EMPIRICAL ANALYTICAL STUDY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTOR OF EARLY MARRIAGES: A CASE STUDY OF BADIN DISTRICT, SINDH, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This study aims at analyzing the main socio-economic causes of early marriages of girl child at the age of below 15 years. Early marriage is not only the violation of their rights to education it also deprives of them rights of childhood. This study also envisages the effect of early marriages on girl's education, health and their living condition. A sample of 57 respondents was selected from Badin district. This research study concluded that an early marriage not only had an effect on their child hood rights but also had a direct adverse effect on their health conditions and because of economic pressure most husbands committed violence on the young child-wife, this research findings that the trend of child marriage is because of cultural practice, poverty, and death of parents.

Keywords: *Poverty, Violence, Cultural Factor, Age of Marriage, Education, Health Condition*

Introduction Early marriage is defined as marriage of adolescent girls with a matured man. (Ango, 1991.)

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UNICEF (2005) reported that the term "early marriage" refers the marriage of both girls and boys before the age of eighteen.
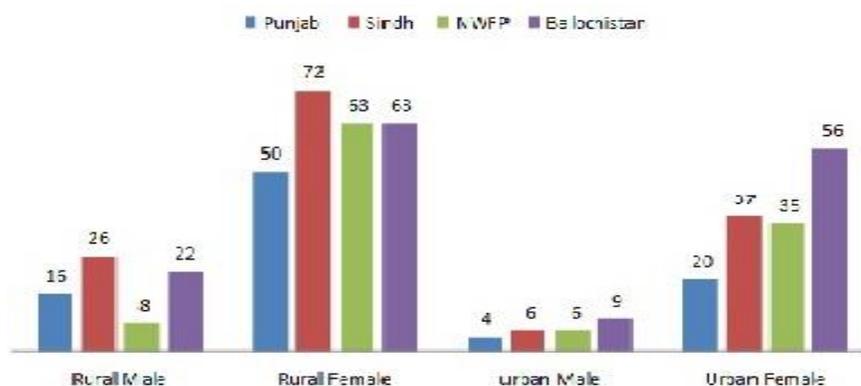
Around the world, over the last few decades, except in South Asian countries, early marriage has been usually treated as taboos among many ethnic groups. It clearly has not only negative effects on living conditions but also adversely affects health condition, especially of young girls. It is not only a violation of girl's childhood rights but in general of their human rights. Many research studies have been conducted and found that marriage before eighteen years has not only direct physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional impact but it may also have negative effects on their education, empowerment, as well as their growth, both physical and mental.

Similarly, UNIFPA (2006) described that before the age of 18 years, girls are not ready to take all the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing they are not strong physically, physiologically, and psychologically

Molokwu (2000) further elaborated that marriage above 18 years is the ideal age to face economic hurdles of life

According to UNICEF's statistical data, about 21% of child marriages were estimated to have occurred in urban areas and an estimated 37% in rural areas and average child marriages equaled 32% of children at the time period of 1987 to 2005. From time to time there has been a significant variation in early marriage statistics from one area to another area according to the UNICEF report covering all Pakistan, Sindh has the highest percentage of early marriages with 72 percent of females as compared to 26 percent of males in the region.

Early marriages are common practice all around south Asian countries, but it was most prevalent in Pakistan, particularly in its rural rather than urban areas. In this study it was concluded through survey that about 58 percent of rural females marry before the age of 20 as compared to 18 percent of rural males and about 27 percent of urban females as compared to 5 percent of urban males

Table 1:- Percentage of 20-24 years old who are married before

Source: UNFPA, (2007) Study report on Child Marriage

The graph shows that from the selected sample Sindh has the highest percentage of early marriages in rural areas, about 72 percent of females and 26 percent of males who married before 20. In Balochistan about 63% of rural females and 22 percent of rural are married before age of 20, whereas it has the highest ratio of urban early marriages before 20, with 9   56% females and 9% males. Result shows that Punjab province has the least females marrying before 20 in both rural and urban areas, with 50% of the women in rural and 20 percent of women in urban areas. Male urban marriages are also very low in Punjab, with only four percent marrying before 20. The lowest percentage of rural male marrying early is in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with only 8% marrying before twenty.

