

Discussion on Child Marriage and Its Impact in Bangladesh

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to study about the child marriage and its consequences. Actually we have tried to focus here what are the main reasons of child marriage and the impacts on society. Besides these, we have described about educational campaign to neutralize child marriage. After that we have mentioned some impacts on child marriage such as: Public Health Impacts, Budgetary Impacts, and Economic Impacts etc. Then some feasibility has been depicted in this paper. Finally we have stated few steps that help to minimize child marriage.

Key-words:

Child marriage, impacts, public health, maternal and child mortality, child bride.

Introduction:

Among all countries in the world, Bangladesh is in the first position for proportion of child marriage before age of 15. In parallel, in the same context before age of 18, its rank is 4. Not only 15 or 18, many families are victims for occurring child marriage due to different types of unexpected circumstances [source: DHS-Demographic and Health Survey].

Bangladesh is the only South Asian country that allows child marriage in exceptional cases. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, passed on February 27, had a special provision allowing under age marriage “under extraordinary circumstances in the best interest of the children” with the consent of parents, guardians and the court. It triggered massive outcry from rights groups who fear the loopholes in the bill could see victims forced to marry rapists. The government is yet to publish the draft rules. But the government has already taken a National Action Plan 2017-2030, which is at the draft stage, to prevent child marriage [10].



Figure: 1

Basically, there are many bad reflections for happening child marriage such as: negative health, societal outcomes and future generation. When child marriage happens, brides are immature. She is totally unaware about her health even though the future generation. As a result, she or her family members have been suffering very much.

In fact, it is quite impossible to terminate child marriage from Bangladesh because of poverty and illiteracy. If it is possible to eliminate completely from Bangladesh then the national economy can gain an additional 403.2 billion BDT [BBS- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics] which is approximately 10% of the national budget [1]. When the national economy will be increased, obviously there is a great impact on GDP in Bangladesh.

A good number of child marriages can be prevented by completing comprehensive annual school education program where it should be targeted grade 5 students. To stop this child marriage, it will be cost 3500 BDT per child. [BBS data]

Child marriage is defined [5] as marriage of any younger person below eighteen years of age in line with the United Nations (1990) convention on the rights of children. Mlambo and Hlongwa [6] have showed the implications of child marriages and their developmental effects on young girls in 2019. Mathews (2019), explains that 700 million women alive today, at some point, were married as children and of that number, 17 percent of them or 125 million live in Africa [7]



Picture: 1

A report by the World Bank indicated that, child marriage in Africa costs the continent tens of billions of dollars in lost economic and human capital. The report also states that 3 million girls in SSA marry before their 18th birthday every year [The World Bank, 2018]. [8].

Each day, more than 41,000 girls worldwide are married while children, often before they may be physically and emotionally ready to become wives and mothers. Child marriage, defined as marriage or a union taking place before the age of 18, endangers the life trajectories of these girls in numerous ways.

Nearly 5 in 10 child brides gave birth before age 18, and 8 in 10 gave birth before age 20 [11].

Bangladesh is home to 38 million child brides, including currently married girls along with women who were first married in childhood. Of course, 13 million married before age 15. [11]

Over the world, 1 girl is affected by child marriage out of 5. It is the, because 23 girls are victims of child marriage in every minute. 67 girls are being married before 18 and 53 before 15 out of 100. This rate is high in Bangladesh. The place of Bangladesh is fourth in the world for under -18 marriages, and in first for under-15 marriages. Due to child marriage the rates of spousal abuse, maternal and child mortality are being increased day by day. There are great impacts on society for being child marriage such as: death of meritorious students, born of immature baby and population growth.

Besides these, unplanned pregnancy, early age of first child birth and increased family size are also results of child marriage. In fact, the World Bank estimates that that eliminating child marriage from Bangladesh would generate nearly 403.2 billion BDT (\$4.8) in additional national earnings and productivity annually, which is roughly 10% of the current national budget. [Source: BBS]

Discussion:

To reduce child marriage, the government of Bangladesh has taken the steps since 1992, with the legal minimum age of marriage being 18 for women and 21 for men. During more than last two decades, the proportion of child marriage under 18 has been decreased from 86% to 71% in rural areas and 76% to 51% in urban areas [Source: BBS data]. Moreover, it is being continued at alarming rates. The government of Bangladesh has also implemented additional laws to prevent these unaware incidents such as birth registration was made compulsory in 2004 to ensure proper age verification at marriage.

The CMRA-Child Marriage Restraint Act is replaced the 1992 law where offenders will get punishment and specially adding a provision that permits a boy or a girl to get married before reaching the legal age limit in few exceptional cases.

