

# STOP MINORS MARRIAGE: AN ANALYSIS OF SAYIDATY MEDIA CAMPAIGN

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## ABSTRACT

*This case study examines how the Sayidaty magazine media campaign used propaganda as part of its regional effort to stop the tradition of minors marriage in the Arab world. Jowett and O'Donnell's (2017) 10-step for analyzing propaganda was used to conduct the examination. Sayidaty, along with several associations, have been campaigning since March 1, 2010 under the slogan "No Marriage for Minors." The aim of this campaign is to raise awareness about the psychological and physical dangerous this tradition has on minors. This study explores whether propaganda plays a major role in shaping and influencing attitudes or behaviors towards a sensitive issue that is not easily visible.*

**Keywords:** Minors, Marriage, Campaign.

## INTRODUCTION

In societies, the media is crucial in shaping and guiding public opinion. It serves as a crucial tool for states' internal and foreign policy because of its function Alzyoud (2022). Yemeni, an eight-year-old child bride, dies of internal injuries on the first night of forced marriage to a groom five times her age. The story reported that Rawan, an eight-year-old, died of internal injuries related to vaginal tearing after spending her first night with her husband, a 40-year-old man, in northwestern Yemen. This story has come to spotlight and spread regionally and even internationally. According to France Press 42 Arabic, almost 52 percent of Yemeni girls were married before the age of 18. Rawan's story and others have caused an outcry in the media and revived debate about child brides. Hundreds on Twitter shared hashtag named #stop\_child\_abuse to show their sympathy for Rawan's story Ahmad (2007).

Child marriage is defined by UNICEF as marriage prior to age 18 years. It is recognized as a human rights violation by UNICEF (2007). Child marriage is a reality for over 60 million women worldwide Raj et al. (2009). Everyone who is under the age of 18 is considered as a minor. Minor marriage is involved worldwide, but it mainly occurs in South Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Nonetheless, marriage of female minors remains strikingly common across South Asia, where over half of all child marriages occur.

By analyzing the Sayidaty media campaign according to the various steps of Jowett and O'Donnell's plan, this analysis revealed that the Sayidaty media campaign has been successful. Specifically, it achieved the meaning of its slogan "No marriage for minors." Moreover, nine child marriages are stopped in the Eastern Province and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. During its first 20 days, it was supported by 100 prominent males and females in Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, the UAE, Lebanon, Morocco, and Bahrain. Further, it has gained wide attention to reach large numbers of officials, preachers, activists, singers, and artists. By the end of the three months, Sayidaty media campaign has helped active women's associations to stop five marriages of child

brides in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Egypt. To learn about their neighborhoods, cities, governments, and cultures, people rely on a range of information sources. Print, radio, and online media sources are among them. Since many governments lack the ability to monitor content produced by common persons, the rapid emergence of social media has generated attention. The Arab Spring of 2011 serves as an example of how the change in how individuals get information has altered how they view the world Makhareh (2018). Numerous studies have looked into a variety of topics, including the credibility of websites, how audiences evaluate sources, and the factors that influence how people react to information from different sources Alharethi, (2020); Deen (2019); Deen, & Pan (2021); Pan et al. (2019). Sayidaty campaign has gained wide attention from social activists, ministers, scientists, princes, and clerics. It is suggested that future studies focus on how to design propaganda that respects the religions, customs, and traditions of religious communities.

Contrarily, Arab females have typically been portrayed as seductive belly dancers, harem girls, or persecuted individuals. In his Netflix series, the comedian Aziz Ansari portrayed himself as an American-Indian who wasn't particularly religious but wanted to act as a role model for Muslim Americans instead Alqahtani (2018); Makhareh et al. (2022). Twenty percent of the births in the Arab World are born to teenage mothers. Not surprisingly, Sayidaty magazine with several women's associations have been campaigning since March 1st, 2010 under the slogan "*No Marriage for Minors*." The aim of this campaign is to raise the awareness of the society about the psychologically and physically dangerous issues of this phenomenon to minors. Sayidaty's campaign began its wide spread from Saudi Arabia under the slogan "*No Marriage for Minors*." This campaign extended to include Egypt and Yemen. The period of this campaign was three months (March- June). Sayidaty campaign has gained wide attention from social activists, ministers, scientists, princes, and clerics. Sayedity campaign continued publishing tragedy stories about child brides married to elders. Further, it has attacked more personal and intellectual, scientific and cultural elites, who were still joining the campaign daily. "*No Marriage for Minors*" campaign has also been joined by prominent women and men from Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Morocco, and Bahrain. These Arabic countries have also fluctuated percentages of the early marriages. This case study examines how the Sayedity media campaign used propaganda as a part of its major strategy to reduce minors' marriage in the Middle-East.