Causes of Early Marriages

In Pakistan, there are various causes of early or child marriages. Amongst those most common causes are: lack of implementation of the existing laws; traditional practices and feudal society; lack of knowledge regarding harmful effect of child marriages in villages ; extreme poverty; internal trafficking including women ; death of parents, large population.

In Pakistan, mostly in Sindh and Balochistan most marriages are arranged on the basis of agreement to get some amount of money by the girl's parents in exchange for their daughter. This practice is called the bride price. These bride prices range from $1,400 to $5,000 and younger girls bring higher amounts. Similarly, the trend of giving dowry is also practiced in Pakistan, with a higher dowry likely to

be demanded when the girls are older. (Government of Pakistan, Report of the Pakistan Commission on the Status of Women, 1989)

A number of traditional customs and practices take place even today in the 21st century in Pakistan. A most common tradition is Swara or Vani,(usually requires one girl to be given but initially two or more are demanded and the aggrieved family selects from amongst the girls) it is the most common practice of solving family feuds by marrying off their young. Other types of child entail exchanging children in marriage. (Pait Likkhi, Watta Satta, and Addo Baddo). This traditional customary practice, where brides are exchanged between two parties. Parents want to marry their son into a family and give their own daughter in marriage to the other family's son in return. UNFPA, (2007) Study report on Child Marriage)

According to UNICEF (2001), the overall ratio of exchange marriages in Pakistan is 10.9%. Another custom that leads to child marriages is *Pait Likkhi* (literally written on stomach), which is most commonly found in tribal and rural areas of Pakistan where two families agree to marry their children before they are born or are still very young.

Effects of Early Marriages

Age of marriage is the most important factor in population growth, having direct effects on fertility, mortality, migration and socio-economic condition of people. It is argued by different researcher that late marriage is advantageous for women, as this allow them to complete their education and have awareness regarding their basic rights and also gain greater bargaining power and ability to fights for getting socio-economic rights from their husbands and have fewer births and slower population growth.

Bala (2003) observed that early marriage not only has negative effect on health and education it may also impact the girl's wellbeing, economic empowerment her decision making power, and access to resources. Early marriage has a negative effect on the girl child which may cause death of infants, emotional and mental disorder, intolerance, school drop-out, Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF) disease, early widowhood and frustration.

Early marriage is the main factor in developing countries which adversely effects on socio-economic status of women and generates health risks on the mother and

child. At puberty young mothers have to face many complications during pregnancy which may cause maternal death. (Zabin and Kiragu, 1998).

Kamari (2005) in his research study observed that the ratio of morbidity and mortality is high in rural area of which the major causes are getting married at the age of puberty.

Axinn and Thornton (1992) stated that when marriages take place at younger age, the burden of all expenditure is born by the parents. They young couple are fully dependent on the income of the parents, and cannot purchase anything according to their own desire. Some scholars have concluded that providing basic rights and economic empowerment to women is largely responsible for the delay in marrying (Preston and Richards, 1975)

Literature review

Zia (2013) reported that in 2012, sixty million child marriages took place worldwide, and 42% of them were from Pakistan. Researches shown that the exact prevalence of early marriages in Pakistan is unknown due to the early marriage not being registered as well as faking ages.

Erulkar and Bello (2004), argued that tradition norms and cultural values have been change from one area to another and different norms and beliefs guide the people. In upper Sindh and Punjab the main reasons for the practice of early marriages is to save the value of virginity, fears about marital sexual activity, to reduce promiscuity of the girl-child, and other socio-cultural and religious norms.

Garima, J.,B. Vikram (2012) conducted a survey to compare early marriages among four countries i.e. Pakistan, Nepal, India, and Bangladesh. Result shows that Pakistan was on second number among them, in girls having husband greater than 10 years older than them.

