Making meaning to Maguindanaon Muslim women,

reinterprets sacred scriptures that have child bride implications

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Master's Thesis

Master's in Religion and Diversity: Conflict and Coexistence

(60 ECTS)

University of Oslo

The Faculty of Theology

Spring 2022

Table of Contents

FOREWORD

The development and completion of this thesis have been a long and challenging journey. I wanted to give up many times, especially with the Covid 19 pandemic being erratic. The initial plan is to travel to the chosen country of location and conduct the interview and observation personally with the participants. However, after much thought and consideration it is difficult to push through this plan. The pandemic also affected my personal motivation as most of the time was spent in the confines of the home with little to no contact with my social circle. Everything is done online. Nonetheless, many people helped me endure and persevere in finishing this thesis. There are people worth mentioning and giving due recognition, as they have been helpful and very supportive to me and to this thesis study. I share the success and completion of the study to these individual.

First is to my supervisors, Raha and Elisabeth, especially to Raha, that have given her time, insight, wisdom, and patience in editing. For encouraging me every time I feel unmotivated.

Second to my friends and schoolmates especially to Faith. No personal contact with someone is difficult, but our phone conversations and writing alongside me is a huge spur to carry on with the research. For Jackie, who constantly guides and gives advice, being someone who went through the same path as I, gave me hope and confidence that I can also do this. Special thanks are also given to the Theological Faculty of UiO, for all the professors I had for building knowledge through the years.

Third, I am very grateful to my roommate and friend Vanessa, who have always been there when the going gets tough, for listening to my cries of desperation and for helping me with all the other needs I have.

Fourth, I am thankful for the informants and participants, who have lent their time, money (mobile data), and life stories & narratives. Most of you don`t know me personally but you are willing to be part of this. I will not have the research without you.

To my family, especially to my sister Phemie, even though we are physically away from each other. I always felt your encouragement and support to pursue this endeavor.

To Kuya Bonn for giving a big chunk of your time in proof reading, correcting, giving your insight, wisdom and advice even though you are very busy yourself. Your endless assistance is very much appreciated.

Lastly, and most importantly to my God for allowing me to be in Norway pursuing a master´s degree. For all Your provision, primarily for providing people to be my support team in this thesis project.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SDG   Sustainable Development Goal

UN   United Nations

PD   Presidential Decree

UNICEF   United Nations International Children Emergency Fund

PSA   Philippine Statistics Authority

NSD   Norsk senter for forskningsdata / Norwegian Center for Research Data

POPCEN   Census of Population

SC   Supreme Court

ABSTRACT

Child marriage and being a child bride is a social phenomenon that is still being practiced in some parts of the world. Although most of these countries already have legal sanctions against the practice, enforcement of these laws is slow and difficult. Can this phenomenon be explored in the context of religion?

This thesis is a qualitative research conducted during a pandemic is a semi-life narrative using double hermeneutic analysis to make meaning to the lived realities of five Maguindanaon Muslim women and one man (who is part of an activist group against child marriage) in the context of religion and social phenomenon. The participants participated in the reinterpretation of Islamic sacred scriptures that have child marriage implications. The advocacy of feminism and standpoint, particularly feminist standpoint, explores the lives of those considered marginalized, oppressed, and silenced groups to give out their voice, agency, reflexivity, and opinion in this thesis in the framework- when religion meets a controversial social phenomenon. This thesis is conducted to identify the role of religion in the social phenomenon in the lives of the participants and to reveal the power structures governing them.

"Child marriage has no place in a civilized world. Girls must be educated; they must play and learn and enjoy life. We are duty-bound by the Constitution and international treaties to not only protect and uphold their rights but to also raise girls into strong women whose consent will have to be obtained before anything could be demanded from them, whose destinies they will pursue according to their sovereignties"
– Leila de Lima (Philippine Senator and co-author of Senate bill 1373 or Girls not Bride Act)

I.   INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I would make meaning to how Maguindanaon Muslim women in the Philippines reinterpret their sacred scripture when attached to a socially and culturally complex phenomenon of child bride practice. The making meaning in the title is a concept inspired by Anne Hege-Grungs' research that refers to the interpretative work done by the participants in her project.[1] I have borrowed this concept as I have presented the participants in the same way as Hege-Grung. In this thesis project, the participants will participate in reinterpreting sacred scripture with child bride implications and presenting their interpretative work. This thesis research is a semi-life narrative using a double hermeneutic analysis. To eventually find out how the religion of Islam through sacred scripture plays a role socially and culturally in these women's lives. I have chosen three texts from the Islamic sacred scriptures with child bride indications. As the researcher, I solely chose the texts.

I am from the Philippines specifically in Mindanao (where the province of Maguindanao is located); hence Maguindanaon Muslims are familiar to me, albeit I am not a Muslim nor an Islam adherent. As a master's student of Religion and Diversity: Conflict and Coexistence at the University of Oslo. I am interested in giving ordinary women in the country where I came from, who are often marginalized and silenced, a voice, an agency and an opinion on such a complex issue - when sacred scripture and the child bride practice are presented to these group of women, simultaneously. This giving of voice and agency to marginalized and voiceless people is from a standpoint theory.

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[1] Hege Grung, A. (2015) Gender Justice in Muslim-Christian Readings *Christian and Muslim Women in Norway Making Meaning of Texts from the Bible, the Koran and the Hadith*, Brill Rodopi, Leiden & Boston

The standpoint theory emerged from a Marxist argument that people from an oppressed class have special access to knowledge not available to those from a privileged class.[2] In societies stratified by categories such as gender, race and class, one´s social positions shape what one can know. This term is coined by American feminist Sandra Harding to categorize epistemologies that emphasize women´s knowledge[3] which she called the feminist standpoint.

I chose Maguindanaon Muslim women because they are not from a privileged class. These women can be categorized as part of an oppressed social stratum – first being a woman, second, a Muslim in a Christian-dominated country. Third, they are situated in the Philippines (considered a third-world country). It is permitted and legal to practice child marriage amongst them.

The empirical data is gathered through an unstructured online interview with structured questionnaires given to the participants. The analysis of the empirical data is guided by hermeneutics, specifically the double hermeneutics of Giddens as explained by Hege-Grung, A. and by Pitre, N. et al. in their book and article, respectively. The interpretative situation subject to analysis in this study covers both the encounter of the participants with the chosen sacred scripture on the one hand and the encounter of the participants with the social phenomenon of a child bride on the other hand.

1.1 Inspiration

Two years ago, I have watched a documentary show about a thirteen-year-old girl marrying a forty-two-year-old man.[4] From the same documentary show it featured another wedding between a fourteen-year-old girl and a thirteen-year-old boy.[5] The first wedding was arranged by the bride's parents, particularly her father and the groom, who has been four times previously married. The bride's family gave her off in exchange for the dowry paid for by the groom. The young bride is against the arrangement; nevertheless, she cannot contradict her family´s decision, especially her father. The family needed to do this to survive as now her husband

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[2] Encyclopædia Britannica. (n.d.). *Standpoint theory*. Britannica Academic. Retrieved January 15, 2022, from https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.uio.no/levels/collegiate/article/standpoint-theory/607855
[3] Ibid.
[4] Soho, J., (aired 15 November 2020) Kapuso Mo Jessica Soho: "42-anyos na lalaki, ikinasal sa 13-anyos na babae sa Mindanao retrieved on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1zU9v7SKuU&t=25s
[5] Soho, J., (aired 5 July 2020) Kapuso Mo Jessica Soho: "Isang 13-anyos at 14-anyos sa Maguindanao ikinasal retrieved on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnGUc-faN34

would provide for her basic needs like food and shelter, taking off these responsibilities from the parents.

The second wedding transpired as both the boy and the girl were caught being together in one room. They have a relationship as boyfriend-girlfriend (they claimed), although both defended that they were only playing and that no sexual activity happened. Both sides of the family, especially the parents, decided that they needed to marry, as it is against their religious belief that the opposite sex is together in one room. Both of them, particularly the girl, were hesitant as they were still very young. She said that *"we are still children."* However, they could not do anything against their elders. Consequently, after a month, a lavish wedding ceremony took place then the newlyweds lived together with the husband's family.

These weddings in the documentary took place in the Philippines, and both couples are Islam adherent.

In my point of view, both girls in the documentary are still young to be a bride and to eventually becoming a wife handling marriage life. I grew up believing that a bride/wife should be capable enough to handle family life, as she will become a wife who will take care of her husband and the household's affairs and in due course become a mother who will bear and rear children. For me, capability in physical, emotional, and financial aspects should be a requirement. From the video I watched, thirteen- and fourteen-year old girls (I consider them personally as children and not yet a fully mature women) are still not mature enough because when I was in their age, all I did was go to school to study, play, and do child activities. I believe if I was married at that same age, I could not handle the responsibilities that is expected of a wife much more being a mother. Are thirteen- and fourteen-year-olds has the capability of handling such responsibilities?

Is being a child bride or participating in child marriage an acceptable union? Does Philippine law permit this? Why are these marriages existing? Does religion play a vital role in this practice? All of them in the documentary show are Islam adherents.

1.2 Introductory Background

Eliminating all harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriage is one of the targets under the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of the United Nations (UN) under goal 5 of the 17 SDGs[6]. The UN urges nations to support and meet the SDGs and eliminate all practices. As a response to this goal, the Philippine Senate, as of November 9, 2020, approved a measure declaring child marriages illegal on its third and final reading. The chamber, voting 21-0, approved the Senate Bill 1373 or alternately called the proposed Girls, not Brides Act.[7] The House of Representatives also passed a counterpart bill on its third and final reading on September 6, 2021. Like the Senate bill, House Bill No. 9943 or the proposed "Act Prohibiting the Practice of Child Marriage" bans and declares child marriages *"void from the start"* and prohibits the facilitation and solemnization of child marriage as well as the cohabitation of an adult partner with a child outside wedlock[8]. These bills bring the Philippines in line with its commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and with the UNs SDG#5, to which it is a state party.

While there is already a law that states the legal age of marriage in the Philippines as twenty-one for both gender and eighteen with parental consent, existing law permits unions before this age among Muslims and indigenous people. As of this writing, the approved and passed bill is still in the process of becoming a law as it awaits executive approval. Marriages among Muslims and indigenous people under eighteen are considered legal. Many also claim that changes, especially among the heavily Muslim populated areas, will have difficulty enacting even if it becomes a law.

One rationale that child marriages are practiced and legal among Muslims in the Philippines is that The Philippine Presidential Decree (PD) No. 1083 ordains and promulgates the "Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines" as part of the law of the land by then President Marcos in 1977. Chapter two of the decree under Marriage (Nikah) Article 16 with the title the

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[6]Sustainable Development Goals Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls retrieved on https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/

[7]Ramos, C.M. (9, November 2020) `Girls, not Brides:' Senate Oaks on third and final reading bill declaring child marriages illegal, Inquirer.net retrieved on https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1358304/girls-not-brides-senate-oks-on-final-reading-bill-declaring-child-marriage-illegal

[8]Jazel, N. (6, November 2021) Bill criminalizing child marriage hurdles House on final reading, Manila Bulleting, retrieved on https://mb.com.ph/2021/09/06/bill-criminalizing-child-marriage-hurdles-house-on-final-reading/

capacity to contract marriage. Muslim females of the age of puberty or upwards may contract marriage.[9]

A female is presumed to have attained puberty upon reaching the age of fifteen. However, the Sharia district court may, upon petition of a proper *wali* (an Arabic word which means master, authority, or custodian), order the solemnization of the marriage of a female though less than fifteen but not below twelve years of age, has attained puberty.[10] Why did the Code of Muslim in the Philippines allow as young as twelve years to marry? For sure there are several reasons to child marriage practice being legal and existing. A country part of the UN and how the Senate and House of Representatives act means that marriages among girls under eighteen years of age should be abolished.

As seen in the documentary, how is this still a practice among Muslims in the Philippines? How can I know the factors that influence such a practice? Does religion play a role in all of these? Maybe I can find answers through their religious texts and from the women themselves.

1.3 Problem Statement

With the aforementioned background and narrative, I chose ordinary Maguindanaoan Muslim women to read and reinterpret sacred scriptures and make meaning through their reinterpretation, to find parallels or contraries concerning sacred texts and existing practice. As I am a master's student of Religion and Diversity: Conflict and Coexistence at UiO. I wanted to find out how does religion play a role in the practice of child marriages among below eighteen-year-old girls through the view of ordinary Maguindanaon Muslim women of their sacred scripture.

1.4 Aim

The thesis study aims to make meaning of how a Muslim woman reinterprets her Islamic sacred scriptures that have a complex social issue, such as child bride practice attached to it. Through this, I may find out if there is a correlation between the reinterpretation of sacred religious text

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[9]Presidential Decree No. 1083, signed 4, February 1977 in the Official Gazette of Philippine Government retrieved from https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1977/02/04/presidential-decree-no-1083-s-1977-2/
[10]Ibid.

and the existing social practice. I chose to make meaning to the reinterpretation of sacred scripture of these women and their narratives of their personal encounter with this kind of situation and wanted to study how these women narrate these kinds of encounter when religious texts have a complex social and cultural phenomenon attached to it. With feminist standpoint and double hermeneutics as a methodology and method of analysis, respectively. To ultimately find out if there are correspondence in these kinds of situation, encounter, and context.

I specifically chose women and not men to answer questions regarding sacred scriptures with child bride implications as Feminism will be used as one theoretical perspective. One stance of this theory is that women are not only structurally different from men but also that the lived realities of women's lives are profoundly different from those of men.[11] The choice of standpoint feminism is chosen because the standpoint researchers believe that people in locations of relative power are interested in maintaining their positions and that the dominant institutions and discourses support them. According to Sprague (as cited by Neitz, 2011, p.55), one distinctive quality of feminist standpoint research is the choice to work for the disadvantaged rather than for those in power.[12] A move to change the focus from looking at beliefs and dogmas as expressed by those in positions such as men, leaders, and institutions to look at the embodied practices in the daily lives of oppressed group of people. Through this, I can examine how these people who are not in positions of power experience the structures that govern their lives. Through their answers/narratives, new understanding of this phenomenon will eventually emerge. Feminism also exposes structures of power, oppression or marginalization.

What are the opinions or views of Maguindanaon Muslim women of the Philippines on certain religious texts used to justify child bride practice? Are their views coincide with the existing practice? The Maguindanaon Muslim women in the Philippines were chosen because they can be categorized as those in disadvantaged positions or positions, not in power, and the PD 1083 acts as the central part of the government of their society. The Maguinadanon Muslim women are situated where social practice and religion intimately meet together. How does religion play a role in this through their perspectives?

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[11]Juschka, D. (ed.) (2001) Feminism in the Study of Religion A Reader, Continuum London and New York p. 604
[12]Neitz, MJ., (2011) Feminist Methodologies in Stausberg, M. & Egler, S. (eds.), The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group London and New York, p.55

1. To make meaning of reinterpretation of ordinary Muslim women to their Islamic texts with child bride practice justifications.
2. To give these women a voice of their opinion, views and narrative of such a situation, encounter, and context, having religious text on the one hand and the child marriage practice on the other hand.
3. To find out if sacred text reinterpretation is parallel with the religious and social practice among them.
4. To find out how Islam's religion plays a role in a social practice that exists among Maguindanaon Muslim women.
5. To find out if there are oppressive elements in this situation; and
6. To produce knowledge about the relationship of religion and social practice from the women in this part of the world.

II.   Thesis Structure

This chapter contains the structure of the thesis to provide a clear picture of the thesis. The first chapter, as presented above, is an introductory part, which includes the inspiration, problem statement, aim, and objective of the thesis. Chapter two follows; this chapter presents the structure of the thesis and what contains in each remaining chapter. This chapter will provide guidance in reading the thesis.

Chapter three comprises the thesis's theoretical and methodological framework. This chapter will present the different theories, methodology, and methods of analysis that will be used. The first theory is feminism and its definition, the fourfold types, and the various waves of feminism. The book of Gayle Letherby will be presented to answer why I chose feminism. The second theory that will be presented is the standpoint theory based on how Nancy Harstock and Sandra Harding have explicated this theory. The third theory and also considered a methodology is the feminist standpoint based on Mary Jo Neitz's presentation of the feminist standpoint. The next theory, which is more used in this thesis as a method of analysis is the hermeneutics, specifically the double hermeneutics of Anthony Giddins through the presentation of Anne Hege-Grung of double hermeneutics in her book. The last part of chapter

three is the presentation of different related literature that provides an overall framework of the theory, methodology and method of analysis of this thesis. There are three literatures that will be presented and reviewed. First is the book by Sandra Harding titled Feminism, second is the Gender Justice in Muslim-Christian readings of Anne Hege-Grung, but I only considered her use and explanation of double hermeneutics of Anthony Giddins, and the last is the article/paper of nurses Nicole Pitre and colleagues titled Critical Feminist Narrative Inquiry through Double Hermeneutics.

Chapter four follows where the background and contextual information is laid down. This chapter covers the key terms and how they will be used in the thesis, the child bride phenomenon, the location, the people that is part of the study, the chosen sacred scriptures and the different Islamic interpretative discourses. I also briefly presented two examples of women who had interpreted/read the Quran academically. These book/research of Asma Barlas and Amina Wadud. Ending the chapter with a brief background of Sunni Islam of the Shafii school.

Chapter five, the method, contains and discusses the method used to gather the empirical data. This is a qualitative research through an online interview using a semi-structured questionnaire. By answering the questionnaires, the participants are encouraged to share their life stories and narratives in the context of the study. The method of analysis is also presented, as well as the analytical process, the scope and limitations, and ethical considerations. This chapter also presents the challenges that I encountered as the researcher conducting the thesis during a pandemic, my position and reasons in relation to the study will be presented too. The process of selecting the participants, the process of conducting the online interview, the presentation of the participants, and lastly, the structure of the analysis, will be part of chapter five.

Chapter six contains the discussion and summary of findings; in this chapter, the researcher will individually present the data gathered, called the empirical data. This is followed by analysis, which is divided into two, which is the individual analysis and the collective analysis. Then the conclusion or the summary of the findings, ending this chapter with the current update on child marriage in the Philippines.

The last chapter of the thesis is my offered recommendations.

III.   THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The research study´s theoretical, contextual, and methodological perspective is closely related. According to Anne Hege-Grung, theory and method should be consistent based on an epistemological view that theory is always situated in a context[13]. This is also based on what Sandra Harding (as cited by Sprague, 2005, p.5) has proposed: there should be three elements in how one ought to be doing research. These three elements embedded into each other are epistemology (theory), methodology (implementation of a method), and the method (technique).[14] In this study – Feminism, Standpoint, and Standpoint feminism will be the theoretical and methodological framework. Hermeneutics is considered a theory and methodology but mainly as a method of analysis, particularly double hermeneutics. A qualitative unstructured online interview with a structured questionnaire is the method of gathering empirical data. Some definitions and discussions relate to theory, methodology, and methods, as they overlap and relate to one another.

3.1 Feminism

Feminism is a broad concept and is not a unified project. Almost all feminists concern is to understand the inequality that exists between men and women in society, women being considered subordinated to male domination. As according to Ziba Mir-Hosseini, feminism is "*a social movement whose agenda is the establishment of women´s human rights. Feminism endeavors to free women from an unwanted subordination imposed on them… it recognizes that women are independent and complete beings…*"[15] I personally define feminism as allowing women to participate in activities and decisions generally relegated to men, making them not subordinate but co-equal in participation and decisions.

