

Early marriage of the Co-tu people in Tay Giang district, Quang Nam province, Vietnam

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Abstract:

In Vietnam, early marriage remains a significant issue, particularly among ethnic minorities. In this article, the author examines the current status of early marriage within the Co-tu community. This ethnic group is ranked 26th in the List of Ethnic Groups in Vietnam. The ethnic group's distribution area includes the mountainous regions of Quang Nam province, Danang city, and Thua Thien Hue province. This article focuses on Dong Giang district, where the Co Tu population accounts for over 93.64% of the district's population. The ethnic group's main livelihood is slash-and-burn cultivation and other secondary activities such as hunting, gathering, afforestation, services, handicrafts, etc. The culture of the ethnic group still preserves many traditional cultural elements such as costumes, cuisine, marriage, family, funerals, weddings or festivals, etc. The study aims to explore the perceptions of insiders and related individuals regarding the relationship between love and marriage, identifying the causes leading to early marriage, and providing an overall view of the life of Co-tu couples. Life after marriage is perceived by insiders as "a game of fortune". The traditional sequence of loving, marrying, and having children becomes sensitive and complex when involving couples under 18. The ethnographic fieldwork was conducted during four trips from early 2017 to mid-2020. Qualitative methods were primarily employed to gather data on this sensitive topic, utilising three specific tools: unstructured in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews, and group discussions.

Keywords: culture, early marriage, ethnic minority, fieldwork, traditional, Vietnam.

Classification numbers: 4.2, 4.3, 10

1. Introduction

Early marriage is understood as marriage before the age of 18. This situation is gradually decreasing in many areas and localities in countries. Still, it does not mean that it has been completely ended. Contrary to the belief that early marriage is enforced or incited by adults, the adolescents in our ethnic and study area - Co tu people, Tay Giang district, Quảng Nam province - make their own marriage decisions. However, their choices are constrained by limited options and gender inequality. Life after marriage is perceived by insiders

as "a fortune". The traditional aspects of loving, marrying, and having children become particularly sensitive and complex when couples marry under the age of 18.

"Before I got married, I had thought I wouldn't have got married early. I had thought about studying further after I graduated from high school. But after I met my husband and fell in love, I had a different decision and thought. I want to get married. I don't know what getting married means, what my life will be like, but I still want to get married" (Fieldwork in 2017).

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“Getting married is more miserable than staying with parents. Living with my parents, I could go to school and go out for pleasure. After getting married, I had to work in the fields all day. My parents-in-law told me what I must do, and I can’t argue with them. I have just done whatever they say. As for my husband, he is alcoholic, jealous, and I am even not allowed to beautify myself” (Fieldwork in 2018).

“We loved each other, so we got married. After the marriage, I still go to school, and my wife stays home to be a housewife, helping my parents with work in the fields. We are delighted” (Fieldwork in 2018).

These are three of the many stories recorded during interviews with couples under 18 in the Co-tu community in Tay Giang district, Quang Nam province, Vietnam. The stories reflect the reality of early marriage, which is still happening in ethnic life.

Scientifically, early marriage is an issue in many countries and among various ethnic groups. Early marriage is defined as marriage before the legal age. Although marriage laws differ among countries, the standard legal threshold is 18 years old. Human rights discourse categorises “child marriage” as marriage involving a spouse under the age of 18 [1-3], implying that individuals under this age lack a mature understanding of their future.

Indeed, early marriage significantly affects an individual’s quality of life. Studies from healthcare, reproductive, human rights, and legal perspectives have highlighted the consequences of this practice. The United Nations emphasises that marriage before the age of 18 can harm children’s health and development, especially girls [4]. Child marriage leads to early pregnancy, increasing the risk of death and illness for both mother and baby [5]. Children (primarily girls) who marry before 18 attend school less frequently than their peers [6]. Individuals who marry early have a higher risk of living in poverty in adulthood compared to those who marry later [7]. Research, counselling, and providing support and intervention solutions are the approaches many countries and organisations (both domestic and international) are adopting to address child marriage. The UN’s sustainable development goals, adopted in 2005, aim to eliminate child marriage by 2030, with

annual reports tracking progress [8]. Despite these efforts, child marriage continues to occur globally.