Moreover, he shows that 57% of early married girls were not educated.

UNFPA, (2007) finding in his research that in the rural and poor communities young girls are considered as economic burden and get early married to reduce their burden, alleviate poverty and reduce household expenses on the basis of *adda badda* (Exchange marriage) and some terms and conditions.

Bayisenga (2012) stressed that a young female marriage is a violation of girl's human rights as it deprives them of freedom, opportunity for personal development, and other rights. It is also hinders the economic development increase population pressure, health care costs and lost opportunities of human development. It is the main factor restricting girls' education as young girls drop out from school to get married all of which impacts negatively on the community as whole and on the wellbeing of future generations.

Overall, due to economic pressure, fear for family honor, as well as their possible sexual victimhood, and socio-cultural, religious and traditional values parents get married their daughters married at an early age.

Objectives of the study

This study was conducted to explore the following objectives:

1- To understand the basic rights of girls child who get married at young age.
2- To explore the socio-economical factor of early marriages of study area.
3- To analyses the effect of early marriages on health, education and their living conditions in the study area.

Hypotheses of the study
1- Early marriage has significant effect on the education of girls child
2- Early marriage has adverse effect on girls health and may causes high rates of infant motility, and other diseases.
3- The practice of early marriages is taking place because of cultural factors, death of the child's parents, or because of economic pressure due to poverty.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted in the Badin district. A sample of 57 respondents was randomly selected. The data was collected with the help of a well-designed close ended questionnaire. The data was then analyzed through the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) Null and alternate hypotheses were formulated to achieve certain objectives, descriptive statistics, cross tabulation, ANOVA, t-test and chi-square test have been applied.

Results and Discussion

Table: 1- Distribution of Respondent According to Age of Marriage % n=57

Age	Frequency	Percent
below 15yrs	25	43.9
16-20 yrs	22	38.6
21 to 30 yrs	10	17.5
Total	57	100.0

This table shows that about 44% of girls child get married at the age of below 15 years and 38.6% of young children get married at the age of 16-20 years. And 17.5 % of respondents get marriage at the age of 21-30 years.

Table: 2 - Factors of Early Marriages % n=57

Factors	Frequency	Percent
Poverty	22	38.5
Cultural factors (*Adda badda*)	25	43.8
Death of fathers	10	17.5
Total	57	100.0

This table shows the various factors which may behave major causes of arrange marriage of girls at early ages. About 43.8% of the respondent reported that because of cultural factor (adda badda,) (exchange marriage) their parents married them of early. This is common practice which is happening on the basis of agreement. Parents get their daughters or sons married on the basis of agreement which is commonly called adda badda(exchange marriage) . About 21% reported that because of economic pressure their parents cannot afford to fulfill their basic needs and took the decision to marry them of at an early age. About 17.5% of the girls responded that their mother died at an early age and that living with step

parents is very hard. They prefer to marry early to secure and protect from domestic violence.

Table: 3- Distribution of Respondent according to Education Level in % n=57

Age at Marriage: Effect on Education Cross tabulation					
			Effect on Education		Total
			Stop Going school	Continue till Matric	
Age at Marriage	Below 15yrs	Count	4	1	5
		% within Age at marriage	60	40.0	100.0
	16-20 yrs	Count	12	9	21
		% within Age at marriage	54.5	45.5	100.0
	21 to 30 yrs	Count	4	6	10
		% within Age at marriage	40.0	60.0	100.0
Total		Count	20	16	36
		% within Age at marriage	55.6	44.4	100.0

This table shows the strong relation between ages of marriage with level of education. About 80% of girls got married and stop going school at the he age of below 15 yrs and 20% respondents said that they continue till middle level. About 54.5 % of respondent stop going school when they got married at the age of 21-30 yrs and 45.5 % of respondent continue till matric they got married at the age of 16-30 yrs ,at the age of 21 to 30 yrs of age about 60 % respondent continue till metric as compared to 40 % of respondent stop going school.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.189[a]	2	.123
Likelihood Ratio	5.685	2	.058
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.365	1	.067
N of Valid Cases	36		
a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.78.			