To successfully analyze this campaign, it should be analyzed under Jowett and O'Donnell's definition of propaganda and their accompanying 10 divisions for propaganda analysis. Jowett and O'Donnell's define propaganda as the "*deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist*" Jowett & O'Donnell (2018). Jowett and O'Donnell also provide 10 steps to use while making propaganda. These 10 steps illustrate useful instructions to know whether Sayedity media campaign use each of the ten steps successfully. The 10 divisions for propaganda analysis are as follows: 1) The ideology and purpose of the propaganda campaign 2) The context in which the propaganda occurs 3) Identification of the propagandist 4) The structure of the propaganda organization 5) The target audience 6) Media utilization techniques 7) Special techniques to maximize effect 8) Audience reaction to various techniques 9) Counterpropaganda, if present 10) Effects and evaluation Jowett and O'Donnell (2018). These ten divisions will be examined through Sayedity media campaign.

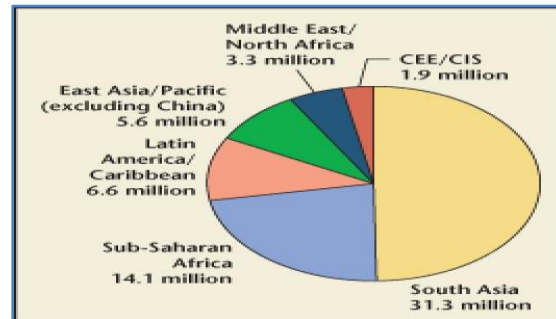
## LITERATURE REVIEW

Sayedity media campaign was published in the Middle-East. It aims to stop minors'

marriage in several parts of the Middle-East. It shows that no studies have been created to examine Sayedity media campaign and its use of propaganda. However, majority of related studies have focused on the religious side because the Middle-Eastern societies are religious communities Alqahtani & Campbell (2022). Further, few official reports have illustrated several trends and numbers about child marriage. For example, Human Rights Watch (2011) examined the child marriage in Yemen. This report was researched and written by Nadya Khalife. It reveals how the political turmoil has swept Yemen since early 2011, and how it has overshadowed the plight of child brides. Also, this report shows how Human Rights Watch calls on the Yemeni government to protect women's and girls' rights to non-discrimination and to end minors' marriage.

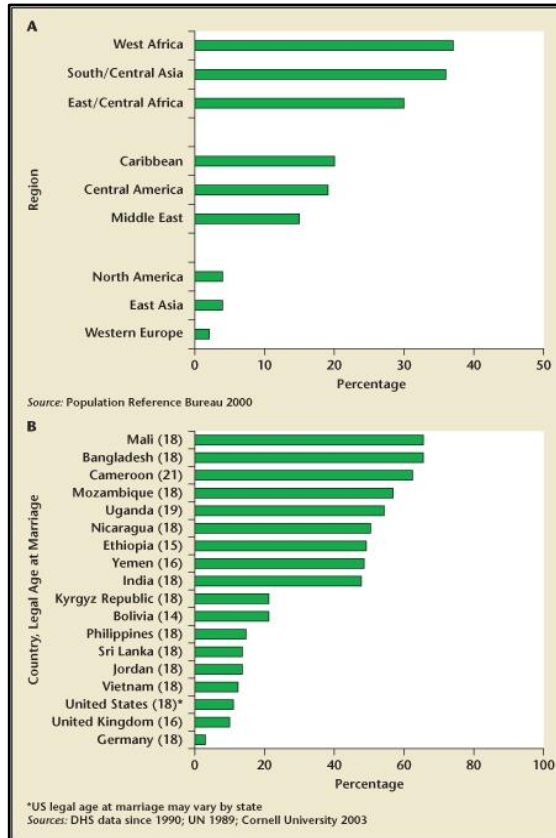
The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) published a report in 2011 that illustrates solutions to end child marriage. This report reveals that finding critical solutions to address child marriage has been a challenge because, while there has been increasing investment in programs during the last decade, many are not well-documented, and even fewer are well-evaluated. In addition, the ICRW report summarizes a systematic review of child marriage prevention programs that have documented evaluations. It reveals that child marriage prevention programs have indeed expanded in number and scope during the last decade; almost two dozen have documented some type of an evaluation. Further, programs in a broader range of African and Middle Eastern countries, including Ethiopia and Egypt, are also adding to the evidence base Malhotra et al. (2011).