Feminism is historically concomitant to the West, it gradually became a worldwide endeavor. It is regarded both a theory and a practice. Feminist researchers start with the political commitment to producing helpful knowledge that will make a difference to women´s lives

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[13]Hege Grung, A. (2015) Gender Justice in Muslim-Christian Readings *Christian and Muslim Women in Norway Making Meaning of Texts from the Bible, the Koran and the Hadith,* Brill Rodopi, Leiden/Boston p. 15
[14]Sprague, J. (2005) Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers, Bridging Differences, Altamira Press A Division of Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. UK, p. 5
[15]Al-Hakim, A. (2013) Islamic Feminism: Theory and Applications, The Islamic Ahlul-Bait Foundation, London England p.48

through social and individual change. These researchers are concerned with challenging the silences in mainstream research in relation to the issues studied and how the study is undertaken.[16]

There is fourfold division of types of feminism. These are liberal, radical, postmodernist and socialist. The liberal feminists demand equal rights for women as they believe in the common humanity of men and women. This became the basis for equality of rights. Radical feminists celebrate the differences between the experiences of men and women. They argue that women´s experience have been suppressed and that as a result, all aspects of culture, from literature and science to politics and law, betray the biases of and in favor of male sensibilities. Postmodernists, according to Al-Hakim are another term for third-wave feminism and socialist feminists advocated the abolition of any division of labor along specific lines. They were dominated by Marxism, which argues that the oppression of women has its roots in the class system and must overturn these systems to liberate women.[17]

Its development and evolution are classified into three waves. The first wave is the period during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of emancipation and socialist movements, the call for an end to legal discrimination against women so that there would be no legal difference between the status of men and women.[18] The second wave is from the 1960s and 1970s and is characterized by the radicalization of the movement. It viewed the concepts of male and female social roles to be bound up with patriarchy and called for its elimination.[19] The third-wave feminism argues that a natural implication of the rejection of traditional ideas about gender is the realization of the diversity of feminine types among women of different races, classes, nationalities, and sexual orientations. It promotes a vision of liberation in a wide-ranging plurality rather than a single idea of a liberated woman. Liberation is seen as diversity in the options available for sexual relations and gender roles.[20]

As part of the diversity of gender roles, there is a shift in the regular order of these roles. One of these is that the voice and ideas of males are generally considered, heard, and accepted.

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[16]Letherby, G. (2003) Feminist research in theory and practice, Open University Press, Buckingham & Philadelphia, p.4
[17]Al-Hakim, A. (2013) Islamic Feminism: Theory and Applications, … p. 53, 54, 57
[18]Ibid. p. 56-57
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid. p. 57

Women's voices and narratives are now studied and given focus. It is typically expected that women are to have feminine qualities such as being passive, naïve, accepting, and simply conforming to the ideas, decisions, and structures given to her by her male figures in life, by the society she is included and that her views and opinion does not matter much. Feminism made a way that women were heard and accepted, but the political movement also championed women's lives to become better in society, especially in the West. Feminist movements campaigned for women's rights such as the right to vote, hold public office, work, receive education, enter into contracts, etc. Feminism also articulates a wide range of a plurality of (liberated) women.

Thus women's lives and experiences to be studied and uplifted should not only be dedicated to white women of the West as 'West and Western thoughts', are regarded as the mainstream and the standard. The wide-ranging plurality of women means that other women in diverse segments of social, political, cultural, and various locations in the world should be studied and included to contribute to the diversified form of feminism is. This is why this thesis is conducted to contribute to the wide-range plurality of women, the theory and political motivation of feminism.

3.1.1 Why Feminism?

In her book, Gayle Letherby acknowledged and pointed out that the knowledge we have, especially the authorized knowledge available in religion, law, and politics, was historically and generally accorded from the point of view of men[21] what she calls male production of or a masculinized knowledge.

What does this mean? It is helpful to start answering this through what it means by knowledge as Gunew (as cited by Letherby, 2003, p.22) argues that knowledge can be defined as a kind of meaning production, as to how we make sense of the world by learning various sets of conventions. These sets of patterns are systems that help us to share our awareness of the natural and social world. Examples of these are language, music, mathematics, manners, and so on that, we experience through sensory data and interpretative grid. Then Gunew (as cited by Letherby, 2003, p.22-23) further argues that "*knowledge can be described in territorial*

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[21]Letherby, G. (2003) Feminist research in theory and practice, Open University Press..., p.22-23

terms in that it becomes legitimated within certain institutions like education system of a particular society that knowledge becomes authorized and only some can claim rights to it. For so many centuries, women were excluded from these organized institutions like education, religion, law, and politics. Thus, authorized knowledge has historically been the so-called masculinized knowledge."[22]

This authorized knowledge is often the knowledge of the academy, and the knowledge that is drawn from everyday experience or what she calls an 'experiential knowledge', especially that comes from women, has been discounted in favor of the authorized knowledge that is usually from the male.[23] Male knowledge even fostered 'scientific' theories, which legitimized the exclusion of women. Sexist thinking has dominated male-defined epistemologies as men have dominated academic settings and created a male 'scientific' culture characterized by male concerns and grounded in intellectual machismo.

Women have not only been largely ignored in traditional approaches to knowledge, but where they have been considered, it is only in masculine terms. Women's experiences and concerns were not seen as authentic but as subjective, whereas men's were seen as the basis for the production of 'true knowledge'. The woman has been defined exclusively in terms of her relationship with men. This became the source from which female stereotypes emerge and are sustained. Women were portrayed as how men saw them, not as how they saw themselves; this played a crucial role in maintaining women's subordinated and exploited position.[24] Because women have been excluded from the making of knowledge and culture, women's experiences, interests, and ways of knowing the world are not represented. Women have not been able to make sense of the world through their own experience but only through the experience of men.

Therefore, they have not been in a position to have their meanings taken seriously enough to represent a genuine challenge to dominant representations. Their meanings which are different from those generated by men, have been cut off from the mainstream and frequently lost. In the 1980s and 1990s, the expansion of education slowly and grudgingly opens various doors of education and academia to women.[25] This gave way to feminism and women's studies in

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[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid. p.22
[24] Ibid. p.24
[25] Ibid.,p.35

which the focus is the experiential, the private, and the personal. As Maynard (as cited by Letherby, 2003, p.42) notes "*a focus on experience has been seen as a way of challenging women's previous silence about their condition and confronting the experts and dominant males with the limitations of their knowledge and comprehension. Feminism must begin with experience; it has been argued that it is only from such a vantage point that it is possible to see how women's worlds are organized in ways that differ from those of men*". [26] As a result, feminism flourished, and within academia, there has been the development of multiple theoretical perspectives that have challenged the mainstream positions. One theoretical perspective that challenges the mainstream position is the standpoint theory.

I choose feminism as the theoretical framework for this research study as I agree with one advocacy of feminism: the regular voice and ideas of males are generally considered, heard, and accepted. It is time to highlight, study, express, and include women's voices, views, and ideas, especially in other locations of the world, not only in academia or the West. The study of women not located in the West can contribute to the diversified and expanded form of women in the world, this is an activism of feminism. It will be possible to see women's world organization by studying and revealing the experiential, private, and personal lives of women and their vantage points. Through feminism also it will unfold power structures in the lives of the women in the study.

3.2 Standpoint Theory

A standpoint according to Nancy Harstock, is not simply an interesting position but it is considered as being engaging. A standpoint carries with it the contention that there are some perspectives in society from which the real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible.[27] Standpoint theory emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a feminist critical theory about relations between the production of knowledge and practices of power. It is considered an explanatory theory as well as a theory of method.[28] It is presented as a way

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[26]Ibid. p.42
[27]Harstock, N., (2004) The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism in Harding, S., (ed) The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader *Intellectual and Political Controversies* Routledge New York and London, p. 35
[27]Ibid. p.2
[28]Harding, S. (ed.) (2004) The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader *Intellectual and Political Controversies* Routledge New York and London, p.1

of empowering oppressed groups, valuing their experiences, and pointing toward a way to develop what Patricia Hill Collins calls an 'oppositional consciousness'.[29]

This theoretical perspective argues that knowledge stems from a social position. The perspective denies that traditional science that is objective, is the only knowledge. It declares that traditional research and theory have ignored and marginalized women and feminist ways of thinking. This theory emerged from the Marxist argument that people from an oppressed class have special access to knowledge not available to those from a privileged class. This Marxist insight inspires feminist writers to examine how inequalities between men and women influence knowledge production.

Their work is related to epistemology, which examines the nature and origins of knowledge, and stresses that knowledge is always socially situated. In societies stratified by gender and other categories such as race and class, one's social positions shape what one can know.[30]

Standpoint theory has many critics and differing views of what this theory is and can do. Sandra Harding sets the stage by noting that women's movements needed knowledge for women. Women, like a member of other oppressed groups, had long been the object of the inquires of their actual or would-be rulers. The research disciplines and the public policy institutions that depended upon them permitted no conceptual frameworks in which women as a group or as groups located in a different class, racial, ethnic, and sexual locations in local, national, and global social relations- became the subjects- the authors of knowledge.[31]

Women as a group or other oppressed groups became authors of knowledge focusing on their experiences, another criticism of standpoint theory emerged as it abandons the epistemological concepts of truth, objectivity, and good method. Thereby losing the solid grounding of epistemological foundation that needs to make its political movement claims plausible to dominant groups and be useful in political struggle. Furthermore, how can standpoint account for and engage with differences among women? Harding defended the theory and stressed the claim that "*knowledge is always socially situated. An example is that the situation of an*

[29] Ibid. p.2
[30] Borland, E. (2020) Standpoint Theory, Encyclopedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/topic/standpoint-theory
[31] Harding, S. (ed.) (2004) The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader *Intellectual and Political…* p. 4

oppressed group is different from that of the dominant group; its dominant situation enables the production of distinctive kinds of knowledge, a knowledge that have insisted on maintaining different material conditions for themselves and those whose labor makes possible their dominance." Harding further insisted that *""knowledge after all is supposed to be based on experiences and so different experiences should enable different perceptions of selves and environments."*[32] Each oppressed group can learn to identify its distinctive opportunities to turn an oppressive feature of the group's conditions into a source of critical insight about how the dominant society thinks and is structured. Standpoint theories can turn a social and political disadvantage into an epistemological, scientific, and political advantage.[33]

Defending the other criticism that not all women have the same conditions or experiences, standpoint theory has been accused of having a 'centered' and 'essentialist' ontology that they criticize, this ontology that envisions only one kind of homogenous, oppressed, heroic, ideal knower and agent of history. They struggle to create a different type of decentered knowledge and history envisioned by the ontologies mentioned above.[34]

The works of different women, especially women of color, have led a way in envisioning coalitions of decentered subjects of knowledge and history whose everyday experiences are both discovered and forged through shared political projects. Harding pointed out that the *"works of different women enable us to understand how each oppressed group its critical insights about nature and the larger social order will have to contribute to the collection of human knowledge. As different groups are oppressed in different ways, each has the possibility of developing distinctive insights about systems of social relations in general in which their oppression is the common feature..."*[35]

The standpoint perspective contributed to redefining and reconstructing a pluralistic vision of truth that can represent the diversity of social realities.

Thus, based on Harstock and Hardings, elucidation of standpoint theory means that the knowledge that comes from an oppressed group is subjective, but this subjectivity contributes

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[32] Ibid., p.7
[33] Ibid. p.8
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid. p.9

to knowledge production, that is needed to have a clearer understanding of the social reality of the world. Standpoint theory has a common feature of revealing power structures and oppression in society.

I agree with the exposition of Harstock and Harding of the standpoint theory, women or marginalized groups should become authors of their experiences, this should be an acceptable academic knowledge production. Knowledge is varied depending on a social setting. The oppressed women's social reality can help contribute to present a more truthful reality. I have chosen the standpoint as one of the theories, as this thesis can contribute to define and construct a pluralistic concept of truth as the lives of the oppressed and marginalized is studied, new social reality is obtained. Their oppression and marginalization will also reveal the working of structures of power in their lived realities, in this thesis it is in the context of the social phenomenon and the sacred scripture. This is the only theory and methodology appropriate for this thesis.

3.3 Feminist Standpoint

Feminism provides the theory and motivation for inquiry. The women's position, usually in a subjugated situation in society, can offer a complete and less perverse understanding of social life, contrary to men's dominating position, which can only result in partial and or worse a perverse understandings.[36] According to Harding, this perspective of women becomes a standpoint, "*a morally and scientifically preferable grounding for interpretations and explanations of nature and social life* ".[37] Adopting a standpoint is a fundamental moral and political act of commitment to understanding the world from the perspective of the socially subjugated.[38] As Dorothy Smith (as cited by Harding, 1986, p.155) also explains, "*we need a method of thinking that does not transform those it studies into objects but preserves in its analytical procedures the subject's presence as actor and experiencer*". [39]

Standpoint researchers believe in the existence of a material world and emphasize starting analyses with people's practical activities in specific locations in the world while integrating

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[36]Harding, S. (1986) The Science Question in Feminism, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London p.26
[37]Ibid. p. 26
[38]Ibid. p. 149
[39] Ibid. p. 155

assumptions about the social construction of subjects.[40] As for Sprague (as cited by Neitz, 2011, p.57) a feminist standpoint refers to "*first an actual location in nature and the interests with regards to that location; the discourses that provide people with tools for making sense and the positions in the social organization of knowledge production.*" Sprague further argued that "*we can increase the likelihood that we will ask critical questions, to the extent that we develop practices that move us outside of our closed academic conversations. By starting with the experiences of people at the bottom of hierarchies rather than with the understandings of those at the top – learning to pay attention to what is missing.*" [41]

As presented by Harstock, as well as by Dorothy Smith, they drew on a Marxist frame to develop their feminist standpoint. Harstock pointed out that women as knowers occupied a privileged position/location as they had access to the rules and understandings of the men in power. Smith further argued that a feminist standpoint of women meant the actualities of women's everyday experiences. This has offered a way to understand social organization and the relations of ruling from starting with the actual experience of people in daily life.[42]

Haraway (as cited by Sprague, 2005, p.43) also used the term 'embodied vision' or the term 'situated knowledge' to emphasize that the vision we have is located in some specific social and physical place, that this knowledge is situated thus partial so to compensate for this partiality to gain a critical perspective on one's situation, it should be viewed from different positions.[43]

The feminist standpoint is without criticism, and one of these is the idea that knowledge comes from a particular perspective seems dangerous to scientific research as this can be subjective knowledge, a subjective knowledge is considered by the critics as a view from nowhere. But some feminist scholars advocate embracing the multitude of perspectives as part of what makes science so powerful.[44] For my understanding science should not only focus on being objective, as there is no pure objective perspective as it also has elements of subjectivity. Even though feminism obtains a subjective perspective it has elements of it being objective.

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[40] Neitz, MJ., (2011) Feminist Methodologies in Stausberg, M. & Egler, S. (eds.), The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods .. p. 57

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid. 57-58

[43] Sprague, J. (2005) Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers,.. p. 43

[44] Halpern, M. (2019). 'Feminist standpoint theory and science communication'. JCOM 18 (04), C02. https://doi.org/10.22323/2.18040302.

Collins (as cited by Nietz, 2011, p.59) argues that "*feminist standpoint theory is a tool for discussing how dominant groups maintain their power through control over culture and knowledge production*".[45]

By using a Feminist standpoint, a perspective that could help facilitate research for women not located in the first world (as the academia already considers them the standard). According to Harding (as cited in Neitz, 201, p.60), "*marginalized lives are better places from which to start asking casual and critical questions about the social order*"[46] All feminists and theorists agree that the feminist standpoint connects the issue of power and knowledge production. This is one example of feminist standpoint having elements of it being objective.

Feminist standpoint theory may also function as a productive methodology for analysis. It can serve as a framework for analyzing the voices of women, people of color, and other marginalized groups.[47] As Neitz has said "*feminist standpoint researchers have proposed a methodology for turning what might have been seen as a flaw – a bias – under a different epistemological position, into a valuable tool for critical research, one that holds the possibility of empowerment.*"[48]

As argued above feminism standpoint is a needed theory and methodology to facilitate research deemed subjective by its critics but holds a powerful tool for critical research. Being critical to the structures of power governing every society. This is valuable for science as all perspective should be considered and given a platform. In this research study, Maguindanaon women are being regarded as part of a marginalized and oppressed group of women. They have all the attributes of marginality. With this principle, Maguindanaon women are more aware of their social standing and by asking casual and critical questions to them, it can facilitate to understand better how social order of the world is being formed in their perspective. Feminist standpoint can reveal the issues of power structures in the lives of these women, by allowing them to reinterpret sacred scripture with a controversial social phenomenon attach to it, this

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[45]Neitz, MJ., (2011) Feminist Methodologies in Stausberg, M. & Egler, S. (eds.), The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods .. p. 59
[46] Ibid. p. 60
[47] McClish, G. & Bacon, J (2002) Telling the Story Her Own Way: The Role of Feminist Standpoint Theory in Rhetorical Studies in Rhetoric Society Quarterly, Vol. 32 No. 2 (Spring, 2002) pp. 27-55 Taylor & Francis, Ltd. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3885979 p.27
[48] Neitz, MJ., (2011) Feminist Methodologies in Stausberg, M. & Egler, S. (eds.), The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods .. p. 63

will reveal how they view, produce knowledge and shape their world from this interactions and encounters. This will hopefully empower them during the process and after the research study.

3.4 Hermeneutics

The term hermeneutics is embedded in the Western and Christian philosophical and theological tradition; however, in recent years, this term was not only exclusive to Western Christian but has been used increasingly within Islamic theological discourses.[49] When interpretation was developed into a scientific method, the term from Greek *hermeneuein*, which means expressing, translating, or interpreting, was used. The source material of hermeneutics is texts and other utterances, and the goal is to understand their meanings.[50] Culture and religion can be seen as textual and as webs of signs which can be analyzed by means of hermeneutical methods.[51]

In this thesis, I would like to lean on the work of Hege-Grung, who took on the double hermeneutics of Giddens. She suggests that social actions could be interpreted in the same interpretative modes as textual hermeneutics to read social interaction and human behavior as a text. This suggestion opens up a new theoretical position.[52] She interprets the interpreters and interprets texts from relevant research fields to make a broader interpretative framework.[53] I believe Hege-Grungs´ interpretation and discussion of the double hermeneutics of Giddins is significant in this research study, as it will give this study guidance and framework on how to analyze the participants' narratives and their reinterpretation of the sacred scripture.

Another paper that has used double hermeneutics is the study of the nurses Nicole Pitre and her colleagues. As for the authors/nurses, the utilization of a double hermeneutic analysis process is to make a clearer and more accessible level of analysis from multiple readings of an often-complex stories/narratives. They have used the hermeneutics of faith and the hermeneutics of contextualization. Their discussion is also very significant in my study. I treat the participants' answers as a semi-narrative or life story but only in the context of sacred

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[49] Hege Grung, A. (2015) Gender Justice p. 20
[50] Gilhus, I.S. (2011) Hermeneutics in Stausberg, M. & Egler, S. (eds.), The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group London and New York, p.275
[51] Ibid. p.276
[52] Hege Grung, A. (2015) Gender Justice p. 19
[53] Ibid. p. 18-19

scripture and the social phenomenon of child bride/marriage. Using hermeneutics of faith and the hermeneutics of contextualization provides a good grounding and framework of analysis.

I will present the narratives/stories of the participants; then it will be interpreted and analyzed based on how the participants reinterpret the chosen sacred scripture. To analyze their views, ideas, and reaction when they know that the sacred scripture is associated with a controversial social phenomenon. This is the conceptual framework of double hermeneutics that were used.

Hermeneutics can be used as a method of interpretation and analysis of the participants' narratives and answers; at the same time, it will be used to analyze their reactions/behavior in reinterpreting, narrating, and answering.

