

ADDRESSING THE CHILD MARRIAGE CONCERN THROUGH VIDEO ART: QAFAS¹

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Abstract

Child marriage refers to any formal marriage or informal union between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child. It has a direct impact on education, health, psychological well-being of girls, as well as the health of their children. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), up to three per cent of girls in Pakistan are married before they reach the age of 15, and 21 per cent are married before they turn 18. The awareness of such sensitive social issues is mandatory. Therefore, Qafas; a video art piece depicting child marriage as an act of violence has been created. The video can be used to leave an impact on our society or any other society who aims to axe child marriage from the world. The objective of "UNICEF for every Child" has been kept in a spotlight throughout, therefore, this art piece is not only for national but also international viewers and policy makers.

Keywords: Child marriage; Children rights; UNICEF; Pakistan; video art

Introduction

Child marriage is a common human rights violation. It is a barrier to any kind of development whether it's social, economic or political. Furthermore, it becomes a root cause of gender inequality.

Child marriage is defined under a number of conventions, treaties, and international agreements, containing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (Edmeades & Jeffery, 2015)

Because of the intimate link between female purity and family reputation, family members are compelled to marry girls at a young age in order to avoid sexual indiscretions and the resulting damage to the family's reputation. The idea of a girl

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¹ The given paper is an extension of my previous research work done in Bachelors. Video url: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Lg5O5lma6IcdeM3YJyEDxbBv0WP_MC93/view?usp=sharing

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child as “other’s property” who must eventually go to her husband’s house hinders parents from investing in their daughter’s education and as a result, daughters are married off at a young age to relieve parents of their “burden”. (Child marriage in Pakistan, n.d.)

More than 700 million women alive today were married as juveniles around the world. More over one-third of the population, or 250 million were married before the age of 15. Girls who marry before they turn 18 are less likely to continue their education and are more likely to be subjected to domestic violence. Young teenage girls are more likely than women in their 20s to die as a result of difficulties during pregnancy and childbirth; their newborns are more likely to be stillborn or die during the first month of life. (Mizanian, 2018)

In order to address important issues and stir society, artists have historically used the numerous tools at their disposal. War, brutality, racism, and equality are just some of the themes that art has been used to address. Art's capacity to focus the community on social issues is what makes it such an effective tool for resolving social challenges. It has been demonstrated that art can assist people connect with some part of social reality in ways that they would not otherwise be able to do. (IvyPanda, 2019)

To address the concern of child marriage, the artist has used the medium ‘video art’. Video art picked up its peak in the US, Germany and Japan in 1956-1975. It is the finest tactic to communicate and depict the art with feeling and emotions (Nadeem, 2021).

It's a medium that may be used to access other types of art or stand alone in gallery installations. Video presentations are used in the designs, which can be integrated with audio if the artist wishes. Although the notion is comparable to television presentations or experimental filmmaking, it is regarded as a separate art form that is more closely related to painting and photography. (Chavis, 2011) This article only focuses on the idea and production of video art piece; Qafas. It is a silent act with the combination of dramatic background music, screening the suffering of little girl. The creation of this art piece is a way ahead for video art in modern era. A huge message

being conveyed clearly to the audience without any script is a feature that video art delivers. The video has been created to make this society realize about the dos and don'ts. The objective of "UNICEF for every Child" has been kept in a spotlight throughout, therefore, this art piece is not only for national but also international viewers and policy makers.

Research Problem

Child marriage is a widespread violence. It has a direct impact on education, health, psychological well-being of girls, as well as the health of their children. Many artists have shed light on this subject through their remarkable artworks, yet none of the video art or installation piece has been seen on child marriage.

Research Question

RQ: How video art can be used as a medium to address child marriage concern?

Literature Practice Review

Visual culture has evolved into a recognized interdisciplinary subject of study in the twenty-first century, focusing on how visuals of all kinds communicate and contribute in the development of identity, gender, class, power connections, and other social and political meanings and values. Medicine, science, politics, consumer culture, religion and spirituality are just a few of the areas that visual culture investigates in addition to art. (Robertson, n.d.).