Prevalence data from the prior decade indicate that approximately 30-70% of married young women in South Asian nations (i.e., Bangladesh, Nepal, India and Pakistan) are married prior to age 18 years Raj et al. (2009) Figure 1.



**FIGURE 1**  
**NUMBER OF WOMEN AGED 20–24 WHO WERE MARRIED OR IN UNION BEFORE AGE 18, BY REGION (2006). CEE/CIS, CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES. REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION FROM UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND.**

Girl brides aged under the age of 18 years: approximately 6.6 million in Latin America and the Caribbean, 14 million in sub-Saharan Africa, and 31 million in South Asia Figure 2.



**FIGURE 2**  
**PERCENTAGE OF GIRLS (AGED 15–19 YEARS) WHO ARE CURRENTLY MARRIED.**  
**(B) PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AGED 20 TO 24 YEARS MARRIED BEFORE AGE 18.**  
**REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION FROM MATHUR S, GREENE M, MALHOTRA A.**  
**TOO YOUNG TO WED: THE LIVES, RIGHTS, AND HEALTH OF YOUNG MARRIED**  
**GIRLS. WASHINGTON, DC: INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON**  
**WOMEN; 2003.**

Child marriage has been a serious problem because it is a violation of girls’ human rights and has grave health consequences for both child brides and their children. The phenomenon of child marriage is a serious social problem which leads to the occurrence of many social and psychological problems, especially on minors who marry at early ages (8-15 age group).

The Human Rights Watch and all organizations are keen to address child marriage and call for the imposition of sanctions on all guardians who allow forced marriage and deprive child girls of their basic human rights such as the right to life and education.

**Reasons for Child Marriage**

1. Poverty is one of the main reasons for child marriage, which is widespread in the poor countries. Parents force their daughters to marry in the early ages to get rid of their expenses Nour (2009).
2. Customs and Traditions are considered to have a direct effect on child marriage in the poor societies. People in these societies spread ideas that encourage keeping and preserving the social heritage, as part of customary customs Nour (2009).
3. Intellectual Ignorance, which spreads among families that do not realize the extent of danger, and the harm in marrying a girl at a young age. Girls at these early ages cannot take responsibility for a husband,

children, and other family responsibilities.

## **EFFECTS OF THE CHILD MARRIAGE**

### **Psychological Effects**

Serious psychological disorders occur in a large group of child brides because of the trauma they are exposed to by the early marriage. This trauma occurs because child brides are not ready for this sudden change in the very quick shift from childhood to adulthood without going through the normal ages. Therefore, most young girls suffer from many mental illnesses, such as: depression and anxiety Khalife & Gerntholtz (2011).

### **Social Effects**

Child brides lose their social identity and feel that they do not have their own personality because they feel deprived of their most basic rights to life such as education Khalife & Gerntholtz (2011). Further, these child brides do not have the culture to deal with children because they are still living their childhood. So, how can they be willing to accept dealing with children at an inappropriate age?

## **METHOD**

This case study uses related studies to examine what was revealed about child marriage. This study is based on an analysis of Sayidaty media campaign under the slogan “*No Marriage for Minors.*” YouTube channels, online websites, and journal articles are used to reach a rich background information about the child marriage. This study also reveals Jowett and O’Donnell 10 divisions of propaganda analysis as a guide to study and analyze this Sayidaty media campaign’s content. This paper carefully examined how these 10 steps were used by Sayidaty media campaign.