3.5 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

3.5.1 Sandra Harding the Science Question in Feminism

The goal of feminist knowledge-seeking is to achieve theories that accurately represent women's activities as entirely social and social relations between the genders as a real – an explanatorily important- component in human history.[54]

In this book by Sandra Harding, she coined feminism and standpoint. Her feminist standpoint can be traced back to Hegel's thinking about the relationship between the master and the slave with the elaboration of other theorists that argues that men's dominating position in social life results in partial and perverse understandings. In contrast, women's subjugated position provides a possibility of more complete and less perverse understandings. Feminism and the women's movement provide the theory and motivation for inquiry and political struggle that can transform the perspective of women into a standpoint- *a morally and scientifically preferable grounding for interpretations and explanations of nature and social life*[55]. Hilary Rose proposes (as cited by Harding, 1986, p. 45) that "*the grounds for a distinctive feminist science and epistemology are to be founded in the social practices and conceptual schemes of feminists or women inquirers in craft-organized areas of inquiry. Women's socially created*

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[54] Harding, S. (1986) The Science Question in Feminism, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London p.138
[55] Ibid. p.26

conceptions of nature and social relations can produce new understandings that carry emancipatory possibilities for the species."[56] Harding furthers that "*men have actively advanced their own futures within masculine domination, women too could actively participate in the design of their futures*".[57]

The subjugation of women's sensual, concrete, relational activity permits women to grasp aspects of nature and a social life that are not accessible to inquiries grounded in men's characteristic activities.[58] As further explained by Jane Flax, a political theorist and psychotherapist (as cited by Harding, 1986, p.151) "*the task of feminist epistemology is to uncover how patriarchy has permeated both our concept of knowledge and the concrete content of bodies of knowledge. Without adequate knowledge of the world and our history within it, we cannot develop a more adequate social practice*". According to Flax "*feminist philosophy thus represents the return of the repressed, of the exposure of the particular social roots of all apparently abstract and universal knowledge. Flax claims that feminist standpoint is still a partial understanding however a person who tries to think from the standpoint of women may illuminate some aspects of the social totality which have been suppressed with the dominant view*".[59]

A Canadian sociologist of knowledge, Dorothy Smith, also explored constructing a sociology that begins from the standpoint of women. She cites that *women's experience of their lives rather than in the terms of masculine science can have a quite different account it would seek to explain/interpret social relations, not only human behavior, and do so in a way that makes comprehensible to women the social relations within their experiences*. Smith stresses (as cited by Harding, 1986, p.158) "*that there are many different realities in which women live, but they should all be regarded as producing a more complete, less distorting, and less perverse understandings than can a science in alliance with ruling-class masculine activity*".[60]

In summary, Harding's critical component of the feminist standpoint in this book is that it can identify the shifts in social life that can make way for a possible new mode of understanding.

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[56] Ibid. p. 145
[57] Ibid. p.146
[58] Ibid. p.148
[59] Ibid. p. 151, 154
[60] Ibid. p.158

This shift is that allowing women, especially in oppressed and subjugated locations be studied and heard can contribute to new methods of apprehending social life.

I base this thesis on this epistemology that the knowledge out there is historically constructed from men and men's perspectives. Hence women's perspectives and explanations of social life are necessary to produce new ways of understanding. Men´s perspective is equally important nevertheless; for me, it is high time to study women´s perspectives and experiences especially in a country like the Philippines and a group of women like Muslim Maguindanaoan. Their knowledge production and worldview can also be an essential academic knowledge.

3.5.2 Anne Hege Grung Gender Justice in Muslim-Christian Readings

The book of Anne Hege-Grung inspires this thesis. Her research book Gender Justice in Muslim-Christian readings. She used epistemologies of Hermeneutics, Dialogue, and Feminisms, but I will only tread on Feminism and Hermeneutics as this thesis is not a co-reading of Muslims and Christians but only Muslims, and this is not even a co-reading in one location. According to her, feminism, especially third-wave feminism, acknowledges diverse goals for a feminist that is not only an analysis of a gendered powered structure but considers ethnicity, class, sexuality, etc., as interacting with gender in the structure of power and oppression.[61]

Feminism for her "*is an ethical and moral project of creating equality between men and women through transforming patterns of male dominance in religious and social structures into patterns more consistent with gender equality. This may take different shapes. To reveal patterns of male dominance, hermeneutics is needed to reach a situated understanding, representing a viewpoint of what is"*.[62]

Hermeneutics is related chiefly to Christian theology but is not exclusive to it. The field of hermeneutics covers different interpretation theories with shifting emphases on text, author, reader(s), and historical as well as current contexts.[63]

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[61] Hege Grung, A. (2015) Gender Justice p. 84
[62] Ibid., p.16
[63] Ibid., p.17

As Hege-Grung used hermeneutics in two ways: first as a designated method for interpreting texts when she refers to a specific hermeneutical tradition, but mainly as a perspective to theorize on the interpretation of human life and communication. This includes the interpretation of texts, contexts, and human self-reflection, expressed through action and agency, discourses and dialogues.[64]

As Hege-Grung did qualitative research to cover the research operation, she used the hermeneutical theory of sociologist Anthony Giddens called double hermeneutics. Giddens states (as cited by Hege-Grung, 2015, p.18) that *"the researcher both interprets according to his own pre-knowledge and the researcher field and reinterprets the interpretation already existing in the field that is the object of research. The researcher thus interprets what is already interpreted as a meaningful universe among the informants in the field."*[65]

The double in the term double hermeneutics by Giddens, according to Hege-Grung, could refer to the researcher's two areas: the research discourse and the empirical field. Another interpretation of this double hermeneutics may also mean that Giddens *"simply wanted to clarify that a researcher is neither the first nor the only interpreter and that there are already interpretations in the field to which he/she has to relate. The double of the hermeneutical operation is to interpret the interpretation of others"*.[66]

Hege-Grung emphasizes that Giddens makes an essential point that the concepts, theories, and interpretations do not exist in closed departments of research and empirical field. Like in her study, the interpreting participants possibly have access to theological and contextual interpretations of both texts and contexts.[67] Hermeneutics, as a qualitative interpretative method, can be used to read social interaction and human behavior as a text.[68]

In this thesis, hermeneutics is a chosen method for analysis of the participants' perspective of their reinterpretation of sacred scriptures with the complex social phenomenon and their perspective of it in terms of their current social situation. I will briefly include Islamic interpretative discourses and samples of Muslim women academic scholars' interpretation of

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[64] Ibid., p.18
[65] Ibid., p.18
[66] Ibid., p.18
[67] Ibid., p.19
[68] Ibid., p.19

Quran and find out how Muslim commonly interpret their sacred scripture. This will serve as a background and idea of how Muslim especially a woman's relation to her sacred scripture.

Is the reinterpretation of the Maguindanaon women the same as the interpretative discourses and the interpretations of the academic scholars or entirely different from their self-reflection and expression which can be analyzed through their answers? There will be two interactive levels of interpretation in this thesis: the participants' reinterpretation and the researcher's interpretation, which is similar to the double hermeneutics of Giddins as explained by Hege-Grung.

3.5.3 Critical Feminist Narrative Inquiry Through Double Hermeneutics

This article/paper by Pitre, Nicole and colleagues focuses on Critical Feminist Narrative Inquiry (A Feminist Standpoint is considered part of a Critical Feminist Inquiry) through double hermeneutic analysis. They focus on the theoretical triangulation of critical, feminist, and symbolic interaction perspectives. The analytical, interpretative objectives and process involved achieves a double hermeneutic narrative analysis approach. They concluded that this approach is suitable for advancing knowledge about the nature and context of individual experiences to expose circumstances leading to social injustice and health inequities (as they have a nursing academic background) to ultimately improve health outcomes for traditionally silenced marginalized and vulnerable populations.[69]

A narrative is a way in which individuals make sense of themselves and their world. It is an activity that propels an individual to tell of personal experience/s, which conveys meaning to a particular audience. A narrative inquiry then focuses on studying the experience/s of the individual; this becomes the primary source of data and deliberately and purposely examines such narratives' content, structure, performance, or context. These narratives are treated analytically. According to Pitre N., et al. "*narratives are embedded within historical, structural and ideological contexts, social discourses and power relations. These are purposefully told to others in light of a particular intention and to benefit a specific audience, create an alternative representation of reality, and engage in social action*".[70] A narrative inquiry may mean

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[69]Pitre, N. Y., et. Al. (2013) Critical Feminist Narrative Inquiry Advancing Knowledge Through Double-Hermeneutic Narrative Analysis, Advances in Nursing Science Vo. 36, No. 2, Wolters Kluwer Health, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, pp. 118-132
[70] Ibid. p. 118

different things to different people and can be analyzed differently. When a narrative inquiry has a critical approach, it is specifically designed to examine what is told within a story from a sociological perspective. As Pitre N., et al. contends, in having a critical feminist approach to narrative inquiry that *"it would be useful to analyze (the stories told) to understand the forces and conditions that shape particular experiences and delineate the boundaries of individual or collective agency, voice, identity, and reflexivity."* [71]

Their approach is informed by the theoretical triangulation of critical, feminist, and symbolic interaction perspectives. The double hermeneutic approach, which is the double process translation or interpretation, is applicable. For the authors, the double hermeneutic approach involves exploring the stories/narratives as recounted to understand individual and collective experiences and to highlight the role of forces and conditions enabling and constraining the storytellers/narrators (participants) identity, agency, voice and reflexivity as knowledgeable agents within the story/narratives that were shared. This approach of analysis, according to the authors, served to situate narrated individual experiences within participants' personal history and relationships. The participants' narratives were examined to recognize the interactions with sources of power at the intersection of personal stories, history, relationships, social structures, and unrealistic expectations. This focuses on the underlying and often overlooked personal and societal forces and conditions that influence the participants' agency, voice, and reflexivity through their narratives.

A critical and feminist perspective on narratives, as expounded by the authors, examines the forces and conditions that exist beyond the individual that is in the broader social and structural contexts of their lives. These involve symbolic interaction perspective, critical perspective, and critical feminist research. The triangular foundation of this different perspective was not merged but instead explored independently for its complementary contribution to a more comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of a specific phenomenon or experience. Discussing and presenting each perspective will explain more of this triangular foundation. Their explanation of the symbolic interaction perspective draws attention to symbols and historical meanings that influence human thinking, action, and interaction. This perspective relies on the symbolic meaning that people develop and build upon in the process of social interaction as actions and interactions follow from an interpretative process that involves

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[71] Ibid.

reflection and communication with the self. These symbols are individually experienced, named, and cause particular responses that depend on circumstances. The symbols include language, people, past, future, self, ideas, perspectives, and emotions. The other edge of this triangular foundation, according to Pitre N. et al., is the critical perspective. It is the examination of human interaction in a dialectical relationship with social structural constraints. It is identifying sources of alienation, power, domination, and recognizing the potential for emancipatory transformation. There is an underlying assumption that history has and continues to shape the prescribed rules, conventions, routines, and habits that allow structures of power and domination to be reproduced and perpetuated within people's symbolic world. Then the last of the triangular foundation is the feminist perspective. This perspective includes a study of gendered relations within people's particular life contexts to identify oppressive conditions fostering domination, inequities, and marginalization. These conditions can be attributed mainly to the patriarchal norms and practices that constrain both men's and women's individual and collective agency and the social norms informed by conceptions of class, race, gender, culture, ethnicity, etc.[72]

The double hermeneutical approach to narrative analysis provides the means to examine the narratives/stories that have been gathered. The objective of this analysis, according to Pitre N., et. al. "*is to explore the ways that narrators/storytellers view themselves and interpret agency with their world, as well as to identify and name sources of power and alienation, recognize expressions of resistance and emancipation, highlight and expose the invisible, silenced, taken for granted historical, structural and ideological forces and conditions that led to or perpetuate injustices.*"[73] The focus of scrutiny extends beyond individual experiences to consider the significance and consequences of interactions with the symbolic, structural and ideological environments as they emerge within the narratives/stories told.[74]

The use and description of the double hermeneutics of Pitre N., et al. in their paper is significant in this study specifically in the analysis of the empirical data. The authors used a theoretical triangulation which consists of critical, feminist and symbolic interaction, this thesis is not the same as it does not use the theoretical triangulation as explained by the authors. Feminism, standpoint and feminist standpoint however was used. I believe that the theories used in this

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[72] Ibid. p.119-120
[73] Ibid. p.122
[74] Ibid.

thesis can also contribute to an analytical and interpretative objective and process involving a double hermeneutic analysis. This method of analysis is suitable in advancing the knowledge of the nature and context of individual experiences and narratives (these experiences and narratives can also be regarded as a standpoint) to expose the social reality in the lives of the Maguindanaon women.

The answers of the Maguindanaon women to the questionnaires are considered as their personal experiences and narratives. These narratives become the primary data, becoming an empirical data, and are deliberately and purposely examined. The data is treated analytically, and the double hermeneutic approach of analysis provides the means to examine. The manner of analysis is to explore the ways Maguindanaon women view themselves, reinterpret the sacred scripture that have an attached controversial social phenomenon, to give these women agency, reveal the sources of power structures in their world, recognize their expression of resistance or emancipation (if there are any), highlight and expose the invisible, silenced and taken for granted historical, structural or ideological forces that contribute to the social phenomenon of child marriage or child bride. Double hermeneutics will be expounded under the Method chapter.

IV.   CONTEXTUAL AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It is important to clarify the use of the terms in this paper.

The religion of Islam, Islam or Islamic, is used to signify anything about Islam as a belief, thought, practice, lifestyle, or ritual. When the term is referred to as Filipino or Maguindanaon Muslim, it is Sunni Islam according to the Shafií school. Shafií is one of the four Sunni schools of religious law. This legal school (*madhhab*) stabilized the bases of Islamic legal theory, affirming the authority of both divine law-giving and human speculation regarding the law. Rejecting provincial dependence on traditional community practice as the source of precedent, the Shafií jurists argued for the unquestioning acceptance of the Hadith as the major basis for legal and religious judgements and for the use of analogical reasoning (*quiyas*) when no clear directives could be found in the Quran or the Hadith. The consensus of scholars or of the

community (*ijma*) was accepted but not stressed.[75] A majority of Muslims in the Philippines adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam, specifically the Maguindanaons.

Marriage is the social and legal contract of two (male & female) persons to live in union as husband and wife, to start and to build a family of their own. This contract is called Nikah.[76] It is solemnized by the proper *wali* of the woman to be wedded; or by any person who is competent under Muslim Law to solemnize marriage (upon the authority of the *wali*) or by the judge of the Sharia District Court or Sharia Circuit Court or any person designated by the judge.[77] The PD 1083 governs the nature, consequences, and incidents of these marriages. A requirement of Shafií school for both parties (male & female) to enter into Nikah is sanity and adulthood (*bulugh*).[78]

Muturity in this thesis is not precisely determined. No indication of the minimum requirement of age or characteristics for a person to be considered mature. There is, however, a consensus among the Islamic schools that menses and pregnancy are the proofs of female adulthood (*bulugh*). Pregnancy is a proof because a child comes into being as a result of the uniting of the sperm with the ovum. Menses because, like the production of sperm in male, is a mark of female puberty.[79]

 A *Child bride* is a female below eighteen -year-old who enters into Nikah either by her own choice or not. They can be given away by their parents or legal guardians for marriage. I sometimes use the term *child marriage* when gender is not part of the discussion. It is either one or both are below eighteen years of age.

Ordinary Muslim women are women that are not scholars nor studied Islam academically. They are neither Muslim women who hold a leadership position in religious, social, and cultural aspects of society.

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[75] Encyclopædia Britannica. (n.d.). Shāfiʿī. Britannica Academic. Retrieved May 6, 2022, from https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.uio.no/levels/collegiate/article/Sh%C4%81fi%CA%BF%C4%AB/67054
[76] Presidential Decree No. 1083 retrieved in https://pcw.gov.ph/assets/files/2020/03/PRESIDENTIAL-DECREE-No-1083.pdf?x95147 dated 14 January 2022
[77] Philippine Statistic Authority, Presidential Decree No. 1083, Code of Muslim Personal Laws retrieved in https://psa.gov.ph/civilregistration/civil-registration-laws/presidential-decree-no-1083 dated December 28, 2021
[78] Maghniyyah, A., Marriage according to the Five Schools of Islamic Law, Islamic Culture and Relations Organisation. Retrieved on May 6, 2022. From http://ijtihadnet.com/wp-content/uploads/Marriage-according-to-the-Five-Schools-of.Islamic-Law1.pdf
[79] Ibid.

Muslim women are adherent to Islam religion by birth or convert regardless of the branch of Islam. When referred to in this paper as Maguindanaon Muslim women, the nationality is Filipino residing in Mindanao, the Philippines at the time of writing, an adherent to Sunni Islam of the Shafií school either as a religion, practice, or identity and acknowledges that she is an ordinary Muslim woman.

Reinterpretation when used in this thesis as *the reinterpretation of the Maguindanaon Muslim women* means the personal understanding, idea & view of the Islamic sacred scripture/religious text that have been chosen and what it means to her as a Muslim woman or in her practice of her religion and her life.

The West is the geographical location with its residents mostly referred to in this thesis as Europe and the United States.

Third world country in which the Philippines is classified is referred to in this thesis as the group of underdeveloped nations with widespread poverty that does not have much power internationally and are economically challenged.

4.1 A Brief Background of child brides in the world and the Philippines

Child marriage has many different forms and has myriad reasons; one issue is predominant, it is a worldwide phenomenon found in almost every region of the world from Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. It is acceptable, practiced, and even legal in most third-world countries. According to UNICEF, the Niger country has the highest overall prevalence of child marriage globally.[80] Child marriage is a legal or informal union where one or both parties are children. Children can be considered persons under the age of eighteen. Eighteen is the legal and acceptable age of adulthood to engage in mature undertakings such as marriage, childbearing, and rearing a family. Most countries, particularly in the West, have the standard that eighteen is the proper age for a person to be considered an adult. An adult, by definition, is a person who is fully grown or developed and behaves in a way characteristic of a responsible person.

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[80] UNICEF, (2014), United Nations Children's Fund, Ending Child Marriage: Progress & prospects, New York retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child_Marriage_Report_7_17_LR..pdf

Child marriage exists for both sexes; however, girls are disproportionately affected. For instance, in Niger, seventy seven percent of women aged twenty to forty nine were married before eighteen, in contrast to five percent of men in the same age group.[81] Bangladesh has the highest rate of child marriage of girls under the age of fifteen globally, with twenty nine percent being married before fifteen and two percent being married before the age of eleven.[82] South Asia is home to almost half (forty two percent) of all child brides worldwide. India alone accounts for one-third of the global total.[83] These girls are often married to much older men who are ten years older than them. In 2016 UNICEF estimated that 5.6 million girls under eighteen became child brides.[84]

According to UNICEF, the Philippines is ranked with the 12th highest absolute number of child brides globally at 726,000. An estimated fifteen percent of Filipino girls are married before they turn eighteen, while two percent are married before fifteen.[85] This practice in the Philippines is not exclusive to Filipino Muslims but also among Christians and indigenous people throughout the archipelago. In the year 2018 and 2019, there were 1.4% of the total marriage registered in the Philippine Statistics solemnized through Muslim rites.[86] These data on marriages were obtained from the certificates of marriage that were recorded at the Office of the City or the Municipal Civil Registrar, and some unions were not accounted for as some have not yet officially registered, or they will not register at all.

 In 2018 according to Philippine Statistics Agency (PSA), there were 364 females ages fifteen to nineteen years old who officially registered their marriage under Muslim rite/tradition. There were two females under age fifteen whose marriages were conducted under Muslim rite/tradition.[87] By the year 2019, according to PSA, 732 females between the ages of fifteen

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[81] Ibid.
[82] Human Rights Watch, (9, June 2015) Bangladesh: girls damaged by Child Marriage retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/06/09/bangladesh-girls-damaged-child-marriage
[83] UNICEF, (2014) United Nations Children's Fund, Ending Child Marriage: Progress & prospects, New York.
[84] Reid, K. (25, July 2018) *Child Marriage: Facts, FAQs, and how to help end it,* World Vision retrieved on https://www.worldvision.org/child-protection-news-stories/child-marriage-facts
[85] Nortajuddin, A., (11, November 2020) *Ending Child Marriage in the Philippines*, The Asean Post retrieved on https://theaseanpost.com/article/ending-child-marriage-philippines
[86] Philippines Statistic Authority (release date 11, January 2021) 2019 Philippine Marriage Statistics retrieved from https://psa.gov.ph/content/2019-philippine-marriage-statistics
[87] Philippines Statistic Authority (release date 29, November 2019) Marriages in the Philippines, 2018 retrieved from https://psa.gov.ph/vital-statistics/id/144732

and nineteen officially registered their marriage under Muslim rite/tradition. There were twenty-three officially registered marriages in which the female is under the age of fifteen.[88] There has been a significant increase in marriage from 2018 to 2019, especially for those under fifteen.