Visual culture involves a platform video art that doesn't follow any specific technique and change over time. The category identified as video art, is a medium of expression and innovative sort of contemporary art, usually gotten in Installations as a separate art form. Any video comprising some art form is a video art. Any object and subject in frame are no longer a still image but in the form of motion. Passage of time, moving images, temporal existence and the formation of mood through sequence and framing can be among few characteristics followed by Video artists.

Instead of following a similar technique, every video artist has seen to be developing his own style and method for the depiction of art (Meigh-Andrews, 2013).

Keeping the idea of ‘art for a cause’ in mind, *Teaching A Plant the Alphabet* (1972) is one of the best-known examples of Baldessan’s artistic assessment of language concepts. By adopting a bold new form to expand his ideas from a static space to a live one, he was able to further his already well-established conceptual agenda. Similarly, Nam June Pak, a Fluxus artist, was one of the first to tear through the barriers between art and technology. The work *TV Cello* was made up of three television sets stacked on top of each other, each exhibiting a separate moving picture. Nam June Pak, through his artwork proved that art can be more efficient when used with technology. There onwards, the idea of merging aesthetics with technology was followed by many video artists, Paik’s art for the cause gave new perspective to the world. (Paik, 1964).

Ai Weiwei, a Chinese artist, has used his installations and sculptures to bring attention to a variety of social concerns. He has used his art to critique the official reaction to the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan, to record China's rapid cultural transformation, and to document his personal persecution and imprisonment.

Enduring “Art for a cause” in Pakistan, in 2014, a Pakistani teenager called Saba Qaiser was shot by her father and uncle and thrown into a river. Saba survived and became the protagonist of Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy’s documentary, *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness*. The documentary won an Oscar and prompted Pakistan to establish legislation against honor killings.

Storytelling is a powerful tool for bringing significant social change. Good art has the ability to educate and engender empathy, both of which lead to change. Business and political leaders throughout the world are investing in art as a means to engage with communities, improve lives, and stimulate economic growth.

In England, the contribution of arts and culture to the economy has expanded at a faster rate in areas that are still recovering from the crisis. According to a 2008

Canadian business poll, 86 percent of respondents say that art is only for better integrated and healthier communities, while 88 percent believe it has a beneficial influence on each individual's health and well-being. (Chinoy, 2017)

Child Marriage Campaigns

Kafka Welfare Organization focuses on child marriage concern in Pakistan. When it comes to child marriage, young people must be at the forefront, mentioned by the youth advocate Irum Asif (2017), who set up her own youth organization in Lahore, Pakistan to help address violence against women in the country. A key element of their mission is getting politicians involved. The organization started "Join hands to prevent child weddings" in 2014 to advocate for changes to the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929. Many other organizations have also held workshops for young people about sexual and reproductive rights. In such campaigns, civil society and media take the lead.

Zoe Birchall (2021) mentioned, on 8 October 2021, Plan International, CHOICE for youth and Sexuality, and Girls Not Brides welcome the adaptation of the Human Rights Council's (HRC) fifth resolution on child, early and forced marriage (CEFM).

Aside from making child marriage illegal everywhere, enhancing girls' access to education is important to eradicate the practice of child marriage. A number of organisations are working to guarantee that Article 25-A of the Constitution is fully implemented, ensuring that all children aged 5 to 16 have access to free, high-quality education.

In order to make this possible, art must contribute for the betterment of society. Over the years, a big number of posters, illustrations, vectors, paintings, short films and dramas highlighting child marriage have remained in spotlight. Therefore, it is noticed that lack of content is not an issue, in fact, the serious and up to date content is needed to keep the viewers on the same page.

Art Movement

This art piece follows the expressionism movement. The movement was greatly inspired by late-nineteenth-century art's Symbolists. The focus of this movement remains on depicting subjective emotion rather than objective reality. Distortion of form and the use of powerful colors are the main components of this movement. (Wolf, 2012) Similarly, dark and sharp visuals have been created by the artist in this video to portray a variety of concerns and yearnings.

Methods and Procedure

The inspiration for this art piece was taken from various Child Marriage Campaign images. The artist listed down the elements which were commonly used in most of the artworks. Those elements were used as props for the video. Following are the elements that helped the artist in creating mood board and strong visuals

The prominent element of innocence and unawareness in girl

A doll or a teddy bear remains common in most of the images used in campaigns.