Again, Jowett and O’Donnell’s 10 divisions for propaganda analysis are as follows:

### **The Ideology and Purpose of the Propaganda Campaign**

The main purpose of the propaganda is to influence people’s attitudes (Jowett and O’Donnell, p. 290). Sayidaty media campaign’s purpose was to thwart minor marriages and to increase the awareness of psychological and physical dangerous issues. According to the chief-editor of Sayidaty magazine Mohammed Alharethi states that the goal of “*No marriage for minors*” campaign is a human and social goal. He added that this campaign includes the cessation of the minors marriage all over the Middle-East.

### **The Context in Which the Propaganda Occurs**

Jowett and O’Donnell claim that “*successful propaganda relates to understand the climate of the times*” Jowett & O’Donnell (2018). Initially, Sayidaty magazine has started launching “*No marriage for minors*” campaign on March 1st, 2010. Then, it spread most widely to reach a wide base of prominent women and men from different Arab and foreign countries. Because of its widespread, this campaign has gotten several Arab officials' and activists' signatures and gained their support. During its launching, it started to cover only three countries; Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. After that, it expanded to include other countries like Lebanon, Morocco, and Bahrain.

Sayidaty campaign was limited by three months—started on March 1st and ended June 1st.

### **Identification of the Propagandist**

Jowett and O'Donnell tell that “*the source of propaganda is likely to be an institution or organization*” Jowett and O'Donnell (2018). Particularly, the leader of this campaign was the chief-editor of Sayidaty magazine, Mohammed Alharethi. He illustrated the file of this campaign on various women's associations to share this campaign to the public. Consequently, Sayidaty magazine and several women's associations have published the “*No marriage for minors*” campaign. “*No marriage for minors*” campaign uses revealing any violent against child brides. Sayidaty magazine continues to publish tragedy stories about child brides, who were affected by internal injuries, in a very professional method to show the negative effects of minors' marriage. The teamwork of “*No marriage for minors*” campaign moved and conducted field visits to search for statistics and talked with the marriage officials.

### **The Structure of the Propaganda Organization**

Jowett and O'Donnell argue that successful propaganda campaigns are created by a strong, centralized, decision-making authority that produces a consistent message throughout its structure Jowett and O'Donnell (2018). “*No marriage for minors*” campaign consists of a teamwork from Sayidaty magazine itself, several women's associations in the Middle-East, and a group of officials all over the Arab countries. Sayidaty tries to support its message content by directing the audience towards the prohibition of child marriage. The Sayidaty teamwork have created a supportive slogan “*No Marriage for Minors.*” Further, Sayidaty teamwork moved and conducted field visits to search for statistics and talk with the marriage officials to enact laws to limit families' excesses against their daughters. Sayidaty teamwork also made nine visits to families in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Yemen.

### **The Target Audience**

Jowett and O'Donnell claim that the target audience is selected by a propagandist because it has potential effectiveness, with messages being aimed at the audience most likely to be useful to the propagandist Jowett & O'Donnell (2018), p. 295). Poor families are considered as a target group that takes the first place through this media campaign. Sayidaty teamwork found that the poor segments of society are mostly targeted by rich segments. Thus, the educated and prominent elites take the second place as a target audience. Many influential leaders joined this media campaign from different fields: Officials: The Saudi minister of media and culture Dr. Abdul Aziz Khoja, Moroccan minister of social development and family Nouzha Skalli, Saudi former minister of social affairs Abdul Mohsen Al-Akkas. Preachers: Saleh Altorky, Ahmed Alkubaisi, Abdulmehsen Alannad, and Sua'ad Saleh. Artists and singers: Mohammed Abdou, Rashed Almajed, Abadi Aljohar, Mohammed Bakhsh, and Abdulah Amer. Educators and journalists: Prof. Mohammed Albar, Hedaya Darweesh, Prof. Mophammad Adeeb, and Prof. Sameer Abbas Alarabia (2010).