A child bride is among a list of harmful practices as it impacts the psychological well-being and personal development of the girls since they are not ready for the responsibilities and roles of being a wife, a sexual partner, and a mother.[89]

According to UNICEF, child marriage is a human rights violation that often compromises a girl´s development by resulting in early pregnancy and social isolation, interruption of schooling, limiting her career and vocational advancement opportunities, and placing her at increased risk of domestic violence. Early marriages for girls can result in a lifetime of suffering not just for young girls but also for their children. Compared to women in their 20s, these child brides are more likely to die due to complications in pregnancy and childbirth. If they survive pregnancy and childbirth, the likelihood of their infants being stillborn or dying in the first month of life is relatively high.[90] Early marriages of girls negatively impact her physical, psychological, emotional, and social well-being and also her children and maybe the generations after her.

The principal reasons for child marriage globally are poverty, natural disasters, lack of access to education, social pressure, harassment, and dowry. [91] The practice has been accepted and endorsed for a long time by religion, society, tradition, and culture as it serves a valuable purpose within families and communities.[92] One purpose it serve is to help families living in extreme poverty with ways to alleviate their economic conditions. Those children are one less mouth to feed and education to fund when given away for marriage at an early age. This practice is furthermore enshrined in the patriarchal attitudes of the community, emphasized by

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[88] Ibid.
[89] Human Rights Watch, (9, June 2015) Bangladesh: girls damaged by Child Marriage retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/news/news/2015/06/09/bangladesh-girls-damaged-child-marriage
[90] UNICEF Data (October 2021) Child marriage is a violation of human rights, but is all too common, retrieved from https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child/marriage/
[91] Human Rights Watch, (9, June 2015) Bangladesh: girls damaged by Child Marriage retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/news/news/2015/06/09/bangladesh-girls-damaged-child-marriage
[92] Rembe, S., Chabaya, O., Wadesango, N., & Muhuro, P. (2011) Child and forced marriage as violation of women's rights, and responses by member states in Southern African Development Community. Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity, 25(1 (87)), 65–74. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41321401

the inferiority of women. This thesis will help to know and understand the statement above if child marriage is indeed enshrined in the patriarchal attitudes of the community and promoted by the women themselves being inferior to men.

Many countries already have laws punishing and criminalizing persons who engage in this practice; however, legislative interventions alone cannot tackle child marriage. What is required is a change in mindset and advocacy. An example is in South Africa, as existing policies and legislative instruments are in place and, in most cases, admirable. Some instances have proved inadequate to bring desired change as there are entrenched attitudes in a male-dominated bureaucracy within government. There are also unyielding cultural attitudes that flow from a patriarchal society which do not place equal value and worth on women´s rights.[93] There are many aspects that child marriage can be undertaken, such as patriarchy, lack of education, poverty, and even religion.

4.2 Magauindanaoan Muslim of the Philippines

The Philippines is considered to be part of third-world nations. The country has struggled for many centuries as the growing population, unemployment, corruption and international debts are some reasons that have contributed to its economic and developmental challenge.

The Philippines is known in the region of South-East Asia as the only Christian nation as ninety percent of the population adheres to Christianity, mainly Roman Catholicism. Islam is second with five percent adherents.[94] Although Islam came first before Christianity to set foot in the country mainly in the Southern area which is the Island of Mindanao. Today Muslims in the Philippines is a minority compared to the vast Christian population. There are only five million Muslims in the country compared to the total of 100 million population as of 2015 records of statistics.[95] The second largest island, Mindanao in which majority of the Muslims continues to reside accounts for twenty four percent of the total population of the whole country, with almost 24 million, and forty five percent of these are women.[96] Based on the 2015 Census of Population, Muslims make up to 23.39% of the island of Mindanao. Of this, 1.1 million

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[93] Ibid.
[94] Philippine Statistic Authority (release date 19, May 2016) Highlights of the Philippine Population 2015 Census of Population https://psa.gov.ph/content/highlights-philippine-population-2015-census-population.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.

Filipinos lives in Maguindanao province, and the residents have 974, 192 Islam adherents.[97] Maguindanaons is part of the ten Muslim ethnolinguistic groups of the Philippines considered the largest Muslim ethnolinguistic group in the Philippines.[98]

The Maguindanaons are the original settlers of Cotabato and Maguindanao province[99] of Mindanao, Philippines. They are called Maguindanaon as an indication that their ancestral roots are from the Cotabato and Maguindanao Province. Today the province is a mixture of both urban and rural areas. Maguindanao, also spelled Magindanao or Magindanaw, means 'people of the flood plain' as they are most heavily concentrated along the shores and in the flood lands of the Pulangi-Mindanao River basin and the surrounding area.[100] Most Maguindanaoan lives in Mindanao, particularly in Maguindanao province, although several are scattered all over the country. They speak Austronesian language written in Latin script related to the Central Philippines' languages.

It is believed that Islam first came to the country through Muslim traders and missionaries to the southern part of the Philippines in the 14th or early 15th century. Although Islam was not solidly established among the Maguindanaon until about 1515, when Sharif Muhammad Kabungsuwan, a Muslim missionary from the Malay Peninsula, converted the ruling Maguindanao families, they were among the first to embrace Islam as a religion. Thereafter the sultanate of Maguindanao was founded, with its seat in the city of Cotabato, at the mouth of the Mindanao River.[101] The sultanate expanded under the leadership of Sultan Kudarat and Buayan. They quickly converted the indigenous people, and the first mosque in the Philippines was established. From a social, spiritual, and historical perspective, these two leaders remained among the most prominent sultanates of the southern Philippines.

Maguindanao society is stratified and family oriented. Those who can trace their ancestry directly to Maguindanao royalty have been bestowed the highest social and political rank.

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[97] Philippine Statistic Authority (release date 26; July 2017) Muslim Population in Mindanao (based on POPCEN 2015) Factsheet http://rssoarmm.psa.gov.ph/statistics/population

[98] Encyclopædia Britannica. (n.d.). Maguindanao. Britannica Academic. Retrieved January 14, 2022, from https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.uio.no/levels/collegiate/article/Maguindanao/49997

[99] Madale, A. (1998) Muslims: The Misunderstood Filipinos, Philippine Studies, Vol. 46, No.4 (Fourth Quarter 1998), Ateneo de Manila University pp. 492-503 https://www.jstor.org/stable/42634286 p.495

[100] Encyclopædia Britannica. (n.d.). Maguindanao. Britannica Academic. Retrieved January 14, 2022, from https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.uio.no/levels/collegiate/article/Maguindanao/49997

[101] Ibid.

Historically, Maguindanao society comprises regions, each associated with a group of related families who are connected socially and politically. In each area are several important larger communities headed by a powerful datu, a male. In the Maguindanao community, status distinctions are significant in everyday life as well as on ceremonial occasions. The unwritten laws, customs, and traditions that were handed down from generation to generation were promulgated by the datus. The datu is accorded special respect and directs many of the activities under him. He acts as a judge settling disputes or any case that arises, he can also act as an arbiter or mediator. He presides over the community's affairs and at religious celebrations or other events. This central community is generally surrounded by many smaller satellite villages, which may be some distance away. These villages usually are comprised of members of the same loosely defined kindred, including remotely related relatives. In these villages, everyday relations according to them are egalitarian.[102] The headman represents the group to outsiders, and decisions are made by him or the adult males of the group. When problems or conflicts arise that they cannot decide by themselves, they can turn to the datu who has authority over their area to find a solution or settle the matter. Today the honorific title of datu still exists; they retain some local power, but political power lessened,[103] as now those in political positions should be elected not chosen because of blood relations.

The predominant religion among Maguindanaon is Sunni Islam of the Shafií school. They follow the traditional beliefs and practices of Sunni Islam; however, it is infused with local tradition and folklore, resulting in the form of folk Islam. The beliefs and practices of folk Islam are gradually becoming more orthodox[104] as a preexisting animistic belief system is incorporated into the continued belief in a variety of environmental spirits, charms, amulets, magic, sorcery, and supernatural beings and that it interacts with the human world. These are evident in some of their culture and ceremonies. Muslim religious leaders and teachers called imam (pandita) preside over religious life, and young schoolboys in reading and memorizing Quran, girls are excluded from joining such. They are the formal religious practitioners in Maguindanao society.[105] Imam (pandita) usually leads the formal prayers, worship and services, heads the Mosque, have authority on Islamic jurisprudence and he sometimes serves as a community leader and provides guidance mostly on religious affairs. The imams

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[102] Stewart, J., (1996) Maguindanao, Encyclopedia of World Cultures (Vol.5: East and Southeast Asia) Macmillan Reference, USA
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.

nowadays, still hold honorific positions in the religious life of Maguindanao. Both the datus and imams still holds relative power over the community, the society and the religion but not as much as compared in the past.

Today the Sharia governs the Muslims in the Philippines but they are under the Constitution of the Philippines. Muslims believe that following and obeying especially the directives of Sharia, is the only way by which they can be assured of a place in heaven.[106] Sharia is intended to strengthen the Muslim faith by subjecting themselves to Islamic laws and sanctions that help them ensure being a good Muslim. This assurance of a place in heaven and being a good person is the aim of all religious person regardless of adherence.

The PD 1083 created the Sharia courts also. These courts are not independent courts that operate without regard to the state's laws. These courts are charged with the administration and disposition of Filipino Muslim personal and customary law in the provisions of PD 1083, thus excluding criminal laws. The Sharia courts are subject to the administrative supervision of the Supreme Courts of the Philippines. There are four Sharia courts in Maguindanao.[107]

PD 1083 is the Code of Muslim Personal Laws declared by then President Marcos in creating and uniting a new state nation (the Philippines) as part of the law of the land. This decree is to ordain and promulgate a code recognizing the system of Filipino Muslim laws codifying Muslim personal laws and providing for its administration and for other purposes. The Code drew heavily on the traditional customary law reflecting in the practices of Muslims. It is comprised of 190 articles in five books that covers personal status, marriage, divorce, matrimonial and family relations, succession and inheritance and property relations between spouses. To promote the advancement and effective participation of Muslims in the building of the society. The state considered Muslim customs, traditions, beliefs and interests in the formulation and implementation of the policies. This is to strengthen all the ethnolinguistic communities in the Philippines within the context of their respective ways of life in order to bring about a satisfying requirement for national solidarity and social justice. PD 1083 recognizes the four schools of Sunni Islam which is the Hanafi, the Hanbali, the Maliki and the Shafií, in construction and interpretation of the stipulations in the Code and to resolve

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[106] Madale, A. (1998) Muslims: The Misunderstood Filipinos, Philippine Studies, p. 500
[107] Supreme Courts of the Philippines Sharia Courts retrieved from https://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/court-locator/sharia-courts/

conflicting issues that which arises not contrary to the Constitution of the Philippines.[108] Thus the Filipino Muslims have mixed governance of Sharia and the criminal laws of the Philippines. Sharia only administrates the affairs of the Muslims.

4.3 Islamic Sacred Texts

The Quran has been an inexhaustible font of inspiration to Muslims worldwide over the centuries. It has stimulated continuing reflection and action in Islamic ritual, aesthetics, philosophy, law, spiritual and moral life.[109] Quran, which was written originally in Arabic, is believed by Muslims to be the very spoken word of God. Quran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the Angel Gabriel literally and orally. The reason that makes the Quran status as holy to the Muslims. Quran was revealed in stages during the twenty-two years of the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet gave his approval or disapproval on various religious, moral, social, cultural, and legal issues during the same period. These statements are called Hadiths and were collected by multiple hadith collectors. Both the Quran and the Hadiths made it clear that the Quran is the supreme and ultimate authority and guides all Muslim matters.[110]

A problem arises when the Quran is not specific in its stand or statement on certain issues, or its provision needs to be clarified or supplemented. In these situations, the Hadith is beneficial to supplement the Quran in formulating various Islamic rules or laws called Sharia. Sharia became the basic standard of Muslim conduct that deals with routine and personal matters. It is considered by them to as sacred also as it originated from the sacred scriptures. It became an integral part of solidifying Muslims. Islamic jurists, theologians, and scholars are the ones who set up, expand, use and develop Sharia. Many Muslim countries solely or partially use Sharia law to govern their nation. Sharia implementation is different from country to country. It depends on how they interpret sacred scriptures. Sharia is a big part of the daily lives of Muslims in the Philippines.

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[108] Presidential Decree No. 1083, signed 4, February 1977 in the Official Gazette of Philippine Government retrieved from https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1977/02/04/presidential-decree-no-1083-s-1977-2/

[109] Kassam, T. R. (2008). Signifying Revelation in Islam. In Wimbush. V. L. (Ed.), Theorizing Scriptures: New Critical Orientations to a Cultural Phenomenon (pp. 29–40). Rutgers University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hj5wr.7

[110] Ali Syed, M. (2004) *The Position of Women in Islam,* A Progressive View, State University Press, Albany, United States of America p. 5

To know a sacred scripture like the Quran and the Hadith means to read it, understand it, absorb it, and internalize its ideas and ideals, values, and vision. In other words, one has to have direct access to it. Understanding it is a task that the individual must undertake independently and not supposedly through someone else. The relationship of Muslims to God is direct and does not need any intercessor.

The sacred scripture, especially the Quran in its final form, was made available to the whole of humanity through the last of God´s prophets. A Muslim may seek the guidance of those who are well versed in the Quran to learn the sacred scriptures. Still, according to Chandra Muzaffar, understanding and applying it in life is one's own personal responsibility and obligation. It is even written in Quran 96:1-5 *Read! In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher who created – Created man, out of A (mere) clot of a congealed blood. Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful – He Who taught (the use of) the Pen – Taught man that which he knew not.* The Quran stresses that man (human beings) read, write, and understand. Muzzafar believe that the vast majority of Muslims today have no direct knowledge of the Quran, as evidenced by reason of illiteracy or if they are literate, they only have memorized it in a language they do not understand.[111] Quran should be available in one's language to understand, study and comprehend its contents.

4.4 Chosen Sacred Scriptures

Presenting below, are the three Islamic texts that I have chosen with child marriage indication. These sacred scriptures were chosen based on my personal readings about the different Islamic scriptures that justify child marriages to those who agrees on the practice. These scriptures are, the first two are from the Quran. In Quran 65:1-4, "*And those of your women as having passed the age of monthly courses, for them the İddah (prescribed period), if you have doubts (about their periods), is three months, and for those who have no courses, their İdda is three months likewise, except in case of death. Moreover, for those who are pregnant, their İddah is until they deliver (their burdens) and whosoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make his matter easy for him.*" This verse speaks of the waiting period of girls/women after three menstrual periods for the consumption of marriage. Many Muslim scholars interpret this verse contrarily according to their stand on child marriage. Some say it pertains to divorced

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[111] Muzaffar, C., (2006) Islam, Justice and Politics in Kamrava, M., (ed.) The New Voices of Islam *Reforming Politics and Modernity – A Reader*, I.B. TAurius & Co. Ltd., London & New York, p. 216

women, and other scholars interpret that all women can marry after their first three menstrual cycles, which means prepubescent girls or ages nine to thirteen.

Another verse from Quran that has a child marriage indication is found in Al Nesa 4:6. "*Test the orphans when they reach the age of marriage. Then if you discern in their maturity, deliver to them their property. Furthermore, do not consume it lavishly and hastily lest they should grow up. As for him who is well-off, let him be abstemious, and as for him who is poor, let him eat in an honorable manner. Furthermore, when you deliver to them their property, take witnesses over them, and Allah suffices as a reckoner.*" This verse speaks about orphans who do not have parents who will take care of them, so some are given away for marriage and the properties their parents left for them. Even if they are young, as long as they already have menstruations, they can be given away is one scholarship interpretation that justifies child marriage.

The third text is part of the collection of Hadith, or the life and acts of the Prophet Mohammad, compiled by Sahih al-Bukhari. His collection is recognized by the overwhelming majority of the Muslim world, also in the Philippines, to be the most authentic collection of reports of the Prophet Muhammad. The Hadith is very sacred in Islam. Many Islamic practices are solely or partially based on Hadiths. In Sahih al-Bukhari Book 7:62:64 as narrated, Aisha: "*The Prophet married her when she was six years old and consummated his marriage when she was nine years old, and then she remained with him for nine years till his death.*" Many Muslim scholars have disagreeing interpretations of this text of the Hadith also.

As read from these three chosen sacred texts, it is not indicated the exact age for marriage. The Islam leaders, the clergies, and Muslim scholars extract the age of marriage from their understanding of these scriptures or base it on the practices of the Prophet when he was alive.

It is important to note that the Islamic community is in unison in acknowledging that the overwhelming majority of interpreters seen as authoritative in the communities are men. This view allowed patriarchy to shape the interpretative traditions. A patriarchal perspective sees things through the male-centered lens. Male interprets have overlooked parts of the tradition where women are represented; they interpreted the texts and the traditions to women's disadvantage to execute power over women. God's message has been distorted to discriminate

against women because it supported men's interests.[112] Patriarchal perspective means that a male perspective remains dominant.

4.5 Muslim women

As I read about Muslims, I came to understand that some agrees that Quran clearly states equal treatment for both gender - male and female. Ringgren & Strom (as cited by Sechzer, 2004, p.268) reveals that patriarchal and matriarchal systems even existed in the pre-Islamic life of the Prophet Muhammad, even polyandry (the state of having two or more husbands at the same time). In the new religion (Islam), matriarchal and polyandry customs were abolished. The status of women began to dwindle as they were now controlled by their husbands and their husband's families, but in the beginning, this was not rigidly enforced.[113]

Conditions for women deteriorated all the more under the rule of Umar, who succeeded Muhammad. Under his leadership, veiling spread to all women throughout Arabia; at first, veiling was only done by the wives of the Prophet Muhammad. Umar also began to limit women from praying at home, excluding them from the Mosque; he encouraged and supported the movement to exclude women from partaking in the religious and communal aspects of life. This exclusion became a pivotal factor in the deterioration of the status of women in Islam.[114]

Another factor is seclusion. Smith (as cited by Sechzer, 2004, p.269) described it as a process that began with Muhammad's relegation of his wives to space apart from regular social interaction with men. The wives remained at home and could not converse directly with men but could only do so with a curtain.[115] Seclusion spread to all Muslim women. These factors led to a rapid secession of women's participation from a society that resulted in a male-dominated society and leadership, and men held influential positions. Muslim women were just confined at home to take care of the affairs of the home, especially for the rearing and raising of children. Their roles are confined to being good wives and mothers. They were not even allowed to go to school. According to Nasr Abu Zaid, "*Islam men have superiority over women because of their contribution to the expenses of life. Human societies have equated financial*

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[112] Hege Grung, A. (2015) Gender Justice p. 44
[113] Sechzer, J.A. (2004) Islam and Woman: Where Tradition Meets Modernity, History, and Interpretations of Islamic Women's Status, Sex Roles, Vol. 51, Nos. 5/6 p. 268
[114] Ibid. p. 269
[115] Ibid. p. 269

wealth with human worth, thus unfairly shifting the balance of power between men and women."[116]

The status of women has now changed among Muslims; many of these also came from the women themselves as there are now many Muslim women who are academic scholars who have published their work and research and Muslim women who hold leadership and influential positions in academic, political and social strata of society. There are many who claim they are Islamic Feminists, champions of gender equality, and Muslim women exegetes' examples like Fatima Mernissi, Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas and Leila Ahmed.

Muslim women in the Philippines have the same narrative as Muslim women around the world. They traditionally occupied positions and roles that may be characterized as less salient and more subservient to men. For their part, Filipino Muslim women did not seem concerned or complain about their roles and arrangement in the family and society as this has been often justified by references to the personal traditions and practices of the founder of the faith (Hadith) or the Quran.[117] Gradual change also came to Muslim women in the Philippines. The biggest factor is education and employment, as this opened a vast horizon of new perspectives that brought them away from their traditional background. Some radically broke away from these traditional social practices and roles. Some still embraced the tradition and roles passed on by their elders, but the majority chose to balance the delicate locus of change and tradition carefully.