In Vietnam, child marriage/early marriage remains a significant issue. In 2014, one out of ten women aged 20-24 were married or living with a partner before the age of 18 [9], with the situation being worse in ethnic minority areas. According to a survey conducted by the Committee for Ethnic Minorities and the General Statistics Office through the Second Socio-Economic Situation Survey of 53 Ethnic Minorities (2019), the rate of child marriage among ethnic minorities was still as high as 21.9%. This rate had decreased by more than 4.7% compared to 2017 but remained relatively high. On average, in the 53 ethnic minority communities in Vietnam, one out of every four marriages (26.6%) is a child marriage [10]. This article discusses the current state of early marriage in the Co-tu community, an ethnic minority group in the mountainous area of Tay Giang district, Quang Nam province, Vietnam. The study aims to explore the perceptions of insiders and related individuals on the relationship between love and marriage, thereby identifying the causes leading to early marriage while providing an overall view of the lives of Co-tu couples. The article results from intermittent ethnographic fieldwork conducted through four trips from early 2017 to mid-2020.

In Vietnam, the term child marriage (Tảo hôn) is a Sino-Vietnamese word (Sino word: 早婚, 早: “early”, 婚: “marriage”), meaning early marriage. According to Vietnamese law, in section a, clause 1, article 8 of the 2014 Law on Marriage and Family, child marriage is defined as getting married when one or both parties are not old enough as prescribed. The age of marriage here is 20 years old or older for men and 18 years old or older for women. Additionally, point b, clause 2, article 5 of The 2014 Law on Marriage and Family prohibits child marriage. Thus, while marriage is a human right, child marriage violates the law on Marriage and Family in Vietnam. Existing literature and studies on child marriage in Vietnam often use the terms “early marriage” or “child marriage” interchangeably [5, 10, 11]. However, to remain consistent with the Sino-Vietnamese term familiar to Vietnamese people, this study will use the term “early marriage”, referring to any marriage where one of the parties is under 18 years old.

2. Methodology

To understand the current situation of early marriage in the Co-tu community and the social factors or personal views influencing marriage decisions among individuals involved in early marriage, we conducted intermittent ethnographic fieldwork through four trips from early 2017 to mid-2020. There are three research questions: 1. What is the people's opinion on the issue of early marriage?, 2. What is the life of couples who get married early like?, 3. What are the causes and some solutions proposed to prevent early marriage in the research area? The data for this article were primarily collected through qualitative methods, using three specific tools: unstructured in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews, and group discussions. Interviews were conducted mainly in Vietnamese and Co-tu, with female interpreters who shared the same socio-economic background as the interviewees and could explain hidden information in the interviews and descriptions.

Early marriage is a sensitive issue, requiring questions to be posed delicately, cautiously, and exceptionally friendly to create a comfortable atmosphere and avoid misunderstandings that might cause interviewees to feel guilty. We employed the method of third-party stimulation, avoiding direct inquiry into the causes of early marriage among those involved, instead encouraging them to discuss other cases they knew or had heard of. This ethically sensitive approach allowed participants to share community motivations and perceptions about early marriage without embarrassing insiders. In order to protect the informants' identities, all names of the interviewees are anonymised in this study. Interviews lasted one to two hours per person, with some cases involving all-day stays, cooking, and socialising together. These participatory observational experiences in ethnographic fieldwork are called "embodiment and trust-building".

The sampling for these interviews was purposive (Judgment Sampling) [12]. Subjects were divided into four main groups: teenagers married before the age of 18, parents of early-married couples, village patriarchs/elderly respected in the locality, and local officials. The collected data were analysed through

careful review of the interviews, audio recordings, and other gathered information to identify the research story's critical topics.

In summary, we conducted nine semi-structured in-depth interviews with couples married before 18, eight unstructured interviews with parents of early-married couples, seven unstructured interviews with village patriarchs/elderly, and eight unstructured in-depth interviews with local officials (managers and teachers). Additionally, there were two group discussions with age groups 14-25 and 35-59. The selection of interviewees and multiple age groups allowed us to access diverse perspectives on social norms and cultural attitudes related to early marriage in the community.

3. Research area

Tay Giang district is a high mountainous area (one of 61 poor districts in Vietnam) located in the northwest of Quang Nam province, about 180 km from Tam Ky city and 125 km from Danang city. The district has a total natural area of 91,368 hectares. The agricultural production land covers 81,530 hectares, accounting for 89.23% of the district's total area. Most of the land is used for cultivation, mainly for short-term crops, perennial plants, and ancient forest trees. Unused land, which includes bare hills, rivers, and streams with no potential for exploitation, accounts for 8,291 hectares (9.07%).