### **Media Utilization Techniques**

Modern propaganda uses all the media available such as press, radio, television, film, the Internet, e-mail, iPods, telephone, fax machines, and direct mail Jowett & O'Donnell (2018).

Sayidaty media campaign uses the media to spread its content. The very beginning was from Sayidaty magazine itself. Then, Sayidaty teamwork uses activists on social media to contribute in the cessation of the minors marriage. These activists have been selected because they have huge numbers of followers. Sayidaty teamwork also uses appearing on various TV screens to illustrate and share this media campaign. They appeared on Rotana TV channel, Alan Arabic Television, and Sky News Arabic. Also, they use newspapers such as Okaz newspaper Global (2007).

### **Special Techniques to Maximize Effect**

Propaganda needs special techniques because it is too complex to limit Jowett & O'Donnell, (2018). Sayidaty teamwork uses the Islamic preachers to speak on behalf of the misunderstood poor and uneducated families about the early marriage. As previously mentioned, societies in the Middle-East are religious communities. So, the religious speech is highly respected and considered among these communities. Further, preachers have the power of words to realize and increase people awareness. This media campaign uses all the ways available to maximize the effect and stop child abuse. For example, Sayidaty teamwork made nine visits to families in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Yemen. These families were on their ways to marry their daughters from elders. Sayidaty teamwork stopped these marriages after convincing child brides' parents to take care of their expenses and give a monthly donation to cover their families expenses, too.

### **Audience Reaction to Various Techniques**

According to Jowett & O'Donnell (2018), "the analyst looks for evidence of the target audience's response to propaganda. If a propaganda campaign is open and public, journalists will offer critical reaction to it Jowett & O'Donnell (2018).

Sayidaty media campaign spreads very quickly. The audience positively interacted with this media campaign. During its first 20 days, it was supported by 100 prominent males and females in Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, the UAE, Lebanon, Morocco, and Bahrain. Further, it has gained wide attention to reach large numbers of officials, preachers, activists, singers, and artists.

Also, targeted families in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Egypt positively responded and stopped abusing their daughters.

### **Counter Propaganda**

The propaganda analyst task, is to measure whether the audience know that counter propaganda exists to oppose propaganda Jowett & O'Donnell (2018).

It appears that no counter propaganda has been created against Sayidaty media campaign.

### **Effects and Evaluation**

Jowett and O'Donnell illustrate that knowing whether the purpose of the propaganda has been fulfilled is the most important effect. If the propaganda has failed to achieve goals, the propaganda analyst should try to account for the failure in her or his analysis Jowett & O'Donnell, (2018). "No Marriage for Minors" media campaign has been achieved successfully. By the end of the three months, Sayidaty media campaign has helped active women's associations to stop five marriages of child brides in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Egypt. Moreover, nine child marriages are stopped in the Eastern Province and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. Further, a debate was published between religious scholars about child marriage in the Arab World.

## CONCLUSION

Although the analysis of propaganda is a complex process, it helps to figure out how much propaganda shapes and influences our attitudes. In this case study, it demonstrates the 10 divisions for propaganda analysis of Jowet and O'Donnell. The propaganda analysis has used nine of the ten divisions. These nine divisions have been reviewed throughout Sayidaty media campaign. This media campaign has successfully passed Jowet and O'Donnell's divisions for propaganda analysis. It has gained wide spread and positive effect among different groups such as marriage officials, activists, and social associations. Sayidaty media campaign respects customs, traditions, and social cultures of the Arab countries. Also, they know how to design this propaganda in order to reach public interests. As this exploratory study previously demonstrated, using Jowet and O'Donnell's 10 divisions as a guide to analyze how propaganda was executed by Sayidaty media campaign has led to achieve a significant success. It achieved the meaning of its slogan "No marriage for minors."

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<p><b>Received:</b> 15-Jul-2022, Manuscript No. AMSJ-22-12333; <b>Editor assigned:</b> 18-Jul-2022, PreQC No. AMSJ-22-12333(PQ); <b>Reviewed:</b> 01-Aug-2022, QC No. AMSJ-22-12333; <b>Revised:</b> 05-Aug-2022, Manuscript No. AMSJ-22-12333(R); <b>Published:</b> 10-Aug-2022</p>
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