The imbalance of power that have accorded men to have more control over the affairs of women, will be a good backdraft in studying Maguindanaon women. To find out if this still holds true to them up to this day. To know if Maguindanaon women are only confined to the affairs of the home, taking care of children and simply being obedient wives to their husbands and to the society or that they have chosen to break away from the traditional practices and roles.

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[116] Zaid, N., (2006) The Nexus of Theory and Practice in Kamrava, M., (ed.) The New Voices of Islam *Reforming Politics and Modernity – A Reader,* I.B. Taurius & Co. Ltd. London & New York, p.163
[117] Lacar, L. Q. (1991) The Emerging Role of Muslim Women. Philippine Studies, 39(1), 3–22. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42633224 p. 21

4.6 Islamic Interpretative Discourses

The varied Islamic interpretative discourses have implications for the status of women in a Muslim society. I will present these diverse Islamic interpretative discourses as this will be my standard of how the women in this thesis reinterpret their sacred scripture. Which interpretative discourses are they treading on when they reinterpret the sacred scripture presented to them? One Islamic interpretative discourse is called cumulative.[118] It is the traditional way of interpreting used in current efforts to make meaning. It is the unbroken chain of transferred knowledge of interpretation from Islam´s origin to the present.[119] They are called traditionalists as they believe that the injunctions laid down in the Quran and in the different schools of Islamic jurisdiction should be followed unquestioningly and are not subject to any new interpretation.[120] The second is the reformist or the modernist approach that claims that the access to the sources of the Quran and the Hadith should be more direct or that it should be consistent with common sense. According to Islamic reformist scholar Tariq Ramadan (as cited by Hege Grung, A. 2016, p.40), there should be a "*methodology of linguistic, religious and juridical interpretation of the sources and … a large frame.. of global rulings … to direct the application of ijtihad.."[121]* The regulations and commandments are the objects of interpretation that brings out the values and principles in which they are expressed. *Ijtihad* means independent reasoning and is an essential concept for Islamic reformists. It facilitates a contextual interpretation of the new situations and challenges of the Muslims under changed conditions. The fundamentalists is the third one, they also understand Islam as a social order and as the natural religion laid down by God and therefore unchangeable. The traditionalists tend to ignore the blurring of boundaries between custom and belief. The fundamentalist resorts to rational arguments to demonstrate how alien customs have tainted the divine law of Islam.

In this thesis, I will find out from the participants where their reinterpretation leads: the traditionalist, reformist, or fundamentalist approach. This will be the standard in making meaning to their interpretative work. This will help me understand individually the participants if their view of their sacred scripture is on the traditionalist way of interpreting that means they are more in support to the social practice because of the sacred scripture or treading on a

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[118] Hege Grung, A. (2015) Gender Justice p. 39
[119] Ibid.
[120] El-Solh, C. & Mabro (eds) (1994) Muslim Women´s Choices Religious Belief and Social Reality, Berg Publishers, UK, p. 6
[121] Hege Grung, A. (2015) Gender Justice p. 40

reformist way that interprets it with the changed condition and situation, or the fundamentalists that argues that Islam is the natural religion and that foreign customs only contaminates it.

4.7 Examples of Muslim women sacred scripture reinterpretation

Two remarkable Muslim women's works of re/reading or interpreting the Quran will be presented, one is Asma Barlas, and the other is Amina Wadud. According to Asma Barlas, a Pakistani-American woman scholar, Quranic hermeneut, and writer stated that the reinterpretation of the sacred scripture is fundamental as it provides Muslims with role models in how to live and be a Muslim. Her work focuses on the way Muslims produce religious knowledge, especially counterfeiting the patriarchal exegesis of the Quran. She stressed that *"there is nothing innately Islamic about misogyny, inequality or patriarchy. Yet this is often justified by Muslim states and clerics in the name of Islam…".[122]* She further pointed out that *"inequality and discrimination derive not from the teachings of the Quran but from the secondary religious texts."* These secondary religious texts that gained sacred status she said are the classical *Tafsir* (Quranic exegesis -viewed by Muslims as an integral element of the process by which a tradition was formed and embedded in history and religious writing. It is not only a commentary of the Quran but also a historical record of the circumstances in which a community and a state claim to have lawful authority over it) and the Hadith.[123]

Barlas mentioned conservative reading of the Quran in which a reflection on male superiority is evident. This male superiority, according to her, is derived from an ontological view that woman is said to have been created from/after man and for his pleasure and a moral-social view that assumes God to have preferred men in the completeness of mental ability, good counsel, complete power in the performance of duties and the carrying out of divine commands.[124] She also mentioned many Muslims' two views on reading and interpreting Quran. These are the modern reading, especially by women, but are seen as tainted by biases. The other view embraces the religious knowledge produced by a small number of male scholars in the classical period as the only objective and authentic knowledge of Islam. They believe in the theoretical infallibility of these male scholars.[125]

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[122] Barlas, A. (2002). "Believing women" in Islam: unreading patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'ān (1st ed.). University of Texas Press p. 3
[123] Ibid. p. 4
[124] Ibid. p. 7
[125] Ibid. 24

She suggested imploring interpretations, reading, and reinterpretation of the Quran by unreading patriarchy. She suggested reading the Quran as a text in light of the present needs with a movement from present to the past and back to the present, allowing one to specify the context of the Quran revelations and teachings and distill its moral and social principle as to make it applicable today.[126] To read the Quran as a cumulative, holistic process or as a whole, a totality. That Quran is its own best interpreter. Interpreting Quran by the Quran. As one argument of her is that many customary practices especially of the ancient Arabs were incorporated into the Hadith and into Muhammad's *Sunnah (*His praxis – includes his saying, actions or tacit approval of behavior he knew about. The *Sunnah* establishes the structure for Muslim praxis and for reading the Quran, since the Prophets life is deemed the best exegesis of its teaching) including abidingly misogynistic ones.[127]

Another American Muslim scholar and theologian, Amina Wadud, undertook research to make the reading of the Quran meaningful to women living in the modern era. She noted that there are two Quranic interpretative categories. First is the traditional *tafasir* (exegetical works) which is exclusively written by males. The second category is interpretations concerned with the issue of women consisting primarily of modern scholars' reactions to the oppressive ways of a woman as an individual and as a member of society. Many under this category are opposed to the Quranic message and Islam as a whole.[128] She proposed a third category of interpretation, this interpretation, she said, should consider various modern social, moral, economic, and political concerns (that includes the issue of the woman). Her proposition of reading the Quran from within the female experience and without stereotype (which is the framework of many male interpretations).

Wadud discussed that interpretations of certain words/texts in the Quran that should fulfill universal guidance (some texts should be read as not gendered but in neutral terms). She is leaning on the belief that Quran was revealed at a specific time in history and within certain general and particular circumstances and was given expression relative to those circumstances; thus, those interpreting from another circumstance must make practical applications in

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[126] Ibid. p. 23
[127] Ibid. p. 64-65
[128] Wadud, A. (1999) Qur'an and woman: rereading the sacred text from a woman's perspective. Retrieved from https://hdl-handle-net.ezproxy.uio.no/2027/heb.04755 p.2

accordance with how the original intention is referred or manifested in the new environments.[129]

Her method of exegesis of the Quran is reading the text of its context, its grammatical composition, and the whole text of its worldview, or she called it *Weltanshauung*.[130]

These interpretative Quranic works of women were presented to show that women can contribute greatly to the future advancement and evolution of sacred scripture and the Muslim community in the modern and ever evolving world.

4.8 Brief Background of Sunni Muslim- Shafií school

An influential Arab jurist, Abu Abdillah Muhammad ibn Idris al- Shafií, was the great contributor of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence. He is one of the four great Sunni imams, whose legacy on juridical matters and teachings led to the formation of Shafií school of *fiqh*. He resolved the problem of contradictions of authority with the provisions of Quran and Hadith and Tafsir that arose in the second century of Islam. He resolved the tension by decreeing in favor not of the Quran but of the Hadith. By making *Ijma (*consensus which the Hadith were based), into the source of Sharia and interpretative tradition on the grounds that it manifested God's will.[131]

The narratives of the Hadith, which is reconstructed centuries after the death of Muhammad, came to provide conceptual access to the teaching of the Quran and it became privileged over the Quran itself. Al- Shafií was able to establish *Ijma* as a source of law and tradition. He came to his own ruling by means not of consensus but of independent reasoning (*Ijtihad*), against which he then decreed in the interest of protecting religious knowledge in the future. By canonizing the *Ijma* of the classical/medieval period, al- Shafiís ruling also canonized the *Tafsir* (and religious knowledge) produced during this era. [132]

Al- Shafií lay the canonization of the Quran and the Hadith as the distinctively authoritative sources of religion/legal norms. He lays out the hierarchy of conceptualizing a law in which

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[129] Ibid. p.4
[130] Ibid.
[131] Barlas, A. (2002). "Believing women" in Islam: unreading patriarchal... p. 40
[132] Ibid. p. 41

the law consists of numerous layers. The first of the layer is the Quran and the Sunna, provided that the Sunna is accurately transmitted. The second is consensus with regard to issues on which the Quran and the Sunna are silent. The third is what some Companions of the Prophet have said if we know of no other Companions who contradict them. The fourth is the opinions that were disputed among the Companions. The fifth is analogy on one of the previous layers. When the Quran and the Sunna are present, no other layer is consulted; and law is derived from the highest available layer.[133]

Maguindanaon Muslim who are predominantly Sunni Islam under Shafií school no doubt followed this trajectory in conceptualizing and establishing the traditions, culture, social norms and law in their communities. Sharia can be assumed that it was influenced by the interpretative work of Al Shafií.

The interpretation of the imams and clergies in the Philippines reinforces child marriage practice, as can be noted that they are covered by the Sharia.

V.   METHOD

5.1 Qualitative Research – Interview through Questionnaire
A Semi Life Story Narrative through Feminist Standpoint with a Double Hermeneutic Analysis

The research study was conducted during a pandemic. Adapting the research method to the current situation is the viable way. This thesis can eventually contribute to doing research during a pandemic. As first planned and technically, interviewing personally a person is the most efficient way. However, the best researcher is the one that is flexible in any challenge that arises. During the whole process of the thesis, flying to the country of location is always the my top priority in order to interview in person and to observe too, once the pandemic pans down. Sadly, the situation became erratic. After much thought and consideration of the cost of time, finances, and energy, it is better to find alternative ways. One consideration I have in mind is to interview Muslim women where I am physically located, but the results I am convinced will be different as Muslim women in the current location expectedly have Western

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[133] El Shamsy, A.(2013) The canonization of Islamic Law, A Social & Intellectual History, From Local Community to Universal Canon. (n.d.), Cambridge University press In (pp. 69-88). doi:10.1017/CBO9781139649711.006

culture and values that can greatly influence their reinterpretation. Another consideration is to scrap the whole project and have another research study that can just be conducted where I am. After much thought, I chose to pursue the research on the country chosen as challenging as it can be because I believe that I need to represent the women in the country where I came from. It is high time to give these women a voice, give agency and study their reflexivity in the academy located in the West.

The research study is a semi-structured qualitative narrative interview, particularly an online interview with a structured questionnaire. Interviewing is a method that creates data by asking the participants (people participating in the research) questions. This is a combination of giving out a set of structured questionnaires to the participants and a semi-narrative interview. The total focus is the life story/narrative of the participants in the context of the study. The theoretical and methodological framework is Standpoint, particularly Feminist Standpoint, this correlates to the method that will be used. This is a one-to-one interview in which I gave the questionnaire and interviewed the participants individually. I gave each participant a set of structured questions, then gave them considerable time to respond and encouraged them to answer freely and ask questions themselves. This is to understand their thoughts, beliefs, ideas, conceptions, narratives, and stories around the topic of sacred scripture and the child bride practice.

The questionnaire is divided into two. The first part is Personal Questions which is made up of fourteen (14) Questions. This is the introductory part composed of questions about who they are, their background, their marriage/family details/lives. This is where I get to know them more and allow them to be comfortable, and let them begin answering and engaging with me. The second part is the Research Questions, which consists of nineteen (19) Questions. The Research Question is where the empirical data of my study will come from. The question started about their perception of their religiosity, then questions about the three sacred scriptures from Quran and the Hadith followed, and what is their comment that this is used for child bride practice justification. Then more questions about their opinion, statement, narrative, and view on child bride practices. I also asked them if they knew other persons who were a child bride, that through this to validate the assumption that this practice is common among them. Part of the questionnaire is that the participants were asked also about the reason/s for early marriage according to their perception and finally they were asked if being a child bride

is an acceptable practice to them.[134] These questionnaires are structured so that the participants will be encouraged to voice out and tell/write their narratives in the context of the research goal.

Qualitative research aims to address questions about developing an understanding of the meaning and experience dimensions of human lives and social worlds. Central to good qualitative research is whether the participant's subjective meanings, actions, and social contexts as understood by them are illuminated.[135] The method for conducting qualitative research are diverse. Qualitative research includes interviews, observation, narrative, analysis, or the combination of what was mentioned. In this study, I will be using a combination of a semi-life story narrative that is in line with the methodology of Feminist Standpoint, using hermeneutics, specifically double hermeneutics, to analyze and interpret the empirical data. Hermeneutics is used as it is a scientific method to express, translate or interpret. The source material of hermeneutics is texts and other utterances, and the goal is to achieve an understanding of their meanings.[136] Hermeneutics consists of a reading that moves back and forth between the parts and the whole of a text, in this case the answer/narrative of the participants to my questions, between its structure and meaning, between the reader's horizon and the horizon of the text, and between the texts and its contexts, adding layers of meaning and understanding that can be a never-ending process. As there is no text that can speak for itself, nor is there interpretation or analysis that is ever final.[137] The guideline for a hermeneutic method is, first and foremost, to read the text slowly and thoroughly, in this case, the empirical data which is the answer/narratives of the participants. This should be read many times over, yielding new information each time. Going to the texts with prejudices and then projects meanings into them. The knowledge obtained in the initial reading modifies one's prejudices, and the texts (in this case, the data) get a richer interpretation in each of the following readings. Another guideline in the hermeneutic method is applying everything one knows about the language and context of the text. The text is a web of references to concepts, ideas, practices, and other texts. A text also has a context. This context is not only one but several. This includes its social, cultural background, and surroundings. In order to analyze, one has to move back

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[134] See Appendices for the detailed questionnaire.
[135] Fossey, E., et. Al. (2002) Understanding and evaluating qualitative research, Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry 36 (6), Sage Journals https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1440-1614.2002.01100x p. 717-732
[136] Ibid., p. 275
[137] Ingvild, S.G. (2011) Hermeneutics. In Stausberg, M. & Engler, S. (eds) The Routledge Handbook of Reserch Methods in The Study of Religion Routledge Taylor & Francis Group London and New York p. 276

and forth between the text and its contexts. Another guideline that will be used in this thesis is that the text has textual meanings that are always in flux, meaning the texts are fluid or can be modified over time. Texts can be studied in relation to their original meaning and in relation to how it has been used by the participants over time.[138]

Utilizing a double hermeneutic analysis process to achieve a feminist standpoint narrative requires analysis from multiple vantage points. I will be using the hermeneutics of faith and contextualization with a critical feminist approach as Pitre N. et al. in their paper. The double hermeneutic approach of analysis of Giddens, as explained by Hege-Grung, is also utilized as participants have their analysis, the researcher, will also have her own personal analysis of the given questionnaire. The hermeneutics of faith approach analyzes the data as they were told by the participants. This leads to an exploration of the participant's situated experiences. Data will be examined to learn about participants' worlds and the significance they attribute to events, people, contextual forces, and conditions given their particular life circumstances. Analysis evolves dialectically in light of the phenomenon under study, the child bride. The hermeneutics of faith approach will only be used to analyze the participants narrative in the context and framework of this study which is the interaction of the sacred scripture and the social phenomenon of child bride in the lives of the Maguindanaon women.

The initial focus is on the view of women to the chosen sacred scriptures and to the social phenomenon as they told it. The relationship between their narrative/answer and their personal stories relating to this is then explored. The intent is to understand the participant's agency, identity, voice, and reflexivity. Are there constant or evolving patterns of reinterpretation, answers, behavior, choices, and decisions? The answers/narrative of other participants is further scrutinized in a dialectic fashion to identify similarities, differences in reinterpretation, experiences, social location, background, interactions, etc.

As more data are examined similarly, metaphors emerge and develop into one meaning making of different women. Each data reflects and reveals shared experiences and particular facets of a more significant experience in the context of social life and the world around them. The other process is through the hermeneutics of contextualization. The narratives/data are further analyzed and interpreted through scrutiny. The intention is to explore the power of intersecting

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[138] Ibid. pp. 276-278

symbolic, structural, and ideological contexts on the participant's interaction within their world and to examine the facilitating or constraining influences on their agency, voice, identity, and reflexivity. The data collected will reveal rules, routines, and interactions with others within this social concept of the phenomenon. The feminist standpoint perspective will highlight the power of social, structural, and ideological contexts within the collected data. These data will uncover the commanding voice of the social collective in determining privilege, boundaries of agency, sources of domination, marginalization, and oppression. The data will also reveal intersecting patriarchal influences and inequalities in the participants' agency, voice, and identity. The dialectic interactions of the participants crossing their religious, cultural, social, and traditional everyday life in the context of the phenomenon of the child bride and the sacred scripture chosen is the framework of the analysis in this thesis study.

This is a study of how marginalized lives reinterpret a sacred scripture with a complex social phenomenon attached to it. Analyzing and studying the answers and narratives of the participants will determine the interaction/relationship of religion to the social phenomenon. This will eventually allow the Maguindanaon women to be given a voice to such matters in order to make meaning of how their social and religious lives interact.

5.2 Analytic process

The analytic process involved in using the double hermeneutic is first is the establishment of empirical data through the hermeneutics of faith. The intent is to determine the nuances and variations within each of the given answers/narratives in the context of religion and the social phenomenon of a child bride. The first level of analysis requires reading the gathered data several times to identify threads of familiar narratives as it reflects a more prominent category or dimension of the personal reinterpretation of the chosen sacred scriptures. The first process is to analyze the first nine questions under Research Questions. The participants' conceptual understanding of their religiosity and their reinterpretation of the chosen scriptures and relating it to their personal experiences. This understanding, reinterpretation, and connecting to their personal experiences will reveal how their religiosity and knowledge of sacred scriptures that have child bride justifications, interact in their lives. As a Muslim, these women are aware of the said scripture justifications and comprehend the depth of their knowledge about this.

The next is the analysis of the remaining ten questions under the Research Question. It will reveal the participants' personal experiences with child brides as a religious and social practice among themselves as a Maguindanaon women living in the Philippines. These two kinds of analysis of hermeneutics of faith will highlight the varied or similar positions, voices, views, accounts of agency, limitations, and positions of the individual participants according to the context of the study.

The following analytical process is to use the hermeneutics of contextualization; the answers/narratives of all participants are analyzed together or collectively to highlight the shared positions, voices, views, accounts of agency, limitations, and positions in the context of the child bride phenomenon. This is examined to gain a more focused understanding of the forces and conditions facilitating or hindering the participants' reflexivity, agency, voice, and identity as a whole. This will examine the participants' interactions with their historical, ideological, and structural world, especially from a critical feminist perspective. This is to analyze, interpret and contextualize the participants' experiences and choices as a social agents in light of the particular situation. This aims to identify how the Maguindanaon Muslim women situate their agency within their immediate religious and social context. As their answers/narratives become contextualized within the participants' description within their family of social network environments, it is possible to highlight the tension between religious sacred scripture justification and their present circumstances.

