



Impacts of Child marriage on Higher Education of Women: A study

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ARTICLE INFO

RECEIVED 30 MAY 2023

ACCEPTED 24 SEPTEMBER 2023

PUBLISHED 4 DECEMBER 2023

ABSTRACT

In India, marriage is one of the biggest personal rituals that a person goes through in their lifetime and is also a very important familial and social custom. Unfortunately, child marriage- one cruel kind of marriage is still very common in some parts of India. Education, health, and general well-being of women are significantly impacted by child marriage, which is unlawful and strongly forbidden. What are the causes of child marriage and how does it affect women's access to higher education? These are the main concerns of this study.

Keywords:

Inequality, women empowerment, child marriage.

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INTRODUCTION

In India, marriage is one of the biggest personal rituals that a person goes through in their lifetime and is a very important personal, familial, and social custom. Although different populations of people in India commemorate marriage-related rites in various ways, in most cases it is a religious and joyous occasion that is observed with great passion by the family, relatives, and society. Unfortunately, child marriage- one of the cruelest forms of marriage is still rather common in some parts of India. Child marriage is severely forbidden and is deemed unlawful. The Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929, which was modified in 2006 and renamed the "Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006," and updated once again in the Child Marriage Restrain (amendment) Bill 2017, are only a few of the laws that the Indian government has established. The legal minimum age for marriage in India during British control was 14 years for girls and 18 years for boys. In India today, a girl under the age of 18 and a boy under the age of 21 are considered minors and cannot be legally wed. Despite the fact that the Indian government has passed these kid protection laws, the situation appears to be different. In India, 27% of girls get married before becoming 18 and 7% before turning 15, according to the UNICEF Report 2017. India has the highest percentage of child brides in the world (74% of girls get married before they turn 20).

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In India, child marriage occurs for a variety of reasons. Women continue to be less educated, unemployed, and visible in the power structure, as well as being ill and suffering from paternal traditions' customs and norms. Women have historically fallen behind men in the realm of education. Today, it appears that many parents push their daughters to pursue "proper education" solely to make them more marketable for

marriage. In rural communities, girls typically get married when they are young adults. Men may find time to continue their education after marriage, but because women must care for the home and children, they may not have the opportunity. The purpose of this study is to identify the major causes of child marriage law violations as well as how they affect women's access to higher education. The proposed study may help improve the position of women in Assam in some way by evaluating the variables that lead to early marriage, violations of the child marriage statute, and their effects on higher education. The suggested research was restricted to Assam's Lakhimpur district.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study's goals are to identify:

1. The elements that cause to child marriage.
2. The link between child marriage and its effects on higher education for women.

METHODOLOGY

The study was survey-based. Primary data for this study were gathered from the Narayanpur Revenue Circle of Lakhimpur District of Assam. The study was conducted among 40 early married women belonging to the age group of 15-22 yrs. Such women were chosen randomly. Secondary information was gathered from books and internet. Using questionnaires and in-person interviews with the respondents, the key data needed for the study were gathered. The investigator conducted a door-to-door investigation.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The following table shows the detail of the population of the study-

Women who got married in between 15 to 18 years		Women who got married in between 18 to 22 years		Total
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	



18	45%	22	55%	40 (100%)
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Above table reveals that out of 40 respondents, 18 respondents i.e., 45% of the respondents got married in between the age of 15 to 18 years, while 22 respondents i.e., 55% of the respondents got married between 18-22 years.

The respondents were questioned about their primary motivations for getting married at a tender age, as well as the psychological and socioeconomic factors that encouraged them to do so, in order to determine the elements that contribute to child marriage.

According to an analysis of the responses, the majority of young married women did not even know the primary causes of their marriage. Some of them claimed to have had secret love marriages, getting hitched despite their parents' lack of understanding of the realities of marriage. But they eventually discovered that reality was very different. They were not driven to learn and most of the parents only urged their daughters to take care of the home and be good housewives, thus this psychological element contributed to the girl children's perception that they would eventually have to get married. Therefore, they were not against marriage at an early age. Marriage was prioritised above schooling. Every child finds the adolescent years to be very challenging. During this time in their lives, children require extra care from their parents, but many girls are still seen as a burden by their parents. When parents find a suitable groom, they frequently want their daughter to marry him, regardless of her age or willingness. It is also common to find cases where a young girl flees with her boyfriend because her parents wanted to arrange her marriage to another man. Therefore, the Child Marriage Act has been broken by some parents as well. Even today, a lot of parents believe that their daughter has a lower chance of finding a nice husband if she does not get married young. Additionally, the socioeconomic circumstances of the parents influence the girl child's marriage. Over 70% of the population in India as well as in Assam, work in agriculture, leaving little time for their families. Typically, they do not consider giving their daughters more freedom in the

social, political, or economic spheres. It was found that the majority of the females who were married off young in the investigated area came from low socioeconomic backgrounds. They are very far from higher education.

The respondents were asked the following questions in order to learn more about the effects of early marriage and higher education:

- (i) How does higher education affect a girl's ability to get married?
- (ii) Is it preferable to a woman to exclusively marry a man with a higher level of education than she has?
- (iii) How do childbirth and higher education influence women?

Out of the 40 respondents who responded to the questions above, 28 (or 70%) claimed that after getting married, going to college was still just a day dream for them. Only 12 people, or 30% of married women, claimed that marriage had no impact on their decision to pursue further education. They all claimed that the only man they wanted to wed had to be more educated than she was. Additionally, it was observed that many women generally held the opinion that they did not need to be more educated than their husbands, and as a result, they did not desire to pursue higher education after being married. Childbirth is a second element that influences women's higher education after marriage. A girl is typically encouraged by her mother and other family members to focus on housework before marriage, and after marriage, her in-laws and husband put pressure on her to do the same.

Another intriguing finding from this study was that three pairs of underage couples got married as a result of the Covid-19 lockout. They explained the reason for their marriage by stating that they were unable to meet each other as they used to do earlier because of the lockdown.

SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS

From the study, conclusion is derived that child marriage of women has a big impact on higher education. Many women get married before finishing their studies. After getting married, they never finish their education. Due to the demands of their families,



they cannot manage their study time. Most parents and other family members encourage their daughters to take care of the household chores and the younger members of the family. According to K. Sudarsan (1990), the key query in this context is, "What do we do with higher education? If we start reading books, who will take care of the household chores, raise the kids, and handle other small responsibilities for the family members?"

Most women believe that their only option for settlement is marriage, and since their primary responsibilities are as wives and mothers, they are not particularly motivated to pursue education. Due to their families' difficult financial situation, these women get married at a young age because they believe that if they wait longer, their chances of finding a good husband will be reduced.

Our society's educated women should be benefited from their advanced degrees. The educated women have a duty to offer assistance to the less fortunate women in rural and underdeveloped areas so that they can receive a proper education and to inform them of the various resources available to them for pursuing higher education. It is important to inform the less fortunate women that higher education can be a powerful tool for their socioeconomic empowerment.

The following recommendations can be made in light of the study's findings:

- (i) Marriage should not be given as much priority as higher education. Instead of waiting to set up their daughters' marriages, parents can urge their daughters to finish their studies. Girls should be taught to give importance on acquiring higher education and finding a job above being married in order to be on an equal footing with boys.
- (ii) Strict legal action should be taken against such practices in addition to spreading awareness against child marriage. The risks of early marriage should be discussed with the girls, and they should be urged under no circumstances to consent to such activity. Additionally, they should be made aware of the legal restrictions on female early marriage.



(iii) Education requires motivation. A woman should be inspired to pursue higher education from an early age.

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