters, and for example living in extreme poverty or in conflict settings, marriages have been reported among girls around 11-12 years and in rare cases even younger (Child marriage, 2019).

In the Global Programme Brochure (2018) it is explained that common strategies in ending child marriage are;

- To empower adolescent girls at risk of child marriage, or those who are already married. The aim is for girls to be informed about the consequences of child marriage and learn to advocate for their own interests (Global Programme Brochure, 2018).
- To educate families, communities and leaders to invest in adolescent girls. This since parents, men and boys, are often primary decision-makers on child marriage.
- To improve the availability of services for adolescent girls in key sectors such as access to quality education and health.
- Foster national laws to protect the rights of adolescent girls (Global Programme Brochure, 2018).
Relevance
Research in men’s engagement in ending child marriage is described as somewhat limited even if there are ongoing programmes and evaluations on the subject (Girlsnotbrides, 2018). Therefore my purpose would be to contribute to further research within that field. An overall purpose in the long run would be to improve practises to end child marriage but my research for this thesis will be compressed and can only make a limited contribution. I believe my research to be of relevance since research within the field is considered thin while the problem needs resources.

From my research perspective it would be interesting to shift focus from “victims” being empowered to the other side. What males, the community, and leaders, are encouraged to do through texts and communication. However, I see no conflict between empowering women, influence policymakers and educate men/community members.

There are a range of words that carries discourses in how the communication around men’s engagement in ending child marriage. An example is the word help that appears in text on male engagement in ending child marriage. That “men should help their wives with the household and children and support” (Women and Girls, 2018). This to secure more equal relations between the sexes and in the long run might need to less child brides. Do words like that within this context challenge the norm, the hegemonic discourse within this specific domain? My analysis would be somewhat limited since I am not really reaching beyond the text. However, I find the text to be crucial and it should be able to stand on its own feet without further explanations. Some of the texts function as manuals which makes the text even more crucial when they serve both as communicative tools and as a guideline for others. A text is a communicative tool and it needs to be able to communicate in a clear and understandable way. I would wish to examine these words and discourses further. Are there different “colliding” discourses in the texts or is there a common thread within the research? How are the discourses expressed? I wish to contribute to future research regarding men’s engagement in ending child marriage since the trend seems to be more focused on empowering girls and women. There has been growing recognition of the importance of engaging men and boys to improve gender equality and empower women and girls. For example, UN Women launched the He for She-campaign in 2015. However, the evidence bases on male engagement in ending child marriage is considered relatively thin, especially
compared to the empowerment approach (Girlsnotbrides, 2018). Therefore I find my research to have relevance and contribute to a perhaps less researched area.

Discourses are interesting to discuss since there is an ongoing conversation about words regarding male engagement in ending child marriage. Would it benefit to refer to boys and men as “allies” or “agents of change,” rather than “perpetrators” or “abusers”? Can words help create a shift toward more positive approaches to masculinity or do not? Further it is explained that it is important to understand the language and terminology that will resonate most with the target audience. That “gender equality” may be a suitable term in certain contexts and “gender justice” or “female empowerment” may work better elsewhere (Girlsnotbrides, 2018). For discussion and further research, it would be interesting to discuss possible effects of texts and the words and the discourses they might be carrying. Are some words more appealing? Why are a certain set of words being used and what do they express? How do words reveal discourses on girls’ agency?

Purpose and research questions

For this thesis I will conduct a discourse analysis on which discourses that are being reproduced in a selection of manuals/texts on the issue of male engagement in ending child marriage.

My research questions are:

*Which discourses on male engagement in ending child marriage are being reproduced in the selected manuals on the subject?*

*How are those discourses challenging or maintaining the norm?*

I am looking at the norms of agency for girls, men, boys, family and the community and which truths that are taken for granted in ending child marriage. I am interested in words that carry norms and how these are maintaining or challenging the dominant discourse on the topic.
**Literature review and existing research**

**Empowerment**

Empowerment strategies aim for girls to gain increased control over strategic life choices, such as their marriage. In empowerment-programmes it is fundamental that the girls build self-awareness about her rights, potential opportunities alternative choices and absorbs skills and information about herself and the world around her (Ending Child Marriage, 2016). The girl needs to be presented to alternatives to marriage or opportunities outside of domestic work, such as education or work. Girls and women can then potentially access other opportunities, such as education, paid work, or public office, which will transform their lives and positively influence their communities (Ending Child Marriage, 2016).

On the subject of girls’ agency and empowerment, Warner explains that it is significant to point out that adolescent decision-making is a double-edged sword (Warner, 2014). Even if empowerment or progressive forces is allowing girls to choose education over marriage, girls’ early marriage might still be the norm. Girls themselves might wish to avoid the stigma directed at older, unmarried girls and women and therefor chose to marry as children solely to avoid being the subject of community gossip and mistreatment. They might want the prestige and benefits of being a married woman and avoid the downsides of being a norm breaker (Warner, 2014). There are also other reasons, such as love, that may lead to marriage. As stated above, to avoid potential promiscuity rumours (Promises, 2011).

Most of the evaluated programs in ICRW’s (2016) review concentrate on empowering girls themselves. It is explained that the rationale behind this is to equip young girls to gain knowledge about their world, options and to end their social and economic isolation, enabling them to act and advocate for themselves. Several programs that focus on empowering girls with information, skills and support systems have documented notable changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour (ICRW, 2016).

Warner explains that it is neither realistic nor desirable that girls alone can transform their lives and sole change the deeply entrenched norms and practices. Girls’ empowerment activities ought to be accompanied by other activities that engage and mobilize gatekeepers, shift norms, alleviate economic drivers of child marriage and improve institutions, laws and policies (Warner, 2014). Female beneficiaries have explained that they cannot fully implement the empowerment strategies they were learning through empowerment
programmes and gain agency in their households and communities without the support of men (Glinski, Schwenke, O’Brien-Milne & Farley, 2018).

**Masculinity and men’s engagement in equity**
According to the UNFPA report Unfinished business (2019) behaviours associated with reproduction, including the way families are formed, are regulated through norms, particularly those related to gender. Such gender norms shape and reinforce the social, legal and economic systems. Patriarchal societies are usually characterized by strong and pervasive sexual double standards where masculinity is defined in ways that reward sexual behaviour and where women are rewarded for purity and chastity (Unfinished business, 2019). Gender-unequal norms and attitudes are used to rationalize control over women’s agency and their freedom (Unfinished business, 2019).