A better understanding is gained of the limitations that often compel and shape participants' choices, decisions, and perceptions of themselves within their immediate contextual space. There will also be a focus on identifying the power structure through the participants' answers/narratives to determine if this influences or not the participant´s reflexivity, agency, voice, and identity. Are the official religious, social, cultural, and traditional standards (in which bride child is legal) a role that plays in guiding or constraining this agency? This leads to an exploration of the participants' answers/narratives interactions with the expert system that defines rules and traditions in their society. The conditions that enhanced or limited participant's agency as they interfaced with these are examined, their response and their reflexivity as knowledgeable social agents. An understanding is gained of the place of reflexivity as a significant means used by participants to activate their agency and to be able to analyze better how the participants contextualize decisions in conforming, resisting, contesting, or freeing themselves or their children from these circumstances or lack thereof.

5.3 Scope and Limitations

At this point, it is important to be reminded that Maguindanaon Muslim women were chosen as they have the elements of being in an oppressed, marginalized, and silenced stratum as they are a Filipino, a woman, and a Muslim. Their reinterpretation of sacred scripture with social and cultural controversy attached to it is an interesting way to acquire knowledge. It will help contribute new perspectives and insights to the phenomenon of a child bride. The Maguindanaon Muslims are permitted through PD1083. Standpoint and Feminism, particularly the Feminist standpoint, is chosen as a theoretical and methodological framework; although it is a big tenet, it is significant in this study as giving voice to women, especially the oppressed, marginalized, or often silenced women of society. These women were studied to understand their agency, voice, identity, and reflexivity to society's complex issues. Understanding how ordinary Muslim women discuss sacred scriptures that have child bride justification is a new way to understand how the relationship of ordinary women interacts with complex issues such as child bride practice.

The online interview questionnaire was designed for the Maguindanaon Muslim women to give their narrative and life story through answering the questionnaires and reinterpreting the chosen sacred scriptures.

The thesis is not a study about academic or scientific interpretation of the sacred texts that have been chosen, hence, there will be no academic Islamic exegetical and hermeneutical analysis of the chosen sacred scripture. The reinterpretation of these women will not be analyzed also against an established academic or religious understanding or interpretation of the said scriptures. It will not also be compared to the way the two Muslim women scholars reinterpreted Quran (Barlas & Wadud). The thesis focuses mainly on Maguindanaon Muslim women, their narratives and life stories when asked to participate in the reinterpretation of certain religious texts that have social controversy attached to it.

The brief presentation of prominent Islamic discourses and the two women scholars will stand only as a background to understand the participant's way of reinterpretation, where are they treading, but it will not be discussed extensively. This study is aimed to make meaning on how ordinary Muslim women reinterpret her sacred scripture that has connections with child bride

practices, individually and collectively. To contribute to the study of the role and interaction of sacred scripture and social phenomenon in the lives of these women.

The feminist standpoint provides a theoretical and methodological framework to explore the phenomenon of a child bride in the religious and personal context of Maguindanaon Muslim women. The frequently marginalized and silenced groups of the society were exposed in order to generate a new kind of understanding of how this groups' agency, voice, identity, and reflexivity work in a given society with a particular social phenomenon. The framework of fragmented and disintegrated individual answers/narratives of the participants are conceptualized, analyzed, and constructed to create a one meaning making. The rationale guiding the choices of theory, methodology, and method of analysis is to underscore invisible, silenced, and taken for granted groups of people that have their own historical, structural and ideological forces and conditions within them. Then on the process to identify sources of power and alienation, recognize expressions of resistance and emancipation, if there are any.

5.4 Ethical Considerations

The starting process in conducting academic research in Norway is to notify the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD) about the research project before going to the field and conducting an interview or gathering data. I filed a notification for approval on the NSD official website. I filled up the form with the project description, interview guide, questionnaire sample, and a standard consent letter template. After seven weeks, the assessment was not approved; changes are needed, especially in the questions presented and the consideration of participants in the project. I initially intended to interview at least one current child bride or a minor.

Since this thesis will be conducted in a distant country and I cannot conduct the interview myself, considering the social, cultural, and religious controversy attached to the project, NSD evaluated that the project could start misunderstanding or fight among family members. The process of the study will endanger the life of the participant/s, especially if the participant is a minor.

I immediately changed the participant selection to an all adult or above eighteen-year-old Muslim woman and altered minor questions in the interview guide.

One concern of NSD is the interview with the help of informants to conduct an interview on the researchers behalf. The most secure means of the interview is required. NSD demanded that the researcher use UiOs available means of conducting an interview through Zoom or webmail.

After another four weeks of waiting, NSD assessed that the thesis project could now start. I sent to the informants and the participants the Information Letter and Consent Form from NSD for them to have a concrete idea and knowledge of what the project is all about and for the participants to know their rights.

The participants and the informants were informed that this is a voluntary participation and that they will be anonymized all throughout the paper. They were also made aware that I will delete all identifiable information regarding them. The participants are all informed that they have the right to withdraw from the thesis project anytime during the whole process.

5.5 Challenges, Personal Position and Reason of theResearcher

The thesis project posed a great challenge to me. First, conducting an interview and gathering the data personally in the chosen location is not feasible because of the Covid pandemic. Second, I am not an Islam adherent; this means that I have less knowledge of Islamic tradition, social rules/roles, and the adherents' relationship with their sacred scripture. Third, the theories chosen has a vast availability of books and articles in Western settings. In terms of standpoint and feminism theories in the Philippines or Southeast Asia settings, it is limited much more when it is narrowed to Muslims in the area. The theories also, at first, have a juxtaposition with Muslim and Islam. Fourth, when gathering information about the Philippines, child bride, and the Maguindanaon Muslim women together as a topic, the sources of related materials and academic literatures are minimal.

Being located in the West, at first, child marriage is an unacceptable practice for me. As a person who does not judge based on one or two scenarios, I realized that maybe there are factors behind the practice of child bride and child marriage that I need to look for. As I read more about this topic from other parts of the world, the obvious reasons are poverty, lack of education and tradition & culture. Then I vividly remember in the documentary that all of them are Muslim. Since I am taking a master's in religion, it gave me an idea and a question that what if

Islamic religion, more specifically the Muslim's understanding of their sacred scriptures, has a role in the said practice. It is not my aim to show bad light to the religion of Islam but to better understand how Muslims, specifically Maguindanaon Muslim women view their sacred scripture with social controversy attached to it. What is the relationship (Muslim, sacred scripture & social phenomenon) to one another?

I am not an Islam adherent; I appropriately have an outsider position in the thesis study. I did not emphasize to the participants that I would be using Feminism as one of the theories. Feminism is associated with liberation or emancipatory characteristics; hence, to not influence the presentation of the informants to the participants of the thesis and the answers of the participants by the chosen theory. I also did not inform the informants and the participants of the other theories or method of analysis. I freely allowed the participants, in their own way express their reinterpretation of the sacred scripture and their views of child marriage.

As already mentioned, the Covid pandemic posed a great challenge for the research project. Conducting the study online birthed other challenges, particularly the internet connections in the Philippines, especially in the very rural location. They sometimes need to go to a specific location to have an internet signal. Covid also restricts the movements of my informants in reaching out personally to the prospected participants, as there are restrictions in travelling from one area to the next. The informants and the participants also needed to load up additional data for our communication. There was also a challenge in language as one participant needed a translator from English to Maguindanaon language, which I do not have any knowledge, luckily the informant who reached out to the participant is knowledgeable in Maguindanaon and English language. Two participants needed the questionnaires to be translated in the national language (Tagalog) as they cannot understand fully in straight English. I did the translation myself as I can fluently communicate in Tagalog and English. There was also a seven-hour time difference from where I am to the country of the study that added to the length of communication time.

5.6 Process Selection of Participants

The participants were reached out through my relationship circle. This relationship circle includes my family and friends who became informants who reached out and connected to the participants.

I purposely selected participants that live in different geographical area classifications of the Philippines. These are the regions, provinces, cities, municipalities, and barangays, but used the more common term of urban and rural areas. According to PSA, the key factor in identifying urban areas in the Philippines are population, presence of establishments, and facilities within a two-kilometer radius.[139] Urbans are places that are central/city or areas close to these. Those that do not fall under the urban classification are considered rural. The researcher added another term in the study which is a *very rural area*. The term *very rural area* means that the site is surrounded by agricultural, forestry, empty lands, underdeveloped and no establishment or facilities within the area, and remarkably that poverty or deprivation is obvious. The people living in this kind of area are usually being marginalized and oppressed. There are three categories of locations of the participants that I wanted to use: urban, rural and very rural areas. The reason to this is to find out if location is a factor over the participants answer/narratives.

I purposely selected different educational backgrounds of the participants. Their level of education is spread throughout, from someone who did not finish her elementary education to someone who is currently pursuing her master's degree. The reason behind this is to gather fair representation of Maguindanaon Muslim women and to determine if their education can influence them too.

I planned to interview at least one who had been a child bride, surprisingly, all women except one married below eighteen. At first, I also did not intend to have an all Maguindanaon participants. Interestingly the participants who were reached out, are from the same ethnolinguistic group proving that Maguindanaon Muslim is the majority group among the ethnolinguistic Muslim population, so I concentrated on them.

5.7 Process of Conducting the Interview

As I conducted the interview online, direct communication with the participants is of utmost importance. However, three informants were involved during the process. When, the term informant, is used; they were the ones who looked for and reached out personally to the participants on my behalf. I gave the informants description of the participants that I needed in

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[139] Philippine Statistic Authority (13 October 2003) Adoption of the Operational Definition of Urban Areas in the Philippines, retrieved from https://psa.gov.ph/article/adoption-operational-definition-urban-areas-philippines

the project. The informant's role was to represent me personally to the participants, helped in the participant selection, introduced me as a researcher and the project to the participants, handed the interview questionnaires and guided the participants to only a minimum degree. The informants and the participants were aware that the informants should not influence the participants' answers. Their primary role is to connect me and the research project to the participants. They are the middle person. Only two informants were involved from the beginning to the end of the thesis project, and the other one was only in the introduction phase. Two of the informants are also Muslims, some clarifications about Islam and Muslims I asked them too as they are more knowledgeable than I am and the other is someone who works as an English teacher to Muslim students. Two of the informants can communicate well in English, Tagalog and Maguindanaon. As this study is conducted through online a representative in person which is the role of the informants, I know it is very vital in order for the participants to join and trust me and the project.

In the beginning, especially in the introduction stage, I mainly used social media as it is easier to communicate with the informants and the participants, particularly the Messenger. Messenger is the application under Facebook where the users can message or call each other. When I received the approval from NSD, requiring a safe way through the university's available interview equipment. The requirement posed a significant challenge to the participants. The safe way requirement is through Zoom or the Webmail of the school. Some participants and even informants are not familiar with using email and Zoom. I persuaded them to do it through Zoom; however, all of them declined as they did not want to be bothered downloading the Zoom application. Most of them only use mobile phones and not laptops to communicate with me. The participants and the informants insist that their phones have low memory capacity. I and the participants compromised to communicate through the Webmail of UiO, although some not sensitive pieces of information were still exchanged through Messenger.

As a researcher only asking for a favor from the informants and participants to be part of the thesis project, losing them is not an alternative. I initially reached out to fifteen persons to be part of this research project, either being an informant or a participant. Some are hesitant, others back out, and still others uninterested and thus unresponsive. In the end, I chose three informants, and five women and one man to be participants. Two of the participants were communicated through the informants, and the four remaining were communicated by me directly.

Since all of the participants and the informants did not want to set up a Zoom application, initially to have an interview and observation method, I decided to prepare an extensive questionnaire. The questionnaires were sent to both the informants and the participants through UiO webmail. The participants replied through the webmail. When I have a follow-up question deemed not sensitive, Messenger was used as a form of communication either by call or message. Messenger is the easiest way for the informants and participants to communicate with me. The method became a semi-structured interview through a structured questionnaire. I am only asking the informants and the participants a huge favor as many of them want to face a more pressing issue of Covid than the issue of this thesis study.

One participant needed to have someone translate some questions and answers into the Maguindanaon language. I do not know and cannot comprehend this language; luckily, the informant did it for me and the participant. The informant is an expert in the Maguindanaon language as she is a Maguindanaon Muslim that has a college degree and can read, write and communicate in the three languages (Maguindanaon, Tagalog & English). For two others, I translated the questionnaires to the national language, in which I am knowledgeable, and the answer of the participants are a combination of English and Tagalog. These participants are not confident in answering in straight English. Only three of the participants gave their answers/narratives in English throughout. The combination of English and Tagalog and one through an interpreter (informant) were the languages used during the online interview and the questionnaire emailed to them.

Before handling the structured questionnaire through the school Webmail, the informants, the participants, and I communicated regularly beginning from the approval of NSD. For the introduction and what the project is all about. The participants also suggested some questions to make the interview/narrative more in-depth and ultimately align with the research project's goal.

I gave the participants ample time to think through their answers after the structured questionnaire was sent through email to the participants. It was more than a month that the participants gave back their complete answers/narratives to the researcher and longer to those who had informants involved. Nevertheless, before, during, and after giving the participants' answers/narratives back to the researcher, both the participants and me communicated

informally, especially those who embraced the research study. I found some fascinating outcomes through these informal exchanges.

I am aware that I have an extensive set of questionnaires as I wanted to make the gathering of data evenly distributed, to cover all the aim and objectives of the research study, and to not ask the informants to go back and forth to the participants location, if ever I needed more clarifications. Some participants were only briefly engaged to me, but others have also embraced my study.

5.8 Presentation of Participants

There were five women participants, with the sixth one a man (a student leader of the group in the state University whose students are majority Muslim) who was referred to me by an activist group against the practice of child marriage, specifically among Muslim girls in Mindanao they are called the Girl Defender Alliance. According to the participant, *this group is an alliance of men and women mobilizing students, teachers, women's rights organizations, policymakers, and others in demanding the law to protect girls from child and forced marriage*. The members of this alliance use the #girldefender on social media accounts to summon all concerned Filipinos to help end anything against girls and women, particularly child marriage. All of the women participants except one were married below eighteen. All of the participants acknowledged that they were Maguindanaon Sunni Muslims and lived at the time of the interview in Mindanao. The participants have knowledge about Sharia courts and law, and all of them are also aware that child marriage is a legal and acceptable practice among them.

Woman A: A married Maguindanaon woman in her early thirties born in Maslebang, Buluan, Maguindanao (a very rural area) but now resides in Poblacion, Buluan Maguindanao (a rural area, more modern than her birthplace)with her husband and four children. She did not finish her elementary education, and she married at age fifteen. She can be categorized as a child bride.

Woman B: A married Maguindanaon woman in her early thirties born in Datu Paglas, Maguindanao (a rural place) but now resides in Polomolok (a semi-urban area) with her husband and four children. She is currently a teacher taking her master's degree in educational management; she married at age twenty one.

Woman C: A nineteen years old married Maguindanaon woman in Talitay Buluan, Maguindanao (a very rural area), and now resides in Maslebang Buluan, Maguindanao (a very rural area) together with her husband, a principal of the school where she studied her high school. She finished her high school education but has stopped so that she could take care of their child. She married when she was seventeen years old. She was a child bride.

Woman D: A half Maguindanaon married woman in her late thirties who was born, raised, and currently residing in Gen. Santos City (a highly urban place). Her father is a Maguindanaon Muslim, but her mother is a Christian. She has one child, twenty two years of age. She and her husband have a college education. They were married when she was sixteen. She was a child bride.

Woman E: A Maguindanaon married woman in her early twenties. She was born and raised in Buluan, Maguindanao, but currently resides in Tupi, Bunao (a rural area). She and her husband did not finish their elementary education. She is a housewife with two children. She married her husband when she was fourteen years old. She was a child bride.

Participant F: Is part of a Girl Defender Alliance group, an activist group against child marriages. He is a Maguindanaon male student leader at the university, where he is an active spokesperson of the activist group. He is in his early twenties. He lives in a rural place but studies at a state University where ninety percent of the student population is Muslim. The state university is located in a semi-urban area.

5.9 The Structure of Analysis

The structure of analysis from the Research Questionnaire is organized into presentations individually, called the empirical data; first is the narratives/story of the participants from the first six questions of the Research Questionnaire. The narratives/story concerns the participants' general view of themselves, their adherence to the Islam religion, how they practice it daily, or how they categorize themselves as a religious person or not. Second is the presentation of the three chosen sacred scriptures and each participant's reinterpretation of those sacred scriptures. How do the participants view these scriptures that have associations with child marriage? Are the participants in agreement or not with how it was used to justify child marriages of those

who practice or promote this phenomenon? The third is the presentation of the participant's narrative of being a child bride and their stand, narrative/story on the issue. Part of the questionnaire also is if they have known someone who has been a child bride for the researcher to know the extent of this social practice within their relationship circle.

After the presentation of the participants' narratives/stories which is called the empirical data, analysis follows. The analysis is divided into two. First is the individual analysis of the participants answer/narrative to easily follow through by the reader. The second is the collective analysis. Each analysis is guided by the theoretical and methodological framework presented above most significantly by double hermeneutics of Giddins by Hege-Grung and by Pitre, et al. Lastly, the most significant findings will be presented.

VI.   DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

6.1 Empirical Data

Woman A: She considered herself a highly religious person as she prays regularly and goes to the Mosque every Friday. However, she was very hesitant to give reinterpretation of the Quran as she said "*I cannot read the Quran, but I know some Hadith*". With the first and second sacred scripture found in Quran 65:1-4 and Al Nesa 4:6, she asked her friend (the informant), who is more knowledgeable in Islamic scriptures, to read it for her in her language. Then she agreed that "*every woman who already had menstrual cycle even at a young age can now marry especially when she is an orphan it will help her continue to live a more decent life.*" With the Hadith, she said that "*when a man is in love with a woman so long as she already has her menstruation and that woman reciprocates the feelings even though she is still under eighteen years of age is better to marry than both will engage in premarital sex which is more sinful in Islam*".

She also knew someone who married under eighteen years of age, revealed that it is her younger sister and she narrated that "*we should be married young as both (her and sister) of us have been an orphan at a young age, It helped both of us survive as it is very difficult without our parents with us.*" Asked if she will allow her child/ren to marry young which is below eighteen,

she said in closing that "*it does not bother me because it is accepted and practiced among us* (maybe to Muslims) *anyways."*

Woman B: She consideered herself a practicing Muslim as she prays five times a day prayer, especially when she is at home. She consideeds Quran and Hadith as her guidance and source of knowledge and wisdom. When the sacred scriptures were asked to her, she was very hesitant to give her reinterpretation of it. She asked for more time to read and study, as she said that "*there is no man* (or person) *who is qualified to use sacred scriptures to justify doing something unacceptable."* For her Quran will always be "*my source of knowledge and wisdom thus should not be used to justify something like this practice."*

She discovered from this project that "*she doesn't know how to reinterpret sacred scripture,"* even though she is highly educated. When asked about the Hadith, she was surprised as it was the first time she had heard about this, she admitted that she was not aware that this existed. She showed vehement opposition to the practice of bride-child and child marriages. She was very concerned with the person's readiness and capabilities for marriage life, especially nowadays. She sadly declared that she knew many women who marry below eighteen years of age but said that "*they are not only Muslims that I know of; even Christians are doing it."*

Her narrative ended with the question whether child bride practice bothers her. She confessed that "*it does not bother me at all because our government have set up good educational system for us Muslims, example of these are the scholarships and state universities but it was their* (referring to those who are in child marriage situation) *choice to be in that kind of life".*

Woman C: She considered herself a religious person as she prays five times a day and goes to Mosque religiously. However, she admitted that "*I asked the help of my husband to read for me the questionnaires"* as she confessed that she does not know how to read properly much more to reinterpret the Quran.

In the first sacred scripture in Quran 65:1-4, She said that "*3-4 months is the waiting period of all women who will marry or remarry* (in terms of being a widow) *to make sure that she is capable of being a mother and to know if she is pregnant or not* (widow) *".* She agreed that "*as long as a woman/girl is after her 3-month menstrual cycle as young as twelve years old can marry if there is someone who offered marriage* (to her)*".* She especially mentioned, "*if*

she is an orphan, she can marry the one that will take her as a wife as soon as after her 3-month menstrual cycle". She narrated that the marriage of an orphan (even young ones) is a better option than for the guardian to use the orphan's inheritance in other means, it is more unacceptable. She was most likely referring to Al Nesa 4:6.