Due to its location on the Annamite Range, the district's terrain is relatively complex and rugged, with high mountains, steep slopes, and numerous intertwined, fast-flowing rivers and streams. The entire district contains primeval forests rich in diverse flora and fauna. The climate is divided into two distinct seasons: the dry season from March to August, and the rainy season from September to February. During the rainy season, flash floods often occur due to heavy rains from the headwaters of rivers and streams.

Tay Giang district comprises ten communes, including eight communes in the area bordering Laos, and one town: Axan, Ga Ri, Tr'hy, Ch'om, Bhalê, Lang, Avuong, Anong, Atieng, and Dang. According to a report by the People's Committee of Tay Giang district, in 2017, the district's average population was 18,520 people (including 9,446 males and 9,074 females).

The Co-tu people comprise 93.64% of the district's population, the Kinh people account for 6.17%, and the remaining are other ethnic minorities. According to old standards for evaluating poor households in Vietnam, by the end of 2020, the district's poverty rate was 34.55%. The average income per capita in Tay Giang district is 24.5 million VND per year. This study surveyed three communes: Bhalê, Anong, and Atieng. Historically and presently, the main livelihood of the people is shifting cultivation [13-16]. However, like most other ethnic minorities in Vietnam, their economic activities have diversified. Besides farming, they maintain other activities such as gathering, hunting, and fishing to enrich their daily meals. These supplementary activities are crucial for their self-sustaining livelihood. Breeding activities occur on a small scale with free-ranging livestock and poultry such as cows, goats, chickens, and ducks. Breeding practices are mainly based on experience and belief in divine blessings, with little investment in care. Most breeding products are used for sacrifices and rituals. Additionally, the people engage in forestry by contracting forest and producing forest land from the state to plant trees such as paper, cajuput, and rubber. They also partake in small businesses, exploit firewood and rattan, work as hired labourers, and perform jobs such as repairing electricity and motorbikes. Some Co-tu youth work in the districts' industrial parks, hydropower plants, cement factories, and eco-tourism areas. Traditional crafts such as knitting and weaving are typical, creating essential products for daily life with little commercial purpose. In trading relationships, they exchange products with residents of lowland areas, mainly trading forest resources like honey, incense, wild animals, and bamboo shoots.

A significant aspect of the community's physical and cultural life is the Guol house, located in the village centre. The Guol house is where rituals are performed and is seen as the heart of the community, providing both practical and spiritual protection. For transportation, due to the steep hills in the mountainous area, the people primarily walk along trails on mountainsides or rivers and streams, using small rafts and suspension bridges made from available materials [16, 17]. Like most ethnic groups in the Annamite Range and Highlands of Vietnam, the

Co-tu people's costumes are divided into daily and festival attire. More popular, men wear short-sleeved shirts and long trousers and women wear short-sleeved shirts and knee-length skirts. The daily meals are simple, with basic spices like salt, fish sauce, and monosodium glutamate. Forest roots and leaves are often used to make drinking water. Alcohol, particularly Ta Vat (Arengga Palm) wine, is commonly consumed during agricultural production cycle festivals and life cycle events. The Co-tu's spiritual life is closely tied to festivals and rituals.

In Tay Giang district today, early marriage is still a story that is found in ethnic life. Compared to 15 years ago, and 20 years ago, this situation has tended to decline; however, the issue of early marriage being prevented and completely ended has yet to be answered. Because this is a complex issue, it not only bears the traces of historical remnants, but the impacts from the socio-economic context, the level of education, the influences from the views on life, and the customs in ethnic culture can also contribute to the persistent existence of early marriage.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. The perception of Co-tu on early marriage

The Co-tu community places great importance on love, marriage, and family. The principle of monogamy is firmly established within the ethnic group. Boys and girls, upon reaching adulthood, are free to get to know each other [18-21]. After falling in love and deciding to marry, couples meet their parents to discuss the wedding.

The Co-tu people have the custom of "ngủ đông", which means boys and girls get to know each other openly, without hiding or sneaking. The "ngủ đông" house is built on the field, stream, or forest edge. A young man who can afford it will construct a relatively solid house equipped like a small village house. Many boys choose to build a small hut from trees in the forest, mainly to protect against the rain, sun, and people's sight. Typically, Co-tu youths prefer to sleep in places far from the village, possibly deep in the forest or near its edge. In the past, regardless of whether the chosen location was near or far, young men had to inform the village elders of their whereabouts.