The taken for granted image of a successful man combines dominance both over women and other men (Glinski et al. 2018). However, being a “master” may have its disadvantages. According to Glinski et al., is not considered possible for two persons to have a free relationship when one holds the power over the other. Both women and men live within patriarchal power structures and uphold these structures and are harmed by the very same structures (Glinski et al. 2018). Thus, men and women are not harmed equally by patriarchy or are able to enjoy the effects of male privilege. Engaging men and boys are about recognizing how social norms of power and gender affect men and women as individuals and in their relationships with each other (Glinski et al. 2018). The alternative is a system in which men share rather than strive for a dominant role (Murphy, 2004). Per Murphy, men in general, desire power over women because it is in their rational self-interest to do so since they enjoy benefits and privileges that power over women provides them. Hegemonic masculinity embodies a successful strategy in relation to women since the male holds the upper hand. Masculinity itself is identified with the norm of what a range of persons believe to be masculine attitudes, behaviours, and abilities. According to the discourse strategy, polarities play a significant discursive role since masculinity is contrasted with what is not masculine. Familiar dichotomies include strong-weak, dominant-submissive and of course male-female (Murphy, 2004). Emotional behaviour is an anomaly in the stereotypical male gender role. If men cannot act freely, neither can they, without restrictions, cry, be gentle or show weakness since these are feminine (negative) actions and not masculine (positive). The
female represents “the other” and the masculine is the norm (Murphy, 2004). In Murphy it is explained that men are more likely to be tolerant of feminism in a watered-down version, hoping that they could gain something from its advent (Murphy, 2004). A statement that might be a generalisation which may not apply to everyone.

According to Glinski et al, the role of men and boys in gender equity and women’s empowerment programming is conceptualized in three main ways: As gatekeepers – holding power in society. That men hold most of the power positions and uphold inequitable patriarchal norms and protect their privileges. As allies or partners which is a more inclusive framework that envisions a positive, culturally transformed role for men and boys. As stakeholders – this approach sees men as participants and promoters in the process of creating equality and equity. It also perceives men as benefitting from the process (Glinski et al. 2018).

A growing consensus is focused on engaging men as stakeholders or co-beneficiaries of gender equity programming since this is an approach that allows men to advocate for the benefits of gender equity that both men and women can experience (Glinski et al. 2018). Glinski et al. explains that there are concerns around the framing of male engagement for women’s empowerment. They clarify that some experts prefer a focus on gender equity while others believe that women and girls should remain the centre of gender equality work, since they are the ones who have been disadvantaged historically and systematically. Glinski et al argues that the goal is gender equity and asking how male engagement impacts women and girl’s empowerment is a necessary step along the path to equity (Glinski et al. 2018). Connell explains that in some ways men and boys are often gatekeepers for gender equality since hegemonic masculinity involves aggression towards the less powerful such as women (Connell, 2005).

UN Women is an organisation promoting women’s rights and are working on engaging men and boys for gender equality. They believe that achieving gender equality is about transforming unequal power relations between men and women including challenging notions of masculinity and traditional perceptions of manhood (Engaging Men, 2019). According to UN Women, this requires men to question power relations in their actions and words at the personal, interpersonal and societal level. Men need to be engaged as gender advocates and be active agents who can transform social norms, behaviours and gender stereotypes that
perpetuate discrimination and inequality (Engaging Men, 2019). The “HeForShe” initiative that was launched in 2015 is an example of a widespread campaign that promoted men’s engagement for equality (Engaging Men, 2019).

Men’s engagement in ending child marriage

“The fact that harmful masculinities are learned, socially constructed, and not innate, suggests that they can also be ‘unlearned’ and replaced with more positive attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.” (Girlsnotbrides, 2018).

According to several international conventions and declarations, girls have the basic human right to determine when to marry, when to have children, to have access to quality health services, and the possibility to gain economic independence. For girls to enjoy these rights, norms around gender must be challenged and transformed at individual, community and society levels (Worldvision, 2019). Increased awareness of gender suggests that an evidence-based response to end child marriage should engage the brothers, fathers, uncles, and future husbands and fathers-in-law of the girls who have been the focus of programmatic efforts (Greene, Perlson, Taylor & Lauro, 2015). This engagement is necessary for challenging harmful gender norms and increasing understanding of the negative consequences of discriminatory relationship (Greene et al, 2015).

As explained before, child marriage is generally more harmful to the bride and girls married young may experience a lifetime of limitations such as giving up school and being kept at home (Women and Girls, 2018) (Ferreira & Kamal, 2017). Further, child brides are more likely to suffer from domestic abuse and complications from childbirth. Therefore, most programs aimed at ending child marriage put their resources toward helping and empowering girls (Women and Girls, 2018). When males are included in strategies to address child marriage the focus is on the key role that men play as gatekeepers such as fathers, religious and community leaders. Engaging them is an important part of mobilizing communities to shift norms on child marriage (Santillan, 2018). Santillan considers it crucial to reach out to boys at an early age to encourage equitable gender attitudes and norms so that they can be allies in preventing child marriage. They represent the “demand-side” of the issue (Santillan, 2018).
A publication from USAID explains that male engagement in harmful cultural practises is an underdeveloped area of research (USAID, 2015). However, they highlight positive results from male engagement in changing gender norms in the household such as men wash clothes and participate in the domestic work.

Parental and community engagement is the second most frequently used strategy for programmes attempting to end child marriage in ICRW’s evaluation (ICRW, 2016). The most common strategy is empowerment of girls. However, the programs do often combine various strategies and address a range of issues. Male engagement is an important strategy since the decision to marry girls early is generally in the hands of family and community elders. Families who breaks the norm may face stigma for failing to meet social expectations. Girls rarely have the power to decide when or whom to marry (ICRW, 2016).

According to USAID, it is crucial to work with male leaders who have power over girl’s and women’s lives (USAID, 2015). Strategies for this includes promoting positive masculinities and working against harmful norms. Men should be engaged as positive role models and be encouraged to become supportive partners that help build solidarity (USAID, 2015). The role of religious leaders as “male role models” have proven to be effective and are considered good practice since traditional and religious leaders also preserve the dominant social norm that marriages should be arranged at an early age (Ending Child Marriage, 2016).

Evidence from programmes that address gender inequality and ending child marriage, suggest that gender-transformative programming, or programming which is deliberately designed to change inequitable gender norms and support girl’s empowerment can help men and boys to become more supportive of girls’ rights (Girlsnotbrides, 2018).

According to USAID, the evidence base for male engagement in relation to ending child marriage is somewhat mixed. Some of the concerns are that seeking the support of male community leaders may downplay the gender equity and empowerment goal (USAID, 2015).

From my research perspective it would be interesting to analyse what males, present and future leaders, are encouraged to do. I want to investigate how men are being addressed and what discourses are being expressed though words that are used in the communication and texts.
Relation to Communication for Development

In the struggle to end child marriage dialogue and advocacy are key elements in the communication. Moreover, some of the texts I am analyzing are manuals and they are meant to be used for advocacy towards social beneficial goals. UNICEF’s vision for ending child marriage includes Communication for Development (Ending Child Marriage, 2019, Jan 6). Programmes working on ending child marriage often uses communication for behavioral change. UNICEF explains that advocacy communication involves organized actions aimed at influencing, for example, the political climate, public perceptions of social norms, the community and empowerment regarding specific issues. It is a means of seeking change in power relations, social relations and attitudes (Communication for Development, 2011).

