

CAUSES OF CHILD MARRIAGE IN RURAL AREA'S

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CHAPTER – III

2.1 CAUSES OF CHILD MARRIAGE

Child marriage continues to be a reality for many of the world's girls because of a variety of factors. These include poverty, lack of education and job opportunities, insecurity in the face of war and conflict, and the force of custom and tradition, health complications⁵¹.

a) Poverty

For many poor families, marrying their daughter at an early age essentially is a strategy for economic survival; it means one less person to feed, clothe and educate. In Asia and Africa, the importance of financial transactions at the time of marriage also tends to push families to marry their daughters early. For example, in many sub-Saharan cultures parents get a high bride price for a daughter who is married near puberty. In Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal, parents feel that their burden of paying a dowry at their daughter's marriage will be lower if she is married at a young age. Globally, forced child marriage is much more common in poorer countries and regions, and within those countries, it tends to be concentrated among the poorest households. For example, a girl from a poor household in Senegal is four times more likely to marry as a child than a girl from a rich household. In impoverished situations, parents see few alternatives for their daughters, aside from early marriage.

b) Limited education and economic options

Little or no schooling strongly correlates with being married at a young age. Conversely, attending school and having higher levels of education protect girls from the possibility of early marriage. In many countries, educating girls often is less of a priority than educating boys. When a woman's most important role is considered to be that of a wife, mother and homemaker, schooling girls and preparing them for the jobs may be given short shrift. And even when poor families want to send their daughters to school, they often lack access to nearby, quality schools and the ability to pay school fees. It is usually safer and

⁵¹ <https://blog.ipleaders.in/child-marriage-impacts-consequences-effects-girl-child/> (Last visited on 3.3.2022 at 8.00 am)

economically more rewarding to spend limited resources on educating sons than daughters. This boxes families into early marriage as the only viable option for girls.

c) Insecurity in the face of conflict

When families live in unsafe regions, parents may genuinely believe that marrying their daughters is the best way to protect them from danger. In war-affected areas in Afghanistan, Burundi, Northern Uganda or Somalia, for example, a girl may be married to a warlord or another authority figure that can ensure that she and her family remain safe⁵². In the Democratic Republic of Congo and elsewhere, girls have been abducted or recruited by armed groups and made into the ‘bush wives’ of combatants and commanders. Law and Order are still not able to provide a secure environment for the girls in adolescent age, so some parents get their girl child married at a young age. In addition, there is the problem of dowry. Despite the fact that dowry has been prohibited for five decades (*Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961*), it is still common for parents of girls in India to give gifts to the groom and / or his family either in cash or kind.

d) Inabilities to plan or manage families

Young girls exercise less influence and control over their children and have less ability to make decisions about their nutrition, health care and household management.

e) Religious, social pressure:

Religion is often blamed for the prevalence of child marriage. The practice is not unique to any one faith; in fact, it occurs across religions and regions. In India where 40 percentage of the world’s known child brides reside, child marriage is prevalent among both Muslims and Hindus. Child marriage might not be tied to one faith, but religious leaders still have a crucial role to play in curbing the practice – particularly because marriages are often ratified as part of a religious are often ratified as part religious ceremony. Working with religious leaders to tackle the scourge of child marriage has proven especially effective, both because these leaders are uniquely influential in their communities and because religious texts and traditions often encourage advocacy on behalf of the most vulnerable, including children. Due to desire for a Religious and Social Pressure in a similar community it makes the girl child into a forced marriage⁵³.

⁵² <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/girls-increasingly-risk-child-marriage-afghanistan> (last visited on 3.3.200 9.00am)

2.2 IMPACT OF CHILD MARRIAGE DURING PANDEMIC SITUATION IN RURAL AREAS

a) Closure of schools:

We know that girls' education is crucially important to keeping girls from getting married as children. As many as 10 million girls have been put at risk of child marriage due to school closures caused by Covid-19, putting under threat the progress made in the last decade by averting 25 million child marriages⁵⁴. Without the safety net and friend and support systems provided by schools, girls are being forced into early marriage. In India's Telangana region, child marriages have increased by 27% since the nationwide Covid-19 lockdown in 2020. This increase stems primarily from poorer families where the parents opted to marry off their female children and force their male children into labour.

b) Barriers to accessing healthcare services:

Pandemic-related travel restrictions, physical distancing and an increase in unpaid care work has made it difficult for many girls and young women around the world to access the health care, social services and community support that protect them from child marriage, maternal mortality and morbidity, unwanted pregnancy, and gender-based violence (GBV). In developing countries especially, the Covid-19 pandemic has created significant additional pressure on underdeveloped health and social service delivery systems, and exacerbated vulnerabilities among populations. Focus on the access and availability of adolescent and youth friendly sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and GBV services has significantly reduced. This is compounded by increased domestic violence, school dropouts, and closures of healthcare units leading to a lack of SRHR knowledge and information during the Covid-19 lockdown⁵⁵. As a result, an increase in the number of child marriages and teenaged pregnancies becomes inevitable.