According to Co-tu custom, if a boy wants to engage in “ngủ đông” with a girl, he must bring gifts (such as beads, necklaces, and other valuable items) to the girl’s house to ask for permission. “Ngủ đông” can last one night, two nights, or even a week. If a man finds the relationship unsuitable after “ngủ đông”, he can bring gifts to another girl’s house to ask for “ngủ đông”. Thus, some men “ngủ đông” with many girls, and vice versa, some girls “ngủ đông” with many boys before getting married.

“Ngủ đông” does not necessarily involve sleeping together but rather confiding and getting to know each other. A “perfect match” couple will spend only a few nights before deciding to marry, not extending the process to a month in the forest. Despite the freedom for men and women to get to know each other through “ngủ đông”, customary law clearly and strictly penalises indiscriminate sex or pregnancy before marriage. Violations typically result in severe punishment for men. The village may force a man to buy a white pig, carry it upside down to each house, confess his actions, and seek forgiveness from the villagers and the gods. Sometimes, the man must compensate the girl’s family with precious items such as gongs or jewellery. A girl who becomes pregnant outside of marriage may be banished to live alone in the forest, and forbidden to communicate with others [14, 22].

Customary law does not specify an age for “ngủ đông”. According to village elders, boys and girls aged 14 and older have traditionally been allowed to engage in “ngủ đông”. Therefore, the concept of early marriage, defined by Vietnamese law as marrying before the age of 18, does not align with the community’s traditional marriage practices. Parents often encourage their children under 18 to find a partner and, if they wish to marry, to bring gifts to the girl’s house and seek permission from the elders. Then, they are allowed to organise the wedding. Village elders in A Drop village, Anong Commune, Tay Giang District, recall engaging in “ngủ đông” at 14 and marrying at 16. Interviews with Co-tu elders reveal that villagers consider 15-year-olds mature, equating “15 crop harvests” with maturity. Consequently, marrying at this age is considered normal.

Youths in the Co-tu community know the custom of “ngủ đông” and view it as a cultural tradition distinct from other ethnic groups, particularly the Kinh majority. They regard it as a heritage from their ancestors, which is still practised today [23, 24]. This custom allows teenagers to get to know each other, making early marriage before 18 seem unproblematic and voluntary. They see marriage as a natural aspiration once they fall in love. Thus, early marriage is viewed positively within the cultural context, normalising sexual relationships and leading to marriage. According to national customs, marrying before 18 is neither wrong nor illegal; it is a voluntary and desired act when they are in love.

A 16-year-old girl stated: *“I think I will get married sooner or later because my sisters are already married. Before they got married, my parents had often told them to get married, and now it’s my turn. Every day my parents remind me that I am old enough to get married, so I want to get married like my sisters, which will make my parents feel more secure”* (Fieldwork in 2017).

A 16-year-old boy said: *“My parents say they will allow me to get married if I fell in love. Having a wife means that my parents have one more person who can help with the cultivation work, and if I have children early, then my life becomes stable. This age is suitable for having a wife and having children”* (Fieldwork in 2017).

Most Co-tu youths interviewed expressed a desire to marry and anticipated a good life after marriage. Encouraged and supported by their parents, they feel confident in their decision to marry, even if they are under 18, as required by law. Despite efforts by officials to discourage early marriage and promote knowledge about adolescent reproductive health, the belief that “15 harvests” equate to maturity persists. Customary law permits early marriage, while state law prohibits it, resulting in continued early marriages.

According to our fieldwork, the rate of early marriage in the district is increasing. For example, in Atieng, Anong, and Bhalee Communes, the number of couples marrying before 18 from 2017 to 2019 is as in Table 1.

Table 1. Early marriage data from 2017-2019.

Commune	Year	Number of couples getting married before the age of 18		
	2017	2018	2019	Total
Anong	4	5	6	15
Bhalee	6	8	7	21
Atieng	7	8	9	24

Source: Authors' fieldwork data.