UNFPA explains that discriminatory gender norms are among the most significant obstacles on progress for women and girls, making them have a second-class status (Unfinished business, 2019). They encourage broader social awareness and behavior change campaigns which can support shifts towards more positive, broadly accepted norms since gender-discriminatory behaviors still go unquestioned (Unfinished business, 2019). In male engagement in ending child marriage the behavioral change seeks to shift the norm on both masculinity and men's dominant gender role as well as on child marriage itself (Communication for Development, 2011).

Lennie & Tacchi (2011) explains that there is more than one definition of Communication for Development. Communication for development can be viewed as the use of communication processes, techniques and media to help people gain awareness of their situation. Moreover, people can understand their options for change, to resolve conflicts, to work towards consensus, act for change to help people acquire the knowledge and skills they need to improve their condition. Lennie & Tacchi points out that a top down perspective on Communication for Development has been a dominant approach (Lennie & Tacchi, 2011). The tendency is that development largely positions the poor as listeners rather than speakers. The writers define Communication for Development to be about people rather than technologies and that the term is generally understood to be about the use of communication in participatory processes for social change (Lennie & Tacchi, 2011).

Karin Wilkins (2015) explains that development communication refers to strategic intervention toward social change. Communication involves intervention by communities, movements, and organizations within institutional and social structures to promote a positive
dialogic action. Further, Wilkins explains that communicating for development engages strategies to promote socially beneficial goals (Wilkins, 2015). Development problems addressed through these missions involves strategies to end child marriage.

Communication involvements can help to create awareness, encourage behaviors or influence policymakers. Development communication offers a complete framework for engaging in dialogue and action toward social change (Wilkins, 2015).

Per Manyozo (2012) highlights an integrated model of communication for social change as “an interactive process where community dialogue and collective action work together to produce social change in a community” to improve the welfare of the public (Manyozo, 2012, p. 6). Dialogue is a key variable to use communication as a tool to achieve social change and development progress. Development communication can be perceived as a subject for the Global South, implicating that the Global North does not need communication in its development processes (Manyozo, 2012).

Some challenges with implementing communication for development interventions on for example, valuing girls’ education instead of marrying them off at a young age, are that parents are not able to visualize opportunities for educated girls (Ending Child Marriage, 2016). Parents need to believe that there is a possibility for future job opportunities for their daughters. Advocacy and to promote an alternative way of thinking and acting is not enough. Services and investments in the community are also are needed. For example, an increasing the number of female teachers demonstrates that girls can have an alternative role model for combining being mother and a child bearer. She can have a respected job and be a person who contribute to the economy of the household (Ending Child Marriage, 2016).

Selection and research
I have used the written material on, for example, recognized platforms like girlsnotbrides.org. This is a public database where they have a collection of texts about male engagement in ending child marriage. The three manuals/texts used are the relevant and trusted ones I could find that were suitable for my cause. I searched online using different platforms and google. I have only reviewed material in English since it is the main language for this thesis. I used public documents and articles that I find to be serious on the subjects and that directly or
potentially communicates with the audience in mind. If I had found more relevant manuals/briefs I could have used them to get a broader selection.

The selection process is important since it is crucial to not base the selection on the researcher’s potential personal agenda. A hypothesis needs to be tested and not taken for granted (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2008). I have proofread the texts that suited my purpose well and choose to present sections which reflected upon my research question. I am analyzing reproduced discourses and looking at words, not judging programmes or texts. I have used texts that function as manuals and are intended to be used to influence others. Therefor the content in them is highly important in the struggle against child marriage.

I have selected the following texts for my analysis:

1. The first text is “A More Equal Future: A Men Care Manual to Engage Fathers to Prevent Child Marriage in India”. Behind the manual is World Vision, a Christian humanitarian. Promundo, an NGO who works to promote men and boys’ engagement in gender equality. And finally, MenCare, a global campaign coordinated by Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice Network (Worldvision, 2019 Jan 5). As mentioned in the headline, India is the targeted region for the manual.

2. The second text is a brief that aims to be a base text for engaging men and boys in ending child marriage. The text states that it synthesises some key lessons learned, guiding principles, recommendations and evidence gaps. It is found on the Girlsnotbrides website (Girlsnotbrides, 2018).

3. The third text is called “Promises: Influencing Parents’ Behaviors to Increase Gender Equality for Children.” It is a text from Save the Children in Nepal. They have developed a behaviour change intervention called “Choices” which targets adolescent boys and girls with the purpose of changing gender-related attitudes, norms and behaviours to achieve their understanding and support for more egalitarian relationships between boys and girls. They explain that child marriage are deeply
engrained practices intertwined with traditional cultural beliefs and that simply informing people of the proven benefits of delaying marriage appealing to logic is unlikely on its own to change people’s behaviour (Promises, 2011). Further, they emphasize that the approach they used would build on the emotional drivers of behaviour change. The main author of the publication was an independent consultant who led the formative research in the field otherwise the manual is a collaboration between various contributors representing mainly Save the children and USAID (Promises, 2011).

I have read the texts carefully, multiple times and have looked at wording and transitivity. Is the norm being challenged or maintained? From my analysis it is possible to determine if the text is a reproduction of already existing discourses or is part of an innovative process that may push further for social change (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002).

**Generalisation and validity**

I have used a qualitative research approach for this thesis. A qualitative research method means that individual events and smaller details can be given great weight. A qualitative study mainly says something about the analyzed empirical data but can also point to trends in society (Thurén, 2007). I will not be counting words or quantify my findings, which would have secured the external validity and a more generalising scientific conclusion (Given, 2012). I did not believe that I had the time to use a much broader selection of texts which a more statistical approach would have demanded. However, I aim for my research to be reliable, repeatable and securing internal validity (Given, 2012). Reliability also means that my research should not be dependent on the researcher. However, I as a researcher have a certain preunderstanding that might affect my findings. Since my study is based on public material that is easily accessed and published online for the general view, my empirical data is accessible for others to take part of. Therefor it is also repeatable. My study is qualitative why it is more difficult to translate validity and generalisability into my research since these concepts stem from a positivistic and quantitative tradition (Lid Andersson, 2009). I would have needed a broader selection of texts and a more statistical approach to have a research with higher generalisability.
In my research I have respected and obeyed the Code of Conduct and Ethical Guidelines. I as a researcher should be fully aware of the ethical issues concerning my research. This means that I have responsibility for all procedures and ethical issues related to the project, that I consider the effects of my research and that potential harmful effects (UNESCO, 2019).