The result shows chi square value is 4.189 with the degree of freedom 2 with significant value 0.123 which is less 0.5. This means marriage at early age has direct relation with education .the relationship between two variable is statistically significant. Education and early marriage are clearly related. Among those who get higher education the ratio of early marriage decline. In particular, girls with no education get married early.

Table: 4- Effect of Early Marriages on Living Standard of Respondent   % n=57

	Frequency	Percent
cannot purchase basic needs	28	49.1
because of economic pressure husbands beaten their wives	15	26.3
Effect on decision making power, access to resources	14	24.5
Total	57	100.0

This table shows the effect of early marriages on their living standards about 49.1% of the respondent reported that they cannot fulfill their basic needs; about 26.3% of respondent reported that because of economic pressure husbands their treated them badly. Girl child reported they are facing violence from their

husbands or other family elders clearly an indication of women subordinate and poor social status in the family and society. Societies with high level of violence against women are characterized as male dominant societies. About 24.5 % of girl's child reported that they do not have any income resources independently, and are fully dependent on their parents. They do not have access on income or any other resources that is why they cannot bear the expenses of education or expenses of pre-natal and post-natal checkup at the time of delivery.

Table:5- Distribution of Respondent according to Pre-Natal and Post-Natal Care % n=57

Visits of Prenatal Care		
	Frequency	Percent
no visits	30	52.6
one visits	13	22.8
two visits	11	19.2
more than two	3	3.5
Total	57	100.0
Visits of post-natal care		
	frequency	Percent
No visits	25	43.8
one visits	17	29.8
two visits	15	26.3
more than two	0	0
Total	57	100.0

In Pakistan, almost seven visits are needed for improved health status of women for normal cases. More visits are recommended according to pregnancy health. Table 3 shows that 52.6 percent of the respondents did not visit to any health professional and 22.0 percent made one visits, 3.5 percent visited more than twice . About 43.5% made no visits for postnatal checkup and about 29.8% of respondent made one visit after delivery and 26.3% visited twice for postnatal checkup. It means that only 10 to 15 percent of the respondents had awareness about the importance of pre-natal and post-natal care. And about 50% respondent had not aware about pre-natal and post-natal care. Visits for postnatal care can save from different problems like low level of hemoglobin, tetanus, gastrointestinal problems for both mother and child.

Table: 6- Relationship between Ages of Girls Child with Health Condition of Girls Respondent

			Effect on Health				
		Anemia	Death of New Born Baby	Fall in Hepatitis	Gyne problem	physically Fit	Total
Age_at_Marraige	below 15years	3	20	0	2	0	25
		12.0	80.0	0.0	8.0	0.0	100.0
	16-20 years	6	0	4	12	0	22
		27.3	.0	18.2	54.5	00.0	100.0
	21 to 30 years	3	1	0	0	6	10
		30.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	60.0	100.0
Total		12	21	4	14	6	57
		21.1	36.8	7.0	24.6	10.5	100.0

This table shows at younger age early marriage may cause of anemia miscarriage/abortion resulting in heavy blood loss in mothers which may cause death of new born baby. At the age of below 15 about 80% of girls child reported that because of early marriage which may cause death of new born baby 12% had

fall in anemia and 8% had gyne problem at the age of 16 to 20 years about 54% of female respondent had gyne problem 27% of respondent fall in anemia .At the age of 21-30 years of 60% of respondent reported that they are physically fit.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	72.322[a]	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	73.429	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	10.319	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	57		
a. 10 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .70.			

The results shows chi- square value 72.3 with degree of freedom with 0.00 significant values which is less than 0.05. Because of significant value is less than 0.5 it means the relationship between two variables is statistically significant. Because of early marriage below 15 years this may cause different problems and death of new born baby and mother.