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ <https://www.includovate.com/5-key-reasons-why-covid-1-has-led-to-a-rise-in-child-marriage> (last visited on 1.4.2022 at 10.00 AM)

⁵⁵ Ibid

c) Economic scarcity

While the Covid-19 pandemic has crippled the global economy, the children, especially girls, in poor families have faced a direct impact. With job losses and increased economic scarcity, millions of families have considered child marriage to alleviate poverty.

d) Lack of alternatives and opportunities:

Child marriage becomes a plausible option for families when productive alternatives are not available for girls. This is all the more true for traditional societies with a social preference for sons and a resultant lower social standing for girls, which means that marriage is seen as the only viable option for girls, while boys are encouraged to aim for jobs or other income-generating options. For instance, lack of mobility, education or employment opportunities mean that families prefer to marry off their daughters early to have one mouth less to feed. In communities where the custom of ‘bride price’ is prevalent, child marriages prove to be a boon to a household’s income as a price is paid by the groom’s family to the bride’s family. The United Nations Population Fund’s, State of World Population Report 2020, observed that child marriages have been found to increase during humanitarian crises caused by natural disasters or conflicts. In Lebanon, 41% of women displaced by the Syrian war were found to be married before they turned 18⁵⁶.

e) Due to lockdown unavailability of court:

Internationally recognised as a form of gender-based violence, child marriage saw a significant increase during the Covid-19 pandemic as the pandemic inhibited enforcement of the legal minimum age for marriage. During nation-wide lockdowns, child marriage became more common due to the absence or non-enforcement of child marriage laws⁵⁷. This meant that even in cases where the perpetrators were arrested, often the courts were closed due to Covid protocols and the perpetrators could not be presented in Court or penalised. Child marriage has always been common phenomenon. But ever since the pandemic hit, the risk of child marriage has intensified for millions of girls across the globe, threatening their

⁵⁶ <https://www.includovate.com/5-key-reasons-why-covid-19-has-led-to-a-rise-in-child-marriage/> (last visited on 4.3.2022 at 7.00am)

⁵⁷ <https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/india/child-marriages-surge-during-and-after-the-lockdown-official-figure-tip-of-the-iceberg> (last visited on 4.3.2022 at 8.00am)

childhood and future prospects. While efforts are being made to curb the spread of the virus, a lack of social protection has meant that girls and young women from vulnerable populations have been exposed to the social evil called ‘child marriage’.

To address this, accelerated efforts are needed if we are to reverse this trend. The focus should be on eradicating child marriage by addressing harmful social norms that perpetuate gender inequality. For instance, a few critical steps to postpone marriage beyond the legal age, improve the health and nutritional status of girls through better access to sexual and reproductive health information, support girls in their transition to secondary school, and help them develop skills can help them realize their full potential and live long and fulfilling lives. In rural areas a Girls child is made to move out of her own at such a young age due to child marriage to up lift their basic necessities by seeking job. It is very difficult to survive in the society because of male domination at taluk level there is no additional job opportunities provided for womens.

f) Lack of sex education in schools of taluk level

In rural areas at the primary level of school education there is no classes taken about sex education to both childrens like male,female and transgenders also. It makes more issues for children to travel in a wrong path, unable to maintain mental and physical fitness of a children.

g) Family compulsion

In rural areas female child are forced into early marriage because of their family members compelled to married to the person without the free consent of the female child. Family compulsion made by near relative or friends of the female child.

h) Grand parents

In the rural areas Grand Parents of the children forced to enter into the marriage. It makes the children to bear the family responsibility as a huge burden it restrict the freedom of rights of the children.

i) Absence of parents (mother / father)

In case of absence of parents the children compelled to enter into a early marriage. It makes the children unable to take the correct decision for their future⁵⁸.