**Theory and methodology**

**Feminist research**

Feminist theories suit my approach since I am interested in power with a norm critical perspective. Feminist theories would be part of my approach and methodology. Feminist research is characterized by the application of a gender perspective to social phenomena. A main element of feminism is that gender is central in understanding social relations and processes. Gender relations are considered unequal and socially created, not biological, and characterized by a historical and cultural context. The feminist perspective points out inequalities between the sexes to contribute to new knowledge in areas previously neglected due to a strictly male perspective (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

From a feminist research point of view, I have a critical approach to discourses that may maintain a status quo and not challenge the patriarchal masculine norm. According to USAID, child marriage is a practise sustained by patriarchal constructions of masculinity and unequal gender relations (USAID, 2015).

Stevi Jackson writes that women’s studies have its roots in second wave feminism and originated as a challenge to male-defined and male-centred knowledge. Before the sociology that was taught in the early 1970s was the sociology of primarily white western men (Discover Society, 2019). During the 70’s, the field of feminist epistemology began to expand when Dorothy Smith feminists like Sandra Harding and Dorothy Smith advocated the necessity of researchers’ daily experiences as a basis for knowledge (Liinason, 2005). The researcher had to turn towards oneself with the purpose of investigating his or her own position and the potential impact on the research results. The researchers questioned the
objectivity obligation that has long been the norm for research. The insight about the researcher’s impact on the research process meant that research results could be considered relative or even biased. An ability to self-reflexiveness, when looking at your own research is required (Liinason, 2005). To engage in feminist theory is to challenge knowledge that excludes. Feminists can ask questions that place women’s lives, and those of other marginalized groups, at the centre of social inquiry (UK Sagepub, 2019). The rise and awareness of feminist theory has led to a gradual mainstreaming of feminist research and theory in the humanities and social sciences. Today students are, according to Jackson, increasingly oriented to activism and addressing the problems women face globally (Discover Society, 2019).

Being too focused on just the feminist approach may lead to exclusion of, for example, ethnicity and class. Therefore an intersectional perspective might be necessary. In this Thesis I will focus on girls and women, but I am also aware that boys suffer from both child marriage and harmful stereotypical gender norms.

For this thesis I am especially interested in Connell’s theory on hegemonic masculinity. According to Connell (2005), the traditional sexual code defines women and men as each other's opposites with the woman as the subordinate. A violation of this gender order risks entailing unfavourable consequences for the breach of the norm (Connell, 2005). Furthermore, Connell describes the principle of the properties dichotomy where women are assumed to have a set of properties and men another. The man can be assumed to be authoritarian, aggressive, stubborn, silent and rational, while the woman can be assumed to be caring, easily influenced, talkative and emotional. This since the man and the woman are opposites, contrasting with each other (Connell, 2005).

Norm criticism

Norms that shape discourses are of interest for my analysis in this thesis. Norms can either be maintained or challenged. Norm criticism is an umbrella term for methods and theories utilised to shift the attention from those who do not comply with the norm to the actual taken-for-granted norm (Genus, 2018). Norm criticism is a tool, which involves focusing on power and challenging norms that affect the perception of what is normal. With help of a norm critical perspective, it is possible to look at and try to change structures instead of individuals.
What is considered a norm is not absolute and may change over time. A certain set of norms applies to a group while other norms apply to another group and vary over contexts. A norm signifies the ‘normal’, acceptable behaviour in a social group and the norm often coincides with the majority (Genus, 2018). It can concern the way people look or dress from sexuality or lifestyle. Norm compliance may give a person advantages from a smoother everyday life to significant privileges and power. Similarly, norms can lead to disadvantages for non-compliers which may lead to discriminatory structures (Genus, 2018).

Per Taylor (2009), a norm is normalizing if it links the expansion of possibilities to an increase in and expansion of the proliferation of power within society. Normalizing norms encourage subjects to become efficient at performing a specific defined range of practices. In gender, the subjects are divided into exclusive groups and the appropriate behaviours are predetermined and the subjects are encouraged to repeat them. In time, the repeated behaviours become embedded and are perceived, not as prevailing norms, but instead as, normal. The character of acceptable gender roles may change over time, but the idea persists that women and men are different. This to the extent that normalizing norms can maintain the link between expanded possibilities and increased power (Taylor, 2009).

In my Degree Project, I will assume that the power lies within the patriarchal structure and especially in a hegemonic masculine gender role. This meaning that the man, be it the religious leader, father, boy, as gatekeeper or allied, is assumed to possess the agency in the struggle against child marriage.

**Discourse analysis**

Discourse analysis is described, in The SAGE Encyclopedia (2008), as a collection of related methods for studying the usage of language and its role in social life why I find the method suitable for my thesis. Stuart Hall (2013) states that discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. The basic premise for the discourse is that people through language can create social constructions of the world (Hall, 2013). Discourse is a form of social action that plays a part in producing the social world, including knowledge, identities and social relations. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) describes this view as anti-essentialist: that the social world is constructed socially and discursively implies that its character is not pre-given or determined by external conditions. That our ways of
understanding the world are created and maintained by social processes. Different interpretations of the world may lead to other social actions, and therefore the social construction of knowledge and truth has consequences (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Discourse is what is considered a given truth within a domain and may shift over time (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2008).

Further, social constructionism is an umbrella term for a variety of theories about culture and society (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Discourse analysis is one among several social constructionist approaches, but it is one of the most widely used approach. It is a critical approach to taken-for-granted knowledge, that our knowledge of the world should not be treated as objective truth. Reality is only accessible to us through categories. We are historical and cultural beings and our knowledge and representations of the world are not reflections of the reality but products of our ways of categorising the world (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). In this Thesis, I will analyse the texts from the premise of taken-for-granted knowledge since it can reveal norms and power relations. It is interesting for me to analyse these texts since they are a tool or a meaning carrier for understanding and ending child marriage.