Table: 7- Distribution of respondent according to age of marriage and number of children% n=57

Age at Marriage * Number of Children Cross tabulation							
		Number of children					Total
Age at marriage		1-3	3-5	5-7	more than 7	5	
below 15yrs	Count	0	7	14	2	2	25
	% within Age at marriage	.0%	28.0%	56.0%	8.0%	8.0%	100.0%
16-20 yrs	Count	2	5	11	4	0	22
	% within Age at marriage	9.1%	22.7%	50.0%	18.2%	.0%	100.0%
21 to 30	Count	8	2	0	0	0	10

	yrs	% within Age at marriage	80.0%	20.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	12	12	25	6	2	57
		% within Age at marriage	21.1%	21.1%	43.9%	10.5%	3.5%	100.0%

This table shows the relationship between age of marriage and number of children at the age of below 15 about 56% of respondent had 5-7 children and 28% of respondent had 3-5 children. About 80% of respondent who come under the category of age of 21 to 30 yrs had 1-3 children and 20% of the respondent had 3-5 children.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	49.476[a]	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	48.858	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	19.381	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	57		
a. 11 cells (73.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .35.			

The results show there is relationship between age of marriage and number of children. Because of significant value is 0.00 which is less than 0.5 with the degree of freedom 8, which shows hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusion

Childhood is a time of innocence at this stage the child needs care and to be given development opportunities to grow up and prepare to face future challenges. As a developing nation, Pakistan is still being pulled between modernization and tradition. Child marriage is major cause which may not only be responsible for lower levels or not attainting of schooling for girls in every region of the world but it also may cause a barrier to achieve international development goals. Educated mothers are also responsible for better care of their children in terms of education and health, and are responsible for changing the behavior of the child.

More than half of the world population is female, if the females become educated and contribute in the labour market on an equal basis as men, society will grow rapidly

Early marriage is not only a violation of rights to education but it also deprives girls of rights to childhood and health. It is observed from different literature review and surveys conducted from the Badin district that because of economic, social and cultural factors poor families marry their children at a young age to release their Economic burden. Mostly in Sindh this is the cultural practice to arrange marriage on the basis of *addo-baddo,* or *watta satta* (Give and take) practice. Most of the respondents reported that after the death of mother their father get and step mother treat badly in order to secure her life get marriage at earlier age. In order to know the effects of early marriages on health most of the respondents reported that after marriage which leads to early childbearing they have to face many complication about 80% of respondents reported that because of heavy blood loss which caused death of their babies, about 27% of the respondents reported that they fall in anemia and had to face many problems during delivery.

Recommendations

1- In order to get awareness regarding effects of early marriages at community level training and seminars should be arrange by local NGOs at the community level to guide them on the effects of and combating against child marriages

2- The Punishments should be imposed by the government on those who arrange, direct and solemnize child marriages

3- All marriages must similarly be registered.

4- There should be mechanism or legislation policy on child marriage and fix the minimum age of marriage for both male and female

5- Poverty is one of the major factors which forces parents to get their children married early. The government should make serious efforts to improve access to basic health and education facilities. Promote education of the girl child. The government should provide free education for girls and construct girl educational institutions at small village levels. Most of

the families decide not to educate their daughters because they cannot bear the education expenses. The government and NGOs should provide free books, uniforms, scholarship and so on

6- Awareness of effects of early marriages should be increase by using mass media to the whole community about the consequences of early marriage on girls themselves, their family and on the community as a whole. This will lead to the empowerment of girl child into skills for self-confidence, assertiveness, speaking out, decision- making and negotiation.

7- There should be amendment in school curriculum to include the effects of early marriages on the girl child. Doctors and nurses of the area should provide the knowledge to parents about the health risks of early child birth.

8- Girls must also be provided basic rights, rights of education which empower the women in socially and economically. More employment opportunities must be created for girls. Vocational trainings and capacity building Centre should be open which is endowing them with those skills that are marketable in the context of their own.

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