She was very confident that she was aware of the particular Hadith and that for her, "*it was true, and it happened between Muhammad and Aisha*," but insisted that Aisha already had her menstrual period. "*Muhammad married Aisha even if she was that young; it is better than he only had sexual relations with her outside marriage.*" She also narrated that she knew many who was child bride, she confessed that her sister married at fifteen years old. She saw the Quran, Hadith, love, and poverty as why many people like her engaged in child marriage. She admitted that being a child bride is acceptable as "*it is better to be married young than to engage in sexual activities outside the blessing of marriag*e."

Woman D: She considered herself a Muslim, although she was a product of a mixed religion marriage as she goes to the Mosque every Friday. She considered Quran as the living reality of her life. Quran 65:4 for her meant that "*it is commanded that Muslim women have to observe a waiting period before they can remarry. This waiting period (3months) must be observed after being divorced. That same verse indicates that it is permissible for a young girl who has not yet started her period to wait three months before marriage. Girls can marry as young as twelve years old as it is permitted in the Quran*".

The Al Nesa 4:6, she agreed that "*it pertains to orphans that the guardian should be the one to testify its marriageable age*". Although the Quran seems that it permits to marry a young girl; she was not in agreement to the Quran as "*Quran should not be used as an excuse for doing such an act*". With regards to the Hadith, her take was that "t*he father should be the one to marry off his daughters even without consulting her*". However, she was in disagreement with the reinterpretation and the practice as below eighteen-year-old girls "*are too young to perform marital obligations and that it has long lasting devastating effect to the child*". She narrated that she knew someone just like her that have been a child bride. This practice "*bothers me as young girls are exposed to gender violence including domestic and sexual abuse*".

Woman E: She considered herself a "*non-practicing Muslim as I do not pray nor go to the Mosque regularly.*" She, however, claimed that she reads the "*Quran and has knowledge of*

some Hadiths." She confessed that she was hesitant at first and that she was not aware that what is written is used in child marriage in both verses in the Quran. Still, when she read both the verses, she was convinced that "*it is allowed to marry as long as they (girls) already have their menstruation.*" She claimed to have "*heard about the Hadith regarding Aisha being married to the Prophet*" she further sadly said as if she relates with Aisha, "s*ix-year-old is too young and is unacceptable for marriage.*"

When she came across the question if she is in agreement that women below eighteen years old can marry, she shared her narrative that "*like me who was married at a young age of fourteen it is difficult as I was not mature in my mind* (maybe she meant that she does not have proper knowledge of what she is going through), *especially being a parent as a child myself, life was very hard for me*", she openly admitted. She shared the reason she married young was "*because of my husband and the brother of my husband*" but was very reluctant to disclose any further information about it (if it was an arranged marriage or with other reason). When the question came if she knew someone who married young, she instantly shared that "*I knew many family members. The youngest is a thirteen-year-old cousin*". With the follow-up question of how that cousin is now, she answered: "*she already has grandchildren and is still doing good.*"

 For her, the number one reason people marry at a young age is love. "*People get in love easily.*" When asked if it is acceptable for her to marry as young as twelve-year-old as long as one already has menstruation, she strongly said that "*as much as possible one should be mature enough because being married with child/children is not easy. One should be responsible enough to handle family life and challenges that come with it*", she however did not indicated the exact age that she considers one to be in a mature or in a responsible age.

Participant F: Is a representative of a group called Girl Defender Alliance. This group was established in 2019 to "*summon all the women's rights defenders and gender justice champions that aim to eradicate violence against women and girls particularly on the issue of child, early and forced marriages.* " They are composed of youth champions, influencers, and legislators. Its mission and vision are "*to deduce the case of violence against women and girls and to create safe spaces for these women and girls.*"

I reached out to a Muslim woman, but she referred me to the group's spokesperson, who is a man. I made use of what I had. I asked him if he could reinterpret the sacred scriptures. First,

he agreed, but he declined when he read the sacred scriptures that was given to him. Although they are almost Muslim in the group (he is a Muslim male student in his early twenties, active in groups like this), he declined to incorporate specific religious texts in their activism.

When I asked him if religion plays a role in child bride practices, he immediately said "*yes.*" He said that "*it is sunnah* (which meant for him the early ways of life of earlier people like that of Muhammad) *to marry at an early age,*" but he emphasized that "*there's a lot of misinterpretation on that.*" He did not expound on what he meant by misinterpretation. "*This is why the alliance is raising an awareness and educating especially the Muslim girls and women on this issue.*" He claimed that "*many women, especially university students, are part of our group.*"

6.2 Analysis

The operative tools in this thesis are guided by the theoretical, methodological framework of Standpoint and Feminism particularly the Feminist standpoint. The double hermeneutics of Giddens as used by Hege-Grung and the double hermeneutics of Pitre et al. in their book and paper was used heavily as a method of analysis.

The analytical operations are based on the premises of the participants ability to make meaning of a given sacred scripture and a social reality through their narratives/story for the given Questionnaires. The double hermeneutics of Giddins as explained by Hege-Grung *the researcher both interprets according to his own pre-knowledge and the researcher field and reinterprets the interpretation already existing in the field that is the object of research. The researcher thus interprets what is already interpreted as a meaningful universe.*[140]And the double hermeneutics as explained by Pitre N. et al. that participants' narratives were examined to recognize the interactions with sources of power at the intersection of personal stories, history, relationships, social structures, and unrealistic expectations. This focuses on the

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[140] [140]Pitre, N. Y., et. Al. (2013) Critical Feminist Narrative Inquiry Advancing Knowledge Through Double-Hermeneutic Narrative Analysis, Advances in Nursing Science Vo. 36, No. 2, Wolters Kluwer Health, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, pp. 118-132

underlying and often overlooked personal and societal forces and conditions that influence the participants' agency, voice, and reflexivity through their narratives.[141]

6.2.1 Individual Analysis

Upon collecting the answers/narratives of the participants, the first rule of hermeneutics is to read the texts back and forth several times. I will be presenting below my analysis using the method of hermeneutics, the goal is to achieve an understanding of the meanings of the answer/narrative of the participants. I read as parts and as a whole, considering also the structure and the meaning of the texts and the sentences. I also considered the context of the texts and the participants which added layers of meaning and understanding. I will admit that I will be bringing with me my preconceived meaning and understanding of some texts/words the participants used which is explained by Hege-Grung of the double hermeneutics of Giddins, that the researcher has her own sets of interpretation as well as the participants. I will be presenting below on behalf of the participants answer/narrative, this is presented individually. I also highlighted words that will identify the participants commonalities or contradiction and will emphasize their story/narrative in the context of the study.

Woman A: Her narrative revealed that **she was a child bride** as she married when she was fifteen. She is currently living in a **rural area** together with her husband, they have four children. She **needs an interpreter** to her native Maguindanaon language as she **did not finish her elementary education**. Her narratives also revealed that she and her sister married below eighteen as both of them became **an orphan at an early age**. From her narrative she categorized a highly religious person, are those who prays regularly and goes to the Mosque every Friday.

Her **hesitancy in reinterpreting** the Quran is based on her **inability to read**, but she became willing when someone helped her in her reinterpretation. Her agreement to all three sacred scriptures can be analyzed as it was based on her **own personal experience and her moral standard**. She was **an orphan** and better to avoid sexual promiscuity, but she insisted that girls only be given for marriage as long as she already has her menstrual cycle. My analysis of her

[141]Hege Grung, A. (2015) Gender Justice in Muslim-Christian Readings *Christian and Muslim Women in Norway Making Meaning of Texts from the Bible, the Koran and the Hadith*, Brill Rodopi, Leiden & Boston p. 18

narrative was that marriage for girls should be **based on her menstrual cycle** which was inline with the Sharia in the Philippines. She did not indicate a specific age for marriage but only based it with menstrual cycle. It was revealed that **she and her sister married before eighteen years of age** and to pass this practice to her own children does not bother her. This can be analyzed as maybe **'common'** with her within family as she and her sister married below eighteen years old, she perceived it as **not a problem or issue at all**.

Woman B: Her narratives revealed that she was **not a child bride** as she married when she was twenty one, she has four children and they are living in a **semi urban area** as her town borders a big city. She and husband both **graduated college education**. Her narratives also revealed a definition of a practicing Muslim is praying five times a day. Her reinterpretation of Quran and Hadith is **based on her relationship with the scriptures** as she considered it a guidance and source of wisdom.

Just like woman A participant, she was **hesitant to reinterpret** the chosen scripture, as for her she does not use the scriptures to interpret or justify anything. I find her narrative a bit contradicting as she insistsed that Quran and Hadith is the source of guidance and wisdom but does not want to see these scriptures as a guiding principle or a source of wisdom used by others on issues such as child marriage. She was a highly educated woman, as of the moment **taking master's degree** she geared her narratives/stories more to her opposition of the practice of child marriage. She had many things to share in topics of the social practice than the sacred scripture. Her narrative also revealed that she **knew persons who have been married below eighteen** years of age and immediately disclosed that it was not only exclusive among Muslims like her. It seems that she was **strongly opposed to the practice**, but at the same time she was **not bothered at all**, stating that for her the Philippine government already have helped them (Muslims) with scholarship and education. Many Muslims does not want to avail it and chose instead to marry young. My analysis of her narrative is it was true to her own experience she did not marry below eighteen even though she was born in a rural area with limited possibility for education she **defied the odds** as she is currently pursuing higher education.

Woman C: She was the youngest participant in the group, she was also a **child bride** as she married when she was seventeen. She is living in a **very rural area** together with her husband and one child. Her narratives disclosed that she and her husband had a significant age gap as

he is already a principal of a high school. She currently **stops going to school** to take care of her child, but **she finished her high school** education.

Her narratives/stories revealed a definition of highly religious person for her is the same with Woman A praying five times a day and goes to the Mosque regularly. Her narratives have been **influenced by her husband** as she asked help from him as this can be understood as she did not finish her high school education. She was not confident or cannot read the questionnaires herself even when it was translated to Tagalog. Her narratives/stories are in **agreement to the interpretation** of scripture that **girls can marry after her first three menstrual cycle** as young as twelve years. She claimed to have knowledge of the Hadith that reinforces her belief that **this is acceptable**. The husbands view plays a significant role in her reinterpretation of the sacred scripture. Her strong acceptance of the interpretation that these scriptures say about marrying as early as twelve reveals this analysis, she **does not hesitate in reinterpreting** the sacred scriptures. Her morality also played a role in her acceptance of child marriage as engaging in sexual activity outside of the blessing of marriage was unacceptable for her. Her narrative also revealed that **she and her sister married below eighteen years old.**

Woman D: She was a very interesting individual as she is a child of a mixed religion but she **identified herself more as a Muslim** than as a Christian. She claimed herself a Muslim as she goes to the Mosque regularly. She and her husband lives in a big city, a **highly urban area** together with their child. She was also a **child bride**, married at sixteen. Both of them managed to finish their studies as they are both a **college graduate**.

Her narrative revealed that she was a highly educated person being a college graduate thus reinterpreting sacred scripture was **not met with any hesitancy**. She immediately **agreed to the interpretation of Quran and Hadith** that marriage as young as twelve was permitted according to her reading. Her narratives, however, disclosed that she was **not in agreement to the said permission**. Her narratives divulged that she considered **marital obligation has lasting effect to the child** undergoing early marriage. She considered **below eighteen-year-old still a child** the same with the UN standard that eighteen-year-old is regarded adult and below is a minor or still a child.

Woman E: She was the youngest **child bride** participant in this group. She married when she was fourteen. She is currently residing in a **rural area** with her two children and husband. The

couple **did not finish their elementary education**. Her narratives/stories tell that she was the only one who claimed non practicing Muslim but have extensive knowledge of the Quran and the Hadith compared to the others, as she claimed that she reads them. Just like the other participants she was **hesitant in reinterpreting** the chosen sacred scripture.

After giving her time, her narrative/story **agreed with the interpretation of the sacred scripture** that allowed marrying young as long as one already has menstrual cycle. Her narrative opened up her heart in **opposition to the practice** as she related her answers to her own experience. She married young recalling the difficulty of her life. She strongly insisted that **maturity** should be one basis of marriage. My analysis of her handling married life and having child/children is that it needs maturity as she related her arguments to her own experience. Her narrative also revealed that child marriage is an **ordinary practice among her family**. According to her, love is the biggest factor why couple marry but given a choice, according to her girls should not marry young as much as possible.

Participant E: He is the only male participant. He **confirmed that religion plays a role** in the social practice of child marriage. Even though he is a male and still a student he **condemns the practice** the very reason he is part of the group against it, to help raise awareness and education regarding the child marriage practice.

6.2.2 Collective Analysis

Upon careful analysis of the answers given by the participants, the hermeneutics of faith and the hermeneutics of contextualization as used by Pitre, N. et al was used, it reflected and revealed shared experiences and particular facets of a more significant experience of the participants. The data collected revealed rules, routines and interactions with others within the religious and social context of the phenomenon. I will highlight the texts that are similar and different in the narratives of the participants. I found commonalities and also differences on their perspective and their narratives of the said scripture which supposedly allow the marriage of young girls as early as the age of twelve and about them being a Muslim and the child marriage on the other hand. The word **religiosity** for the participants have different expression, meaning or practice. Most of them but one participant stated their adherence to the Islamic faith and follows its practices like going to the mosque to pray and also being subservient to Islamic teachings. My analysis of this is that an identity of being a Muslim will only be acknowledged

by the individual, their definition, expression and practice of being one specially about religiosity varies among them. Majority of these participants were **hesitant** to reinterpret the chosen sacred scripture. Only one participant was aware of all of the chosen Quranic texts. The participants have an idea on one, but not both, they have heard or read about the existence of these scriptures. Almost all of them have heard or have knowledge of the Hadith about the marriage of Muhammad to Aisha. All of them **did no contradict** or raised any doubt about the Hadith that Muhammad married Aisha when she was still considered a child, being six-year-old and consummated when she was nine years old. The reinterpretation of most participants of the chosen sacred scriptures were made **through representations** on how these scriptures should be construed, mostly they drew and based on their personal experiences.

It is important to note also that the **participants were in agreement** that it is allowed in Islam to practice child marriage, one analysis is because it is approved by their community which is largely having Muslim population as part of their religious, social and cultural practice and largely because it is **allowed through the provision of PD 1083**. The participants agreed on the concept of child marriage that it is hinted in the three chosen sacred scriptures, they were **apprehensive and worried on the readiness of a person** as early as twelve years of age to marry, one reason I see is that the biological set-up and maturity of the person of this age is considered by them a child.

It is noteworthy to mention that the participants who marry below eighteen years old does not considered themselves or they are **not aware that they have been a child bride** (four out of five women participants married below eighteen years old). They are apprehensive in the marriage of girls twelve to fourteen-year-old, but they did not consider themselves as a child bride too (those four participants who got married below eighteen). Maybe for them, fifteen years old and above is **considered a marriageable age** but not below.

Another noteworthy observation is that they **knew of someone**, its either family members or in their community who happens to marry below eighteen years old. The extent of people they knew who married below eighteen **confirms that this practice is typical** among them. I have not hinted a surprise from the participants that this is existing which is dissimilar to my reaction when I have known and seen about this social practice. The lack of surprise among the participants about early marriages is another confirmation that these kinds of marriage is common among them.

I also found during the interview that the way the participants answer the questionnaire it is drawn out from their personal experiences and not on their academic or intellectual reasoning. This confirming the research study as a semi-narrative or life story of the participants. Their **academic education plays a small factor** in how they reinterpret the sacred scriptures, but it **plays a bigger role in their stance or view of the social practice** of child marriage as the two-college graduate has a lot to say against child bride based on their pre knowledge, comprehension and reasoning.

The current area of **location or place of residence** of the participants also **plays a factor** as those living in the very rural places tends to label themselves easily as "*religious or regularly doing religious activity like praying, going to the Mosque and reading the Quran and Hadith*" but needs help in understanding and reinterpreting the chosen sacred scriptures but they are willing to somehow reinterpret it according to how they have understood in terms of their experiences unlike those living in the urban areas they are hesitant to label themselves as to how they practice their adherence to Islam as a religion but the same way they are apprehensive in reinterpreting the sacred scripture but they can easily voice out their views, ideas and opinion on the social phenomenon of child bride. They have a lot to say in terms of the social phenomenon. These participants in the urban areas show strong opposition to the social phenomenon, and they are not cautious in stating it. Surprisingly most of them are not affected or they are not bothered about this child bride practice. Some even said that it is fine with them that their children will undergo such marriages.

6.3 Summary of Significant Findings

Upon reading and analyzing the participants' answers/narratives in the context under study, hereunder are my significant findings:

a. There is hesitation to really reinterpret the sacred scriptures written on Quran 65:1-4 and Al Nesa 4:6. One participant even depended her reinterpretation on her husband. These significant finding of hesitation can also relate to seclusion. Smith (as cited by Sechzer, 2004, p.269) described it as a process that began with Muhammad's relegation of his wives to space apart from regular social interaction with men. It stated among others that;

"These factors led to a rapid secession of women's participation from society that resulted in a male-dominated society and leadership, and men held influential positions. Muslim women were just confined at home to take care of the affairs of the home, especially for rearing and raising of children. Their roles are confined to being a good wife and mother. They were not even allowed to go to school"

In a paper published by Gunew, it stated that for so many centuries' women were excluded from these organized institutions like education, religion, law and politics, thus authorized knowledge has historically masculinized knowledge.

This is especially true in the social reality of the Maguindanaon women, as most of them are hesitant to give reinterpretation or view of Islamic sacred scripture. These women simply accept the institutionalized knowledge that have been dictated upon them. However, when it is a husband that have helped as in the case of one participant there were no hesitation involve in the husband's part. He immediately reinterpreted it. These women, given some time are willing to reinterpret through their personal experiences.

b. For the participants, being an Islam adherent means to be subservient to their religion, culture and social practice. Marrying at an early age are common in their community.

It can be attributed in my research that Sharia governs the Muslims in the Philippines. Muslims believe that it is the only way by which they can be assured of a place in heaven. Sharia is intended to strengthen their faith by subjecting themselves to Islamic laws and sanctions that help them ensure being a Muslim. Further, it also explains that religious and cultural practices are related as what a recent study made by Abdulla which she states that;

> *"Culture and religion are not so distinct, with cultural practices becoming "religionized" and religious ideas becoming part of the culture. Recognizing this relationship can open up other more positive avenues for the promotion of human rights and freedom of religious belief".* [142]

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[142] Abdulla, M.R. (2018) Culture, Religion and Freedom of Religion or Belief, The Review of Faith & International Affairs, Taylor & Francis Journals, Vol 16 (4) p. 102-115

With the above cited arguments, it validates the obedience of Islam adherents to their culture and religion.

The women will never raise a question, even though most of them are vocal being personally against the said practice but they will never do anything radical to their community, family or even to their personal lives to change the said practice. They will rather obey and follow.

c. Most of the participants agreed that a child bride is not ready biologically and emotionally to have sexual intercourse and be a mother especially those below fourteen years of age.

This strongly correlates to the study made by the UNICEF, wherein, it stated among others that a child bride is among a list of harmful practices as it has impacts on the psychological well-being and personal development of the girls, since they are not ready for the responsibilities and roles of being a wife, a sexual partner and a mother.

d.   Most of the participants does not state what the exact age a person or a woman should marry, they are in correlation with the sacred scriptures, the marrying age is not explicitly specified. The scholars interpreted it as having menstruation for women to be considered mature. The participants opposed to child bride hinted maturity as the basis for marriage but not elaborated if they are the same as how the scholars have interpreted this word.

e. One participant is a part of an activist group which promotes greater role and empowerment of women, their aim is to promote equality and against discrimination of women. Their group composed mostly of women Islam believer and activist is rare, given the conservative nature of the Muslim community in Mindanao.