Discourse analysis is related to power and identity and the discourse can determine what is considered the normal mode (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Discourses help to construct social identities and relationships as well as different knowledge and meaning systems. The discourse analysis focuses on the communicative event, such as a text and it is a valid tool to use to distinguish underlying power structures in a text. Which is something I would like to examine. In the discourse analysis, it is interesting to find out who has the formulation privilege. What can be said and by whom? Power is bound up with knowledge and power is responsible both for creating our social world and for the specific ways in which the world is formed and can be talked about (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

I will compare texts to see what kind of discourses that are being produced to gain an overview of the material on men’s engagement in ending child marriage. The strategy of comparing texts is based theoretically on the structuralist approach, that a statement gains meaning through being different from something else which has or could have been said (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). When applying this strategy, the researcher asks the questions: In what ways is the text under different from other texts and what are the potential consequences? Which understanding of the world is taken for granted and which understandings are not being recognised? The questions can be addressed through comparison
with other texts on the same subject (or even texts on different subjects but addressed to the same audience). Comparison is a strategy which makes it possible for the analysts to distance themselves from their material why I find this method useful when I am approaching the texts (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

For this Thesis, I will use Fairclough’s approach to discourse. Fairclough uses the concept of discourse in three ways. First, discourse refers to language use as social practice. Secondly, discourse is explained as language used within a specific field, such as a scientific discourse. Thirdly discourse is used as a count noun referring to a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a specific perspective (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Per Fairclough, discourse constructs social identities, social relations as well as knowledge and meaning (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). Further, discourse analysis needs to expose the link between text and society and an interdisciplinary approach which combines textual and social analysis is required. The concept of ideology is vital, and Fairclough recognizes ideologies as constructing realities that produce, reproduce or transform power relations (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). Fairclough distinguishes discourse as text (the linguistic features), as discursive practice (the processes related to the production and consumption of the text) and as social practice (the wider social and cultural context to which the text belongs) (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). The aim of Fairclough’s model is to connect theories of hegemony and power structures with discursive practices. The production of a text both reproduces and is formed by social practice. Fairclough’s approach is a systematic and structured method specifically in the study of social change (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002).

In Jørgensen & Phillips it is explained that Fairclough emphasises the importance of placing texts into a larger context and thereby considering the conditions in which the discourse that is being analysed (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002).

Fairclough suggests several tools for analysing the linguistic aspects of the text (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). The ones that will be used in my analysis are wording and transitivity. When analysing transitivity, the focus is on how processes are connected or lacks connection with subjects and objects. The purpose of analysing transitivity is to investigate what ideological consequences different forms of production can possess. By doing so it is possible to determine if the text is a reproduction of already existing discourses or is part of an innovative process (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). Interdiscursivity occurs when diverse discourses are articulated together in a communicative event. Through new articulations of discourses, the
boundaries change. Creative discursive practices in which discourses are combined in new challenging ways “interdiscursive mixes” are a sign of discursive and thereby socio-cultural change (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). Discursive practices in which discourses are used in conventional ways are indications of the stability of the dominant order of discourse and thereby the dominant social order (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). Within the discursive practice, it is interesting to see if the text has low interdiscursivity, that is, if the text is conventional and reproduces already existing discourses. A high interdiscursivity is believed to be more changeable and “innovative” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). In the texts I am analysing it is of interest whether discourses about are maintained and/or challenged.

A risk with conducting a critical discourse analysis is also that it does not per se contribute to new knowledge. I do not present a bold theory or hypothesis. When analysing texts, it is a risk that it is more of a “doing” rather than something that contributes to new and interesting research that may be useful for others. A critical discourse method may be regarded as self-affirmative in sense that the researcher interprets the text according to the frameworks and structural conditions offered by the chosen discourse method and can therefore be assumed to find the answers the researcher seeks (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). When conducting a discourse analysis, it is crucial to adopt a critical attitude towards oneself, one’s knowledge and values. An important concept in this regard is reflexivity, meaning that I as a researcher understands that my own work I a part of a discursive construction (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002).

Concept Definition

Child Marriage

UNFPA describes child marriage as a marriage in which one or both spouses are under the age of 18 which is the definition I am following in this thesis (Child marriage, 2019). The reality of child marriage can however be more complicated since both the words “child” and “marriage” are interpreted differently. The concept of marriage may in some place’s marriages may be recognized by the community without legal registration etc. (Child marriage, 2019).

Forced marriage is a frequent term in child marriage. It is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not give their full consent or are unable to leave the marriage, regardless of age.
(Child marriage, 2019). Since children are generally not considered to be able to give their legal consent, all child marriages are considered forced marriages even if two adolescents are marrying each other voluntarily (Child marriage, 2019). This might also be considered as a normative assumption and would be interesting to conduct more research on. In this thesis I have a normative understanding of child marriage since I am looking at manuals working towards a harmful practice.

**Child**

The internationally recognized definition of a child, which has been established by the Convention of the Rights of the Child, is one of the most universally recognised and explains that a child is “every human being below the age of 18 years”. This is the legal definition used in most parts of the world (Child marriage, 2019). In rare cases adulthood can be reached before 18 years and some countries consider adulthood a state achieved upon marriage while other countries such as Nepal have an older minimum age of marriage (Child marriage, 2019). I will follow the Convention of the Rights of the Child’s definition of child.

**Norm**

A norm indicates what is considered normal, an acceptable behaviour in a social group. This can concern a range of themes such as the way people look or how they are supposed to act in general (Genus, 2018). However, in some cases the norm might lead to discriminatory structures. For example, in this case to marry at a young age, when a man needs to live up to a hegemonic masculinity or when girls and women are not viewed as agents in their own life.

**Discourse**

The term discourse is understood as a certain way of understanding and talking about the world (Genus, 2018). As explained earlier in this thesis, discourse is a form of social action that contributes in producing the social world, including knowledge. The premise for the discourse is that people through language can create social constructions of the world (Hall,
Discourses define the boundaries for what can be thought and said, and it suggests that unequal power dimensions affect which discussions of reality are considered possible (Genus, 2018). Language is not only descriptive, it is also a practice. This means that, when something is said, something is also done, which generates consequences in people’s lives (Genus, 2018). Discourse is what is considered a given truth within a domain such as a society and may shift over time (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2008).

Further considerations

In my research I must be sensitive towards cultural differences and not be firm that the Western perspective can be transferred to other cultures. That I, as a Western researcher, have the “right” knowledge on discourses. I am just curious on how texts are approaching male engagement in ending child marriage expressed in words. I don’t not wish to cherry pick controversial examples to prove a point of an underlying agenda. I have an open mind but are looking for comparisons in texts and wording in texts that are suitable and serious. Many of these texts are, as my own research, shaped in a Western context. In this Degree Project, I am reviewing overall research on the subject and not thigh it to a specific region. It may help the generalization but lack culturally specific sensitivity. However, I could be considered to apply an ethnocentric perspective when I accept and use normative definitions of concepts like “child” and “child marriage”?

I am aware of the fact that child marriages are an issue considered linked to certain cultures and that I am not a part of that culture, offering an inside perspective. Though in the US at least 207,468 minors where married between 2000 and 2015 (Baynes, 2017). I will aim to not be “othering”, exotify or represent a strictly western perspective. However, I live in that context and are therefore influenced by certain theories and values.

In this Thesis I lay my focus on men and boys, girls and women. Masculinity and femininity. I am not being sensitive to a non-binary transgender approach.
Analysis

To answer my research questions, I will analyse the below excerpts accordingly looking at words and discourses on male engagement in ending child marriage.


Text 2, Girlsnotbrides, a brief that aims to be a base text for engaging men and boys in ending child marriage.