2.3 CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD MARRIAGE

- a. Violation of rights of the child
- b. Premature baby
- c. Maternal mortality
- d. Infant mortality
- e. Health problems
- f. HIV/AIDS
- g. Illiteracy
- h. Abuse and violence
- i. Teen widows
- j. Mental health
- k. Isolation and abandonment⁵⁹

a) Violation of rights of the child:

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is designed to guarantee certain individual rights—which are denied by early marriage. Rights undermined or lost by children forced to marry early are: The right to education, The right to be protected from physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, including sexual abuse, rape and sexual exploitation.

b) Premature pregnancy:

The majority of young brides have limited knowledge and access to contraceptive and reproductive health services. They are exposed to early and frequent sexual relations and to multiple pregnancies and childbirth before they are physically mature and psychologically ready.

c) Maternal mortality:

Girls below the age of 15 are five times more likely to die during child birth or pregnancy than a little elderly woman. Pregnancy-related deaths are the leading major cause of mortality for girls aged 15 to 19 worldwide, and girls aged 15 years or under are five times more likely to die than those over 20.

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ibid

d) Infant mortality:

Mortality rates for babies born to mothers under age 20 are almost 75% higher than for children born to older mothers. The children that survive are more likely to be premature, have a low birth weight, and are more at risk for transmitting HIV/AIDS.

e) Health problems:

Premature childbirth can lead to a variety of health problems for mothers, including vaginal tears, fistula and deterioration in general health. Girls with fistula are often abandoned by their husbands and ostracized by society. There are approximately 2 million girls living with fistula, and 100,000 new cases every year add to this number.

f) HIV/AIDS:

Married girls may be more likely to contract sexually transmitted disease, including HIV/ AIDS, than unmarried girls. Young girls are more physically susceptible to STI's, have less access to reproductive education and health services and are often powerless to demand the use of contraceptives.

g) Illiteracy:

Child brides are often pulled out of school and denied further education. Their children are also more likely to be illiterate. Human rights research shows that the greatest obstacles to girls' education, as identified in many government reports to human rights monitoring bodies, are child marriage, pregnancy and domestic chores.

h) Abuse and violence:

Child brides are more likely to experience domestic abuse, and violence than their peers who marry later and less likely to take action against this abuse. Girls who marry early are also more likely to believe that a man is justified in beating his wife and it is his right.

i) Teen widows:

In a society that condones child marriages, it is not uncommon to find widows and divorcees under the age of 18.

j) Mental health:

Violence and abuse can lead to post- traumatic stress and depression.

k) Isolation and abandonment:

Child brides are often isolated from their peers and abandoned if they develop health problems like fistula.⁶⁰

2.4 EFFECTS OF CHILD MARRIAGE IN VIKRAVANDI TALUK

- a. Economic Pressure
- b. Poverty
- c. Customs
- d. Dowries
- e. Depression(Girl Child As Burden)
- f. Gender Inequalities

a). Economic pressure

It arised due to the pandemic have; pushed poor parents to marry off girls early. With no schools, safty of children, particulary girls, was a major reason for Increase in violence against children and child marriage.

b).Poverty

Child Marriage in India is also related to poverty. As the people in Vikravandi Taluk in and around villages and small towns do not have sufficient sources of income, to them, marrying the girl child would mean fewer mouths feed. Not only that, but child marriage in India also involve selling the minor girl to the groom's family during this pandemic situation made the people into very critical to lead a normal life.

c). Customs

Social customs and traditions still define the mindset of particular castes and communities in the society.

Child marriage in India has been practiced since the invasion by the Mughals and then the Britishers. It was performed to protect to protect the young girls from abduction and sexual abuses. Especially in Vikravandi Talluk interior areas the followed local customs and traditions for the consummation of marriage.

⁶⁰ UNICEF. Early Marriage – A Harmful Traditional Practice, 2005, 1.

d). Dowries

The offering of gifts and wealth to the groom's family by the bride's family is called dowry. It has long been associated with child marriage in India. A common practice across all religions in India, it is often correlated to the age of the bride. In other words, more the age of the bride, more the demand of the dowry will be. This fear of more dowry has led to more prevalence of child marriage in India. Additionally, poverty has also been a major factor driving people towards child marriage. The practice of getting and giving Dowries in Rural Areas of Vikravandi Taluk is still prevalent in the society.

e). Depression (girl child as a burden)

Some rural areas, poor parents even sell their daughters to rich men just for some money. Due to their poor conditions, they consider their daughters a burden in their life and have no financial support to educate or send their daughters to schools. Dowry demand by in-laws of the daughter forces the society to think that daughters are as a burden and results in child marriages, where they have not to pay much dowry to the in-laws.

f). Gender inequalities

Another factor of child marriage is gender inequality. Gender inequality is the key cause of child marriages. Illiterate people consider their daughter a 'burden' even the rich people in some rural areas have this kind of thinking that 'betiyan bojh hoti hai' in Hindi it means that daughters are burden. Just to get rid of their expenses, they marry their daughters in their childhoods. According to them, sons are better than daughters. Due to this gender inequality, the next generation also gets this thinking of not respecting girl children.