After marrying with their families' support, most young couples do not register their marriages with authorities, knowing it is illegal. This discrepancy sometimes leads to differences between official reports and the actual number of child marriages in the community. The District Population and Family Planning Centre in Tay Giang District reported that all child marriages from early 2017 to the end of 2019 involved ethnic minorities under 18. The reported number of early marriages seems to have decreased, but our survey data suggest otherwise. This discrepancy is common in sensitive studies on child marriage [25].

An 18-year-old male said: *"The commune officials did not agree to proceed with the marriage registration procedure for us because my husband and I were not old enough, but we recognised by the families and the village as the spouses"* (Fieldwork in 2017). The female aged 17 said: *"We have been married for two years, now we are old enough to register marriage"* (Fieldwork in 2017).

In recent years, district authorities in Tay Giang have implemented various measures to prevent child marriage, such as promoting the abandonment of child marriage, raising awareness about adolescent reproductive health, and highlighting the consequences of child marriage. Despite these efforts, differences remain between customary law and state law. The role of the village patriarch, the importance of customary law, and traditional thinking about "ngũ đông" opportunities for love relationships continue to influence the Co-tu people significantly [17, 20, 22]. They feel content and safe with their community's acknowledgement of early marriage, even if it violates

state law. Marriage is seen as a marker of maturity and an affirmation of an individual's role in the family and community [26-28]. When their children express a desire to marry, most parents agree without concern for the legal age of marriage. Consequently, a significant gap exists between customary law and legal requirements regarding early marriage.

4.2. Life after marriage is a fortune

Most interviews with early-married couples revealed a strong belief in living with their loved ones early in their marriage and a conviction that their decision was correct. They emphasised that *"the fundamental thing of marriage is love"*, which made it desirable to live with their lover early. This thinking leads to voluntary early marriage. However, after marriage, some insiders began to criticise this initial perspective.

"After we got married, we had a child right away. We live with our parents-in-law. I have not done well with housework and work in the fields, so I am often scolded by my parents-in-law. They often compare me to my sisters-in-law. However, they are much older than me, so they take good care of children and work better than me" (Interview with a female, aged 18, 2019).

"Since we had a child, my husband has changed his personality. He is always gathering friends for fun drinking and does not care for me anymore. I wish I had better perceived not to get caught up in the love whirlwind and get married early. I want to go out with my friends, go back to school" (Interview with a female, aged 17, 2019).

"My parents-in-law love me very much. My husband and I also love each other a lot. We have a daughter who is seven months old. He works downtown and comes home twice a month. I don't regret getting married early. I feel happy" (Interview with a female, aged 18, 2018).

In most of the three researched areas, the Co-tu community's marriage is patriarchal. After the wedding, the couple typically resides with the husbands' families. Girls participate in livelihood

activities with their husbands' families (shifting cultivation, housework, and other livelihood activities) and are seen as additional labour for the family. They share the responsibility of protecting and ensuring the family's livelihood with other members. Traditionally, a young couple lives with the boy's parents until they have a child, then move out. However, most early-married couples rarely leave home immediately after the wedding or even after having children due to a lack of experience and the ability to care for themselves.

All young couples do not favour living with parents-in-law (all interviews show a preference for independent living); however, they must live with them due to insufficient resources for independent living. Living together is believed to ensure the safest livelihood for early-married couples. In these contexts, a young girl living with her husband's family must completely obey her mother-in-law and avoid arguments.

"The daughter-in-law in the house is under control of my wife. Wherever my wife goes to work, there the daughter-in-law is" (Interview with a man, 55 years old, in 2018).

"A good daughter-in-law is someone who has to do good housework and have filial respect for her parents-in-law. If the couple earns money well, she must share with her parents-in-law, or siblings-in-law in the family, not hide her property" (Interview with a female, 50 years old, in 2018).

"Young spouses must give in to each other; a wife must share the income with her husband and listen to her husband's words to make life sustainable" (Interview with a male, 47 years old, in 11/2019).

The notion that a wife has duties such as housework, working in the fields, childcare, and obeying her parents-in-law is implicit and taken for granted within the Co-tu ethnic group. Customary law also recognises a wife's refusal to argue with her husband in the family. After marriage, while a husband maintains a close relationship with his parents, a wife cuts off ties with her parents [15]. The patrilineal family structure shapes relationships such as husband-wife,

parents-children, and siblings. The high dependence of a wife on her husband and his family after marriage makes young Co-tu couples (mainly females) perceive marriage as a "fortune". If lucky, the wife lives in a loving relationship with her husband's family; otherwise, she suffers in the relationship. A young wife has little voice in her husband's family.