Text 3, Promises: Influencing Parents’ Behaviors to Increase Gender Equality for Children.

Comparison

In this segment I will compare sentences and words from the texts with each other. I am looking at the variation of words when describing similar situations or topics and what kind of discourses they are promoting.

The below quote is found in the introduction of the manual and is explaining that international conventions, girls have the right to determine when to marry but to achieve this right, norms around gender must be challenged on the basis of individuals, relationships, communities, and society (Worldvision, 2019 Jan 5, p. 1).

“This includes engaging men to take on equitable responsibility for raising children without violence, valuing their daughters as they do their sons and contributing more to the domestic housework.” (Worldvision, 2019 Jan 5, p. 1)

Under the headline “Fathers can help advance gender equality within their families and societies” the below quote is found (GirlsnotBrides, 2018 p. 5).
“Such programmes have helped fathers move beyond culturally-expected roles of provider and decision-maker, and toward ones that involve more equitable sharing of household and caregiving responsibilities, and that are more supportive of their daughters’ rights to education and empowerment.” (GirlsnotBrides, 2018 p. 5)

The below quote is found in the overview of the manual Promises.

“Boys in the experimental group reported changing behaviors, helping their sisters with household chores, and advocating for their sisters’ education and against early marriage.” (Promises, 2011, p.2)

When comparing the wording in the sentences “equitable sharing of household and caregiving responsibilities” (GirlsnotBrides, 2018) with “helping their sisters with household chores” (Promises, 2011) I find that the second phrase may maintain the discourse that the man is only helping the woman and being an aid to the person responsible for the chores. The first sentence does not imply so by using the phrase “equitable sharing of household” implying that it is everyone’s responsible for the chores of the home. An important factor in ending child marriage is that girls needs to be presented to alternatives to opportunities outside of domestic work (Ending Child Marriage, 2016).

I am assuming that the texts have been carefully proofread and it is likely that wording have been up for discussion. Even so the wording differs. Text three can from this example be assumed to have a lower interdiscursivity than text two. The word help indicates that the traditional gender roles are maintained. Even so it is perhaps baby steps towards changing behaviour and discourses around household chores and masculinity. It might be better to encourage boys to help than to continue as before. After all, engaging men is an important part of mobilizing communities to shift norms on child marriage (Santillan, 2018). Moreover, I do not know what words that were used in real life. From this example it might be assumed that men and boys need to change their behaviour and contribute to the household and the empowerment of the females and that they not doing so today. This is in line with the normative assumption of the hegemonic masculine male.

A word like helping their sisters might suggest that the boys are not seen as active contributors to the home with equal responsibilities. Would a wife help her husband to watch the kids? Advocating for might promote a fear or criticism against the male engagement, that it might undermine the empowerment of the girls. In text three, Promises, it is explained that
boys are advocating for their sisters’ education and against early marriage (Promises, 2011, p.2). In text 2, it is stated that fathers are more supportive of their daughters’ rights to education and empowerment (GirlsnotBrides, 2018 p. 5). When comparing the texts number two might possess a higher level of interdiscursivity. The fathers are described as supporters who encourages empowerment. In text three the boys are advocating for their sisters. They are described as active and the sisters are being advocated for which might frame the girls as passive receivers of aid and goodwill.

Under the headline "Identify and promote “positive masculinities” as alternatives to harmful ones” the below excerpt is found (GirlsnotBrides, 2018 p. 3).

Finally, thinking about and explicitly referring to boys and men as “allies” or “agents of change,” rather than “perpetrators” or “abusers” can help create a shift toward more positive approaches to masculinity.” (GirlsnotBrides, 2018 p. 3)

This text emphasis on the benefit of positive masculinities for men. It is suggested that men are called more positive sounding words like “allies” or “agents of change,” instead of “perpetrators” or “abusers.

In the introduction of the Men care manual the following quote is found:

“To achieve this, men must also be engaged as allies and active participants in this transformation.” (Worldvision, 2019 Jan 5, p. 1)

Men are described as allies or partners is a typical expression when it comes to male engagement in ending child marriage. In both texts’ men are encouraged to become allies in the struggle against child marriage. Glinski et al. explains that the terminology envisions a positive, culturally transformed role for men and boys (Glinski et al. 2018). It is not really explained in the GirlsnotBrides text if men actually have to perform or do something to qualify as an ally. In the Worldvision text men ought to be engaged as active participants suggesting that they need to conduct an active performance. The sentence in Girlsnotbides might be somewhat confusing if you wish to ill interpret the sentence.
“Fathers can help advance gender equality within their families and societies”
(GirlsnottBrides, 2018 p. 5).

“Confidence that they made the best choice for their daughter.” (Promises, 2011, p. 9) and “Pride in their decision to give their daughter a gift that will benefit her for a lifetime.” (Promises, 2011, p.9)

The first text, Worldvision, is especially targeting fathers in its approach. Text three, Promises, is more focused on the parents and the community. GirlsnotBrides is also targeting fathers under specific headlines rather than parents. The focus on fathers might be to transform them from gatekeepers to allies. The male is considered to have the upper hand on the decision-making in the family. In the Promise text the communication in this case is not only approaching the male but the parents, possibly implying a shared decision-making. As concluded earlier, parents, men and boys, are often primary decision-makers on child marriage why educating them are crucial (Global Programme Brochure, 2018).

**Emphasises on harmful gender norms**

All manuals use the word *norm* frequently and all texts are referring to harmful gender norms. Below are some of the many example throughout the texts.

An excerpt from the introduction of Men care:

“In general, men are seen as the primary economic providers, or “breadwinners,” while women are primarily responsible for household and caregiving tasks. These norms often reinforce gender inequalities at the household and community level where paid work (often men’s work) is seen as more valuable than unpaid work (often women’s work) such as cooking or caring for children. These same norms also prevent girls from having the same opportunities to education and a successful future as their male peers.” (Worldvision, 2019 Jan 5, p.1)

The quote is taken from the headline “Why engage men & boys?” in the Girlsnotbrides brief.

“Attitudes and behaviours around gender roles are underpinned by harmful gender norms, which disadvantage women and girls by limiting their agency and ability to influence the key decisions that affect their lives. These
gender norms, in turn, contribute to the fact that investments in education, and even food within the household, may be prioritised for boys, who are often seen by families as having more economic value and opportunity than girls. These norms also support the continuation of practices like dowry and bride price, where girls and women are treated as commodities in a marriage market.” (GirlsnotBrides, 2018 p. 2)

The text warns about the downsides on maintaining harmful gender norms which may discriminate girls and may give boys advantages. Some practical like more food and others more structural like “a higher value” and more opportunities in life. As explained by Murphy, hegemonic masculinity can be a successful strategy in relation to women and gives men benefits and privileges (Murphy, 2004). Further it is explained in the UNFPA report that gender-unequal norms and attitudes are used to rationalize control over women’s agency and results in significant obstacles on progress for women and girls (Unfinished business, 2019). Connell also explains that hegemonic masculinity involves aggression toward women and minorities, the ones generally considered to possess less power (Connell, 2005).