This can be explained in one of my literatures concerning feminism especially the so-called "third-wave feminism" which argues that a natural implication of the rejection of traditional ideas about gender is the realization of the diversity of feminine types among women of different races, classes, nationalities, and sexual orientations. It

promotes a vision of liberation in a wide-ranging plurality rather than a single idea of a liberated woman.

6.4 Conclusions

a. Islam is one of the many religions whose leaders must be a male in the person of imams. This fact could be attributed to the hesitance of the participants to directly answer or reinterpret Quran 65:1-4 and Al Nesa 4:6, their access and knowledge to these texts are limited as evidenced by Islamic preachers and leaders as exclusively male and are recognized the head of the family too. Living in a conservative and highly religious community in Mindanao, Philippines may contribute to their hesitance as female adherents of Islam are still directed to become docile to their husbands or fathers. This long-standing practice has only contributed to the limitations of Islam women as far as learning and even reading the scripture is concerned.

The same can be concluded with the second finding where the participants depend their interpretation and understanding of these verses on their husband or male companion. The limited role of women in the religion of Islam or any religion for that matter has only given women lesser knowledge on the scriptures as compared to their leaders who not only interpret but also impose upon them the meaning of these scriptures. It is noteworthy that although they consider themselves religious and practicing Islam but not have the full understanding of the sacred scriptures.

b. The existing practice among the Maguindanaon Muslim community in Mindanao of marrying before the age of eighteen has become typical/common that it reinforces overtime their traditional practice of child marriage. Most of the participants have either family members or someone they know that were married at a young age. The exact marrying age vary but all of them were married before eighteen. Although the participants approve or in agreement to the said practice, they are very cautious of these brides to have sexual intercourse particularly at the age of twelve to fourteen.

c. Although the participants have some knowledge and opinion on the social phenomenon of child bride or marriage. The conservative and patriarchal nature of the Magauindanaon community in Mindanao has somehow prevented them to openly express their ideas on the issue of child marriage. As mentioned Maguindanao society is stratified and family oriented. They are still mostly headed by a datu which is a male. Although not politically powerful, the datu and even the imams still have significant status/power in everyday life. As they still preside over the community's affairs, religious celebrations and other events.

d. The Maguinadanaon Muslim women's hesitancy in reinterpreting their sacred scripture can be attributed that they are treading in a cumulative or the traditionalist way of Islamic interpretative discourses as the traditionalists believe that the injunctions laid down in the Quran and in the different schools of Islamic jurisdiction should be followed unquestioningly and are not subject to any new interpretation.

e. The role of religion to a social phenomenon cannot directly be identified by simply allowing ordinary women to reinterpret their sacred scriptures. It however reveals that even though many of them identify themselves as a religious person, they are not in depth in studying and learning their own scripture. They simply rely on a popular interpretation, particularly made by men. This can be identified as one power structure that govern the lives of these women in this context.

f. The institutionalized Code allowing child marriage, is not necessarily because of the Islamic sacred scriptures but how the male authorities in the past have permitted and included it. This is how they view women and marriage. This is the power structure that was exposed through this study. It was the institutionalized provision of PD1083 that mostly endorsed the practice as practitioners are guarded by this Code.

6.5 Child Marriage Now in the Philippines

At the start of writing this thesis study child marriage is acceptable and legal among Muslim and indigenous people of the Philippines the Senate and House of Representatives is in the

process of approval of two Bills that bans and declares child marriages void from the start. By 10, December 2021, Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte has signed and approved Republic Act No. 11596 or the Prohibition of Child Marriage and Imposing Penalties for Violations. It was publicly released on 6, January 2022. This new law means that any marriage entered into where one or both parties are children (persons below eighteen years old) which is solemnized in civil, church, traditional, cultural or customary manner is now considered a public offence and illegal. This new law also contains strong penalties for violations.

The penalties include, "*a person who causes, fixes, facilitates or arranges a child marriage will be subject to fines and/or prison time, with a penalty of up to twelve years in prison if the perpetrator is a parent, step-parent or guardian of the minor*". Another strong penalty is that "*those who violate the law by performing or officiating the formal rites of a child marriage will also receive fines and/or prison time, and those in positions of public office will be disqualified from office.*"[143] The measure also mandates the government to implement enabling policies and programs towards an environment where child marriage shall not thrive. This law is consistent with international conventions on the rights of women and children.

The new law also signifies that the state recognizes the "*need to abolish all traditional and cultural practices and structures that perpetuate discrimination, abuse and exploitation of children such as the practice of child marriage*" and that "*it also recognizes the role of women in nation-building and shall therefore protect and promote their empowerment. This entails the abolition of the unequal structures and practices that perpetuate discrimination and inequality.*" The law said.[144]

Unsurprisingly many male Muslim leaders repeal the recently signed law insisting that child marriage is ingrained in their tradition, culture, religion and is tough to amend. According to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao labor and employment minister Romeo Sema "*We are asking the president to reconsider it and veto the law.*"[145] Another Muslim leader in Aguak town in Maguindanao Anwar Emblawa emphasized that a girl is

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[143] Center for Reproductive Rights (13 January 2022) Victory for Children´s Rights: Ending Child Marriage in the Philippines retrieved from https://www.scmp.com/yp/discover/news/global/article/3162813/philippines-bans-child-marriage-duterte-says-practice-child

[144] Maitem, J. (2022) Philippine Muslim leaders urge to repeal of New Law Criminalizing Child Marriage, Benar News, Cotabato City, Philippines https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/philippine/child-marriage-01072022135850.html

[145] Ibid.

considered a woman once she reaches the age of puberty and that in "*Islam there is no fixed age to get married. As long as a girl reaches the age of puberty, they are allowed to get married.*"[146] Another Muslim leader Ziaur-Rahman Adiong a deputy speaker of the regional parliament in the Muslim self-ruled area had tried to convince Duterte to veto the laws penal provisions. He said, "*while we understand that child marriage is not popular among various sectors in the country, we also need to consider the varying definitions of 'puberty' relative to what the law says and what the Islamic perspective is.*"[147]

Many Muslims are liberal and open minded, but Zaid claimed that when it comes to the subject of women, men take refuge in an outdated ideology.[148]

Some portions of the legislation have been suspended for one more year to allow for a transition period for Muslims and indigenous communities in which these marriages are relatively typical.[149]

As revealed, there are many prominent male Muslim leaders who rescind this new law that affects them. Me as a Filipino knows that law enactment is slow and difficult if it is met with opposition specially among who holds power and important position in society and religion. The Filipino Muslims will always hold on to their beliefs, practices, and traditions if covered by people among who holds power and influence over them.

VII. Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered by me as the researcher:

- There should be awareness and education among Magauindanaon Muslim women especially on these specific sacred scriptures that supposedly allow marrying at an

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[146] Ibid.

[147] Agence France-Presse, (10 Jan 2022) Philippines bans child marriage; Duterte says practice is child abuse, retrieved from https://www.scmp.com/yp/discover/news/global/article/3162813/philippines-bans-child-marriage-duterte-says-practice-child

[148] Zaid, N., (2006) The Nexus of Theory and Practice in Kamrava, M., (ed.) The New Voices of Islam *Reforming Politics and Modernity – A Reader,* p.166

[149] Agence France-Presse, (10 Jan 2022) Philippines bans child marriage; Duterte says practice is child abuse, retrieved from https://www.scmp.com/yp/discover/news/global/article/3162813/philippines-bans-child-marriage-duterte-says-practice-child

early age. There should be a concerted effort by the family, community and religious leaders to give substantial knowledge on these scriptures but also for the Quran as a whole. In this way, it would allow for the greater participation of women in the Islam religion. This should also be done on the basis of clamor among women to have a significant voice in this issue. Just like many scholar Muslim women in other parts of the world that help elevates and recovers the status of women through the study of Quran and other sacred scripture. By pointing out that the sacred scripture does not promote oppression and marginalization in any form.

- Religious beliefs can never really be questioned, however, raising the level of awareness through counselling and education on the effects of child marriage. This could be discussed extensively among the parents, and to the datus, imams and all other community and religious leaders. This could prove helpful to the future generation.

- For the datus, imams and Muslim leaders that they should continue to inculcate the importance of family, culture and religion among their believers and promote openness and understanding of these not only among male adherents. That they should be willing to change and be flexible to adapt to the current situation, particularly in helping to improve the lives of every Filipino Muslim including those of Muslim women and children.

- The study plans and programs of the government through universities and state schools should be more visible, affordable and attractive to the Muslim parents and their children for them to be lured to send their children and the children themselves pursue their education. They should not only look for marriage as an alternative answer to the economic challenges that they are facing. Inculcate the importance of uplifting oneself through education. As one participant have proven that the governments have already set up good programs especially for them (Muslims) so they could finish their education.

- For the Girl Defender Alliance group and other activist groups that even though there is already a law penalizing those who participate in the said practice, they should continue in their efforts to raise awareness and educate women and girls of

their rights in the law. They should not stop in their activism especially that there is still resistance among Muslim male leaders.

- That the government will be firm in implementing the law and penalize those who will participate and conduct such illegal practice. That the government's policies and programs will be directed indeed towards an environment where child marriage shall not thrive

- That the women participants themselves who are mothers just like Leila de Lima said in the opening statement of this thesis, should raise future daughters who are educated, that enjoys playing, learning and enjoying life itself. That they should help protect and uphold their daughters' rights. These mothers should raise daughters into strong women in whose consent will be respected and obtained first before it will be demanded from them and that these daughters will pursue their own destinies according to their rights and not the wishes of their parents and guardians.

- Replicate further studies among other Islam adherents especially in other countries in Asia and in any other continents where there are sizable Muslim population. Giving voice to oppressed groups (like Muslim, women, children or those in third world countries) can bring understanding on how they view their world and their beliefs at the same time.

- Replicate further studies on other issues such as inheritance, polygamy or 'beating of wife' among Muslim women in the third world nations to give them voice, agency and reflexivity in view of their sacred scripture with these other social issues.

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APENDIX 1: Questionnaire

I.   Personal Questions

1. What is your name?
2. When is your date birth date? (only the year)
3. Where is your place of residence? (Not specific address)
4. Where were you born?
5. What is your civil status?
6. If married, how old were you when you married?
7. Can you tell me about how you met your husband, and how you married?

8. Can you tell me whether, and how, your husband gave/pay dowry to your parents/guardian? 92
9. After your wedding where did you live (residence)?
10. How many children do you have? Their ages?
11. What is the work/source of income of your husband?
12. What is your work/source of income?
13. What is the educational background of your husband?
14. What is your educational background?

II.   Research Questions

1. Can you tell me about your everyday religious practice? (like praying 5x a day or going to the Mosque, or not practicing)

2. What kind of role do the Quran or the Hadith play in your life?

3. What is your understanding of Quran 65:4? ("*The waiting period of those of your women who have lost all expectation of menstruation shall be three months, in case you entertain any doubt; &* <u>*the same shall apply to those who have not yet menstruated.*</u> *As for pregnant women; their waiting period shall be until the delivery of their burden. Allah will create ease for him who fears Allah.*")

4. For you does this Quran verse pertaining (underlined) to girl's marriage or consummation of marriage after the three-month cycle of first menstruation?

5. For you can girls marry after three months of their first menstruation if there is a guy who wants to marry her? For example, she is 12 years old when she has her first menstruation, Can she marry?

6. Why or why not?

7. Other Muslims claim that after the first three menstrual cycle (average girl having first menstruation 9-12 years old) a girl can be given away (by parents/guardian) for marriage. (As they claim that this Quranic verse allows it) You agree with them or not? Why?

8. In Al Nesa 4:6. "*Test the orphans when they reach the age of marriage. Then if you discern in their maturity, deliver to them their property. And do not consume it lavishly and hastily lest they should grow up. As for him who is well-off, let him be abstemious, and as for him who is poor, let him eat in an honorable manner. And when you deliver to them their property, take witnesses over them, and Allah suffices as a reckoner.* What does this Quran mean to you? (Just answer briefly)

9. Many uses the above Quranic text as an excuse to marry a young girl. Do you agree or not? Why?

10. In Sahih al Bukhari Book 7:62:64 as narrated by Aisha: "*That the Prophet (Muhammad PBUH) married her when she was 6 years of age and he consumed that marriage when she was 9 years old.*"
Are you aware/have knowledge of this?

11. What is your comment to the above Hadith

12. Do you agree/not agree to 18 years old and below girls marrying?

13. Why or why not?

14. Any further comment/s on this?

15. Do you have someone (girl) you know that married 17 years and below?

16. What is your relationship with her/them? (Neighbor, relative, a friend of a friend)

17. How old were she when she married?

18. How is she right now?

19. In your opinion, why there are girls who marry young? Was it because of Qur'anic verse and the Hadith that were read above? Or other reasons like love (they love the guy), poverty (parents/guardian need the dowry payment or let the husband take care of her basic needs) or the culture within them (it is common or being a custom where they are)?

For you, should early marriage of girls (17 years and below) just fine and acceptable? If yes, why?

Or does it bother you? Why? Can you do something or?

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR PARTICIPATING AND ANSWERING

<div align="center">

Are you interested in taking part in the research project:
"Making meaning of Islamic Sacred text and Child Bride practices"?

</div>

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to let Muslim women in Mindanao, Philippines reinterprets parts of their sacred scripture. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

1. To find out if sacred text reinterpretation among Muslim women in Mindanao is parallel with the religious and cultural practices that is existing among them.

2. To produce knowledge of how Muslim women in Mindanao reinterpret their sacred texts and what does it mean to them and how it affects them.

3. To understand the Child bride phenomena in Mindanao through the Muslim women.

4. To find out the reason to this said practice, does sacred scripture play a role.

This is for master´s thesis in Religion and Diversity, Conflict and Coexistence.

Who is responsible for the research project?
University of Oslo is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?
You are fit to the required person for this project.

What does participation involve for you?
This is a paper based and online interview. It requires your general personal data and opinion for the answers to the questions and will be recorded on paper and electronically.
« If you chose to take part in the project, this will involve that you fill in an online survey. It will take approx. 45 minutes. The survey includes questions about (how you understand Quran 65:1-4, Al Nesa 4:6and Hadith Sahih al Bukhari 7:62:64 and Child bride practices). Your answers will be recorded in paper and electronically»

Participation is voluntary
Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data
We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- The informant, me, supervisor and teachers will have access to the data and information and your personal opinion, but you will be anonymised all throughout.
- As I will replace your real name and contact details with a code.
- I will use my personal computer but will use a secure way provided for by my institution.
- That this will be conducted in Mindanao Philippines but will be presented in Oslo, Norway.

Your information and that of husband and children (if applicable) for example: age, educational background, occupation, gender will be required and thus be included in the work to be published but will be anonymised as well.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?
The project is scheduled to end August 2022. Your data (which is anonymised) will be turned over to the educational institution responsible (UiO) and all those details will be deleted in my personal computer.
You will be anonymised all throughout the paper. (Your real name will not be indicated/mentioned).

Your rights
So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:
- access the data that is being processed about you
- request that your data is deleted
- request that incorrect data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?
We will process your personal data based on your consent. But personal data will be replaced with a code.

Based on an agreement with University of Oslo and NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?
If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:
- University of Oslo via Sheenamie Tano (student, sheenamt@student.teologi.uio.no +4793683250)
- Our Data Protection Officer: Raha Sabet Sarvestany (lecturer and researcher, r.s.sarvestany@teologi.uio.no +4796715392)
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Student
(Sheenamie Tano)

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project *Making meaning of Islamic texts and child bride practices* and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

☐ to participate in an interview by answering the questionnaire given.
☐ to participate in giving my personal information, so long as I am anonymised in the project.
☐ to participate in giving information about my husband and children, so long as they can be anonymised in the project.
☐ to participate in giving my personal opinion of the sacred texts in the project.
☐ for my anonymised data to be processed outside the EU (European Union) – this project is conducted in Mindanao Philippines.
☐ for my anonymised data to be stored after the end of the project for follow up studies. – if applicable

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. *August 2022*.

(Signed by participant, date)

NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

Assessment
 Print
Reference number
583908

Project title
Making meaning of Islamic Sacred text and Child Bride practices

Data controller (institution responsible for the project)
Universitetet i Oslo / Det teologiske fakultet

Project leader (academic employee/supervisor or PhD candidate)
Raha Sabet Sarvestany, r.s.sarvestany@teologi.uio.no, tlf: 96715392

Type of project
Student project, Master's thesis

Contact information, student
Sheenamie Tano, sheenamt@student.teologi.uio.no, tlf: 93683250

Project period
01.11.2021 - 30.07.2022

Assessment (1)

05.11.2021 - Assessed
Our assessment is that the processing of personal data in this project will comply with data protection legislation, so long as it is carried out in accordance with what is documented in the Notification Form and attachments, dated 04 November 2021, as well as in correspondence with NSD. Everything is in place for the processing to begin.

TYPE OF DATA AND DURATION The project will process general categories of personal data and special categories of personal data about ethnic origin, religious beliefs, health and sex life or sexual orientation until 30 July 2022.

LEGAL BASIS The project will gain consent from data subjects to process their personal data. We find that consent will meet the necessary requirements under art. 4 (11) and

7, in that it will be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous statement or action, which will be documented and can be withdrawn. The legal basis for processing general categories of personal data is therefore consent given by the data subject, cf. the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 a). The legal basis for processing special categories of personal data is explicit consent given by the data subject, cf. art. 9.2 a), cf. the Personal Data Act § 10, cf. § 9 (2).

THIRD PERSONS Family members of the data subjects will be third persons in the project. The data subjects will give information about the project to the third persons (husbands and children) where possible. The amount of personal data on the third persons will be limited, they will not be directly identified in the material, the duration of processing will be relatively short, and the third persons will be anonymised in the publication. The project will process general categories of personal data about third persons on the legal basis that processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest, cf. the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 e), and for scientific research purposes, cf. art. 6.3 b), cf. the Personal Data Act § 8. The project will process special categories of personal data about third persons on the legal basis that processing is necessary for scientific research purposes, cf. art. 9.2 j), cf. the Personal Data Act § 9.

PRINCIPLES RELATING TO PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA NSD finds that the planned processing of personal data will be in accordance with the principles under the General Data Protection Regulation regarding: • lawfulness, fairness and transparency (art. 5.1 a), in that data subjects will receive sufficient information about the processing and will give their consent • purpose limitation (art. 5.1 b), in that personal data will be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes, and will not be processed for new, incompatible purposes • data minimisation (art. 5.1 c), in that only personal data which are adequate, relevant and necessary for the purpose of the project will be processed • storage limitation (art. 5.1 e), in that personal data will not be stored for longer than is necessary to fulfil the project's purpose

THE RIGHTS OF DATA SUBJECTS NSD finds that the information that will be given to data subjects about the processing of their personal data will meet the legal requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13. Data subjects will have the following rights in this project: access (art. 15), rectification (art. 16), erasure (art. 17), restriction of processing (art. 18), notification (art. 19) and data portability (art. 20). These rights apply so long as the data subject can be identified in the collected data. We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about their rights, the data controller has a duty to reply within a month.

THE RIGHTS OF THIRD PERSONS NSD finds that the information that will be given to third persons about the processing of their personal data will meet the legal requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13. Third persons will have the following rights in this project: access (art. 15), rectification (art. 16), erasure (art. 17),

restriction of processing (art. 18), notification (art. 19) and data portability (art. 20). These rights apply so long as the data subject can be identified in the collected data. We remind you that if a third person contacts you about their rights, the data controller has a duty to reply within a month.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES NSD presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data. Three research assistants will be data processors for the project. NSD presupposes that the processing of personal data by a data processor meets the requirements under the General Data Protection Regulation arts. 28 and 29. To ensure that these requirements are met you must follow your institution's internal guidelines and/or consult with your institution (i.e. the institution responsible for the project).

NOTIFY CHANGES If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project it may be necessary to notify NSD. This is done by updating the information registered in the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes.

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT NSD will follow up the progress of the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded. Good luck with the project!

Best regards,
Simon Gogl
Senior advisor