Although the concept of a wife's dependence on her husband's family is upheld, Co-tu women do not see it as a human rights issue or gender discrimination [15]. Each gender is aware of their role and responsibilities within the family: the husband is the breadwinner, handling important family affairs and managing property, while the wife helps with cultivation and child-rearing without participating in social activities. The principle of "giving in to each other" is essential to maintaining good family relationships. However, early-married couples are typically of school age (secondary and high school) and unable to live independently. Even with parental support, they cannot fulfil the roles of a faithful husband and wife as expected by the community, leading to dependence on parents-in-law, especially for young wives.

Fieldwork group discussions estimate that the number of children attending primary school in the studied areas reaches 99%, gradually reducing at secondary (80%) and high school (over 40%). The dropout rate increases from primary (10%) to lower secondary (20%) and upper secondary (45%). Early-married couples often quit their studies, feeling unprepared for early marriage but voluntarily engaging in it.

5. Conclusions and implications

Most early marriages in the Co-tu ethnic group in Quang Nam province, Vietnam, are voluntary, involving boys and girls with their parental consent. Although early marriage is considered usual and customary within the Co-tu community, it is legally unacceptable for those under 18, still in high school. Early marriage often leads to hard work, poverty, lack of independent voice, and disadvantages for females

(wives, mothers). Thus, although couples hold the mindset of willingness to love each other and their attachment to a partner's choice of love marriage is respectable and appreciated, early marriage has caused them difficulties.

Young couples often live with their parents and depend on the husband's family financially. Females have no say in decision-making, and boys and girls who marry early often quit school. Girls typically stay home, limiting social relationships. "Depending on and entrusting life to the husband and his family" is common among Co-tu girls after early marriage. "*Depending on and entrusting life to the husband and the husband's family*" is the thought of most Co-tu girls after getting married early. Despite severe or unexpected experiences, almost none consider divorce.

"That cannot happen, despite difficulties, we try to keep the family" (Interview with a female, 18 years old, 2018).

"Although it is hard, we do not want to break up. I still hope for better things in the future..." (Interview with a male, 17 years old, 2017).

The leading causes of early marriage in the Co-tu community, Tay Giang district, Quang Nam province, Vietnam, include lack of awareness, incomplete enforcement of legal frameworks, and customary law. First, the traditional custom of "ngủ đông" supports teenagers' freedom of choice in marriage and selecting their life partner. However, it also fosters a permissive mindset about cohabitation, creating accessible opportunities for intimate relationships during their psychophysiological adulthood. Evidence suggests that, in today's context, the strict regulations of "ngủ đông" are almost no longer observed, with the majority of young couples in the researched area having had sex before marriage.

Second, other influences, such as marrying early to gain more labour for household work, also play a role. Additionally, limited awareness of legal observance among the ethnic group and the lack

of strict enforcement of sanctions contribute to the persistence of early marriage. Economic challenges further exacerbate this issue, as families often lack the financial resources to send their children to school, leading to higher dropout rates and limited job opportunities. This creates a mentality among some teenagers to forgo education in favour of early marriage. The negative impact of social networks and new lifestyles also affects young people's perceptions of early marriage.

Thus, even though young Co-tu couples marry voluntarily, early marriage before the age of 18 presents significant disadvantages. It deprives them of many better life opportunities they might otherwise have. The study makes the following recommendations: First, it is necessary to strengthen the leadership of Tay Giang district authorities at all levels, enhance the role of mass organisations, and create unity of awareness and social consensus in preventing child marriage. Second, Improve the responsibility and coordination of all levels and sectors in propaganda, advocacy, and handling of administrative violations related to child marriage according to the law. Third, Change community awareness about child marriage. Propagate the benefits of marrying at the legal age and highlight the limitations and challenges that child marriage imposes on children under 18. Expand and improve healthy recreational activities, skills training, and life values for young people to help them make better and more appropriate decisions about marriage. Help the community understand the positive aspects of the "custom of sleeping rough" while aligning the idea of early marriage with national customary laws and Vietnamese law. Raising awareness of the roles of both men and women in love and marriage, emphasising equal respect and treatment for boys and girls within their families. Finally, the fourth recommendation is to focus investment resources on socio-economic development and improving people's lives.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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