Under "homework" the following explanation is found.

“As men, it is important to recognize which norms are harmful and step away from them in order to seek out more positive versions of what it means to be men.” (Worldvision, 2019 Jan 5, p.15)

The excerpt emphasizes on a positive masculinity and advises men to recognize and reject a harmful masculine gender norm.

The below quote is used when explaining projective techniques.

“The technique was also used to explore what people were giving up, emotionally, by following rigid gender norms that dictated gender-based violence in households and early marriage for their daughters.” (Promises, 2011, p.5)

Discourses on hegemonic, potential harmful, gender norms are advised against in all the texts and they aim to challenge that norm giving the text a higher level of inter-discursivity. The norm that is described is the man as the breadwinner with a higher value than the woman. The texts are pushing against a change towards a more diverse masculinity which does not implicate a destructive power over women’s and girls’ lives. Harmful gender norms are often similar to the concept of a hegemonic masculinity which, according to Murphy, embodies a successful strategy in relation to women were men are considered the dominant sex (Murphy, 2004). In the excerpt it is described that destructive gender norms may disadvantage the girls
and women in various ways, reducing their agency about their own lives. Glinski explains that a usual norm for men in relation to child marriage is as gatekeepers, holding power in society and maintaining a status quo (Glinski et al. 2018). Instead it is encouraged for men to help shift the norm on masculinity and instead become an ally seeking out more positive male role models. Norm compliance may give a person advantages, privileges and power while norms breaking can lead to disadvantages for non-compliers (Genus, 2018). Challenging the norm of the society and promoting a higher level of inter-discursivity may have social downsides for the person but can, according to the texts promote equality and change the attitudes on child marriage. As concluded earlier in this thesis, addressing child marriage requires recognition of structural and social factors (UNICEF, 2019).

**Benefits for others in ending child marriage**

In text three, Promises, it is explained that the emotion-based benefits the project want parents to experience when they choose education for their daughters instead of early marriage includes: “Confidence that they made the best choice for their daughter.” (Promises, 2011, p. 9) and “Pride in their decision to give their daughter a gift that will benefit her for a lifetime.” (Promises, 2011, p.9)

Further the text discusses that framing a girl’s education as a “gift” or legacy that parents give their daughter is using the principle of reciprocity (Promises, 2011).

In the excerpts it is assumed that parents are more likely to change their behaviour when they see themselves receiving something in return. That when education is framed as a gift parents can give, they are more likely to associate this with what they might receive back one day for their generosity. Further the text explains that the word “gift” means a generous transfer of something to another that is appreciated by the receiver (Promises, 2011). As concluded earlier in the text, Save the Children works with emotions to change behaviours. The parents need to feel that they are the decision makers and that they make the decision for their daughter. A risk with this approach might be to maintain the status quo and not push further for change. It may exclude the daughter’s agency and not contribute to her empowerment. The statements in the text indicate low interdiscursivity. However, aiming for change is also a way to move in the right direction and the text and words seems to be carefully considered.
The below excerpt is found in the introduction of the Worldvision manual.

“Engaging men in caregiving and gender equality not only benefits women, girls and boys, but also men as fathers themselves. Men benefit by developing closer, more emotionally connected relationships with their families and their peers.” (Worldvision, 2019 Jan 5, p. 1)

Under the tagline “Mission and objectives of the manual” the is the below quote.

“Promote men’s caring roles in the home, including supporting girls’ education and sharing domestic work within the home.” (Worldvision, 2019 Jan 5, p.2)

The above texts are especially targeting fathers. In text one (Worldvision) and text two (Girlsnotbrides) the word benefit is recurrent when describing men’s engagement in supporting girls and women (Worldvision, 2019 Jan 5, p. 1) (GirlsnotBrides, 2018 p. 3). Male engagement is promoted by the word benefit. Men and boys can also gain something from equality, and not just the women and girls. This is a usual response to feminism and women issues. That men are hoping that they could gain something from its presence (Murphy, 2004). This might be a good selling point to encourage male engagement, but it is problematic that facts about illegality and disadvantages does not seem to be enough. Parents are supposed to bring a gift, which they should be thanked for and the community should benefit in the long term. All arguments are welcome, but these might maintain the discourse where girls and women are first and foremost viewed as mothers and child bearers and not active members of the community with agency over their own lives (Ending Child Marriage, 2016). Glinski et al explained that there is a consensus that is focused on engaging men as stakeholders or co-beneficiaries since this approach allows men to advocate for the benefits of gender equity that both men and women can experience (Glinski et al. 2018).
Conclusions

I consider myself to have answered my research questions and kept to the relevant framework.

*Which discourses on male engagement in ending child marriage are being reproduced in the selected manuals on the subject?*

*How are those discourses challenging or maintaining the norm?*

There is not just one relevant discourse being produced in the texts. Some are displaying the girls as more passive, maintaining a stereotype. The men, boys, family heads or the community are considered in power (patriarchal structure) and taken for granted to “need” to gain something to be an advocate for girls’ and women’s rights. That, for example, “softer” words or expressions like giving a gift (and receive something back) makes them more likely to be positive about delaying marriage or supporting girls in general. They will not be equal on their own, they need to be encouraged to change their behaviours and be open to a wider masculine gender norm. This might suggest that the man or person of power are presumed to not be willing to release the power without receiving something in return. As explained earlier, Per Connell, the traditional sexual code defines women and men as opposites with the woman as the secondary. A violation of this gender order risks entailing unfavourable consequences for the breach of the norm which means that it might cost something for men to act less like a hegemonic male (Connell, 2005).

As explained in the introduction, parents or the father need to believe that there is a possibility for job opportunities and further secondary education to send their daughter to school (Ending Child Marriage, 2016). There “must” be a possible pay check on the other end. Still communities and parents tend to reduce girls as either mothers or potential child bearers and don’t support their possibilities (Ending Child Marriage, 2016).

All texts emphasize on working towards changing a potential harmful masculine gender norm for men and boys which in the end can affect the likeliness of child marriage. It can be viewed as assumed that men and boys need to change their behaviour and start contributing to the chores of the household and empowerment of the females and that they are not performing these duties in their current situation.
The overall used language that surrounds the issue of child marriage can be considered “soft” in its approach and not especially judgemental or critical. This possibly in order to be sensitive and not create aggression. After all, having an angry and hostile approach is perhaps not the right way to gain people on your side and encourage behaviour change. Argument with benefits is a well-used strategy like the tool kit used by Save the Children (Promises, 2011). However, as have been concluded earlier in this Thesis, this approach may harm the empowerment side of the issue of child marriage. If the aim is to push for a shift of norms and behaviours discourses possibly can be challenged further. But it is a fine balance. As Wilkins explains regarding communication involvements, it is about supporting to create awareness and encourage behaviours (Wilkins, 2015). An international organization will have to be smooth since there is a power balance to consider. They are also working with laws and policies to promote the cause of ending child marriage.