Fancy red color prop to give Asian Bride touch.

Story Board

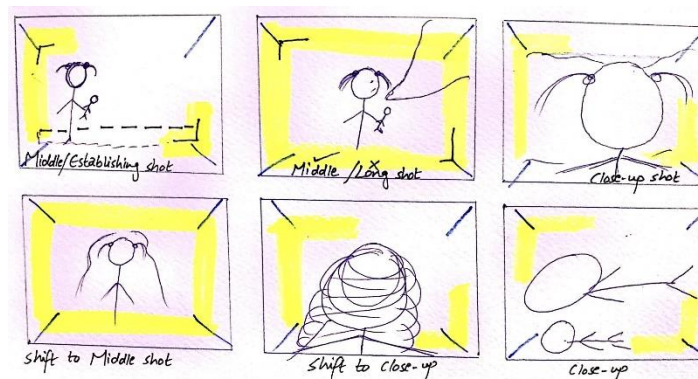


Figure 1

Preproduction: Division of shots in rough story board

Technique and Software

Chroma key was used in the background for recording. Adobe Premiere pro was used for the editing of this video. Furthermore, the audio was also treated in the same software. Lastly, the Urdu text was typed in In page.



Figure 2
Chroma/ Green screen used in the background



Figure 3
Name of the video typed in Urdu

Camera Angle

The camera remained at front of the subject; however, the shots were divided into two types:

Medium shot: Instead of using longer shots, the artist captured medium shots to reveal details on the subject from the very beginning.



Figure 4
The Establishing shot

The whole setting was established and a little girl was shown freely moving and playing with her doll.



Figure 5
A fancy red piece of cloth appears in the frame and the child starts playing with it too.

Close up shot: Emotions of the subject were revealed through close up shots.



Figure 6
Close-up shot to reveal details of a doll



Figure 7
Interval shot: The child wears it and remains unaware of the circumstances



Figure 8
The Final shot revealing her struggle and bad outcomes

The smaller number of shot divisions and angles make this art piece more eye catching and observant.

Conclusion

Art has the potential to directly empower society's most vulnerable citizens. All throughout the world, stories of injustice, dissent, and perseverance are waiting to be shared. The need of raising awareness regarding girls and their future has long been emphasized by this research. Child marriage cuts short a girl's childhood, interrupts her education and has a negative impact on her health and that of her children.

It can be prevented by governmental and nonprofit efforts aiming at educating the public, raising awareness, engaging local and religious leaders, including parents, and empowering girls through education and work. This art piece is a contribution to all of the efforts undertaken by government and non-government organizations to address the issue of child marriage.

It has always been noticed that if an issue becomes visible on media, it can lead to reform. Side by side, the artists and collectors are both embracing the merging of technology and art. The way we think, conceive, create, and live is being disrupted as the world becomes digitized and we enter the virtual world. Ultimately, it's touched our minds and souls and how we express ourselves via art. As a result, video art is widely recognized as a platform where technology and art collide to establish a new, natural identity. It can be as lengthy as the artist desires.

Video art "Qafas" is a silent representation of the circumstances and repercussions of early marriage. The artist chose to exclude the dialogues and voice over, allowing the spectator to grasp the sensitivity of the situation without narration. The art piece is on point and hence easy to understand due to the limited switching of shots. The only stipulation of video art is to keep the artwork authentic and updated.

Keeping the digital age and new generation in mind, the artist has kept the duration short. Although, it is often challenging to convey a big message in a short interval of time, however, doing so is considered as a good practice in today's era.

In order to bring change through art, leaders in the arts, politics, and business must collaborate to bring change via art. Many firms have already begun to create public

art, finance literary awards, and sponsor film festivals. In regions that have been trying to recover from the crisis, the contribution of arts and culture to the economy has expanded the quickest. Keeping the examples of Oscar winning films on social issues in mind, video art can be described as a significant platform for the expression of social issues and hence bringing change in the society.

The enthusiasm to develop and contribute skills within art industry can lead the country to a positive future, therefore, the artist intends to continue using video art as a platform to address other social issues in the future.

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