To return to the questions in the method “In what ways is the text under different from other texts and what are the potential consequences? Which understanding of the world is taken for granted and which understandings are not being recognised?” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). The risk is that the texts may not condemn child marriage or emphasize the downsides enough. After all, it is generally considered a crime and a violation to human rights. Traditions and culture are not above the law. In the example when the word help is used in one manual and of equitable sharing, the potential consequence is to maintain the norm of the woman as responsible of household chores which is contra productive if the aim is to change the norm.

In text three it is explained that “Girls in the experimental group confirmed these changes and also expressed being more comfortable expressing their opinions, hopes and dreams.” (Promises, 2011, p.2) This indicates that the girls (and the evaluation of the project) did not express that they felt less empowered by the approach to engage men in behaviour and norm change to end child marriage. However, we don’t really know if they only felt somewhat helped or more equal in general. Some of the excerpts that are presented might indicate low inter-discursivity when looking at the statements themselves. Words and discourses are not everything, but I draw conclusions that texts can be written in both a culturally sensitive way and with a more norm challenging approach. I have learned that here is not necessary a conflict between the two. Challenging the norm does not mean that the communicative approach is rude or offensive but simply offers an alternative way of thinking and seeing things differently. It also seems possible to use an approach that can both empowering to girls
and working with male engagement mutually. In the some of the texts on male engagement in ending child marriage girls are portrayed as somewhat passive receivers of aid and goodwill. Other texts express more of a high interdiscursivity by using more “equal” words and supports the girls’ agency.

In line with relevant research, all texts encourage a shift on harmful gender norms as a way to behavioural change for a more equal society and to reduce child marriage. They support a higher level of interdiscursivity which challenges the masculine gender norm. A norm that might be narrow and limitative for the man itself and risks of resulting in reducing girls’ and women’s agency.

I believe that this thesis has reflected upon the subject of communication for development since the manuals and texts I have analysed have had the motivation of behavioural change and advocacy. I have analysed texts that supports the cause of ending child marriage. Ending child marriage is an interesting and an important subject. I have learned a great deal about projects on how to end it with a various range of strategies and approaches, some which I have presented in this Thesis.

As I stated above, even if I do not necessarily see a conflict between the empowerment approach and male engagement approach, in fact they seem suitable to combine together and with other approaches. However, there are some interesting aspects to reflect about. It might be easy to fall into the trap where women should be the ones to step up, embrace their rights and speak their mind. But even those who does not have the courage or the possibility to stand up for themselves are entitled to enjoy their basic human rights. The most used strategy in the field of ending child marriage is empowerment of girls (ICRW, 2016). Men, especially those in power of either political issues, daughters or potential wives, might need to take a step back and be supportive. The community as a whole plays a large role and women are agents in child marriage too. Female relatives can be just as promotive of child marriage. There is just not one factor to blame but “the demand”-side need to be held accountable. “The unique selling point” for men is that they can benefit from equality to become an ally for girls and women. This is an approach we see, as explained in the beginning of the thesis, in Western feminism, campaigns (such as He for she) and programmes – how men can benefit from
feminism and equality. It is of course great if they can benefit and access a more liberated gender role but education and escaping child marriage are perhaps not to be viewed as gifts or benefits. These are basic human rights.

**Lessons learned**
To critically reflect upon my work, I can see that there is a risk that my thesis does not contribute to new research, that my findings are too shallow and that the research questions are too broad. My findings are not that strong and progressive, which is a risk with conducting discourse analysis. The thesis is heavier in its first half and the analysis might be the thinnest part of the thesis, on various levels, which is a weakness. However, it is sometimes easier to take on too much and then risk not being able to finalize the thesis at all. There is a fine line between being too basic or taking on too much work and I might have spent too much time on the first part.

Interviews and surveys on discourses about male engagement in ending child marriage would be time consuming and I would have needed a contact on the inside who could connect me with relevant experts. I have used the methods before and it is hard to find the right respondents who have the time and willingness to participate. Their answers would lead more to the research question on what discourses the experts say or possible seem to believe are expressed in research and texts on the subject. If I were to have another approach to the research about the subject, for example to study how an organisation works with male engagement in ending child marriage I would have had to choose another method and theoretical framework. I could have used more texts on the subject to achieve a higher degree of generalisation. The collection and proofreading of text were time consuming and within the given timeframe I had no time to find more. All texts function as manuals but are targeting different regions. Two are country-specific and one is more general which might be considered both a strength and a weakness with the selection. I might miss country specific sensitivity but am able to compare texts. If I had more time I would have made my analysis stronger with a wider selection of texts. If I were only to have chosen one text I would have used the case study approach. However, I wanted more texts to be able to make comparisons and attempt to draw larger conclusion even if these are not able to be widely generalisable. Even if I can spot flaws, I am hoping that it is an interesting and readable thesis on an engaging, though highly complex, subject.
I believe that the issue of child marriage and strategies on how to end it is crucial. I have learned a tremendous amount about the subject and its relation to communication for development. I believe that this thesis has reflected upon the subject of communication for development since the manuals and texts I have analysed have had the motivation of behavioural change and advocacy. As explained in my introduction, communication for development is a well-used strategy in the aim to end child marriage.

In the future it would be interesting to further research best practises methods for ending child marriage, possibly with words and the discourses they are carrying as a factor. The programmes are being evaluated as a whole but it would be interested to examine details further. I am only scratching at the surface in this thesis, but it feels like there are a lot of interested reflections to be done in the area of words and discourses around the subject of child marriage and male engagement. Is it possible to emphasize more on laws that prohibit child marriage but at the same time be sensitive towards culture and men in behaviour change? Laws are supposed to effect discourses and prohibit certain behaviours. Do the decision makers need to feel that they are gaining something back or is girls’ human rights an enough cause? Even the term forced marriage regarding child marriage can be reviewed further.

Questions that experts ask are; How much of the focus should be on C4D/SBCC versus service delivery? Are we implementing the "right" communication initiatives? How do we measure and do the "right" thing? Whose behaviors would we like to influence to increase our results for girls and to end child marriage? Is it the religious leaders or girls? (Ending Child Marriage, 2016) Moreover, Connell wonders if it is masculinity itself that is the problem with gender inequality or if it is the institutional arrangements (Connell, 2005)? These questions bring awareness to the difficulty of the issue. It is no easy task with a simple answer, but the work and research continue.
References


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