There are some crucial reasons for occurring child marriage are given below:

Poverty, illiteracy, high demand, superstition, avoiding of dowry and lack of security, these are all frequent contributing factors to a parent's decision to marry their child before 18 years of age. In the Figure -2: represents the proportion of marriages involving under 18 years in Bangladesh 1992-2017 in both rural community and urban community where in urban area, the ratio is gradually decreased but in rural community though it is decreased except in the duration 2002-2006, here it has been fluctuated.

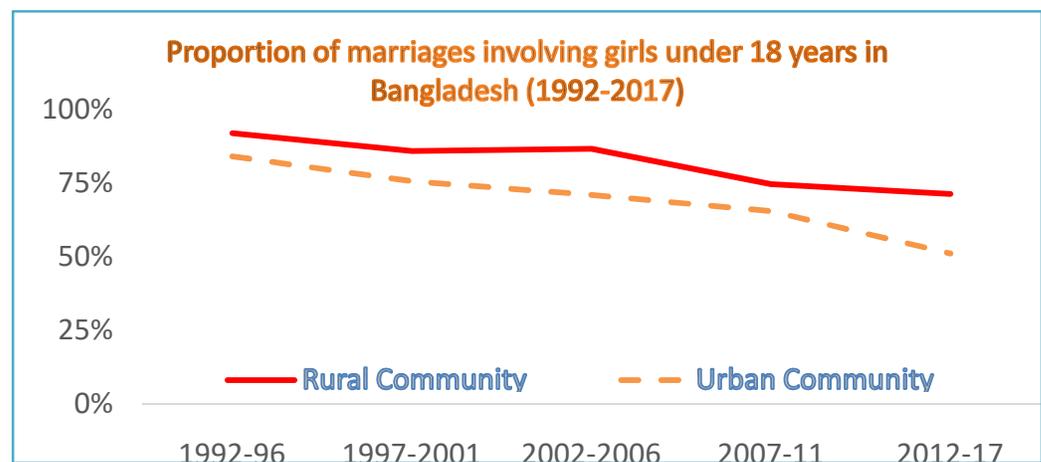


Figure: 2

Both parents and child may be unaware of the negative consequences associated with marriage and child birth at a young age. For ignorance of marriage a girl faces some negative consequences which are terrible for her entire life. Even she is also an economic burden of her parents. Parents are insisted to marry off their daughter before 18 are:

1. To get relief of increasing dowry
2. To prevent eve-teasing and sexual harassment toward their unmarried girls.
3. To assert of control over their daughter's virginity and sexuality.
4. To avoid of family dishonor over relationships or pregnancies before marriage.

Methods:

Case-1:

To neutralize child marriage, one advance is to teach children about negative impacts of early marriage and available resources to struggle child marriage with their known circles or friends who faced such situations and must inform them that it is their right to refuse a forced marriage particularly, at a young age.

The campaign will also provide information about the benefits of completing secondary education, and on existing programs designed to enhance the feasibility of staying in school.

Case-2

The main target of the educational campaign is to enroll all children in grade 5 of Bangladesh and which should be repeated annually.

Case-3:

A few years back, only 55% of eligible children in secondary education where 98% of eligible children were enrolled in primary education.[Source: BBS]

Because of this sharp decrease, the grade 5 levels optimal to maximize the reach of the program. It is obviously true that only 2% of girls remain married after at the age 11.

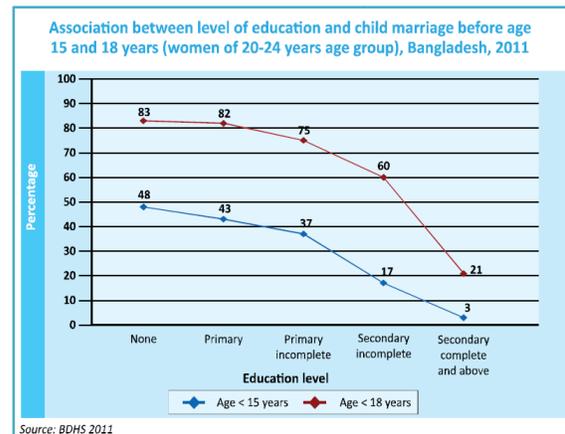


Figure: 3

In coming years, actionable information can be provided to parents so that child marriage can be prevented. By focusing on the importance of finishing secondary education and decreased rates of child marriage are inverse proportions with each other.

Budgetary impact:

The projected cost of such an education program will be 580,758,700 (\$ 6,91,37,894) annually to the government of Bangladesh. Cost allocations for Educational campaign are given below:

Field of Cost	Estimated Cost	
SADTM	3,93,500BDT/\$4,686	
PoDM	28,320,000BDT/\$337,142	
TTM	Central	428,800 BDT/\$5,105
	District	12,302,400BDT/\$146,457
	Sub District	77,314,000BDT/\$920,405
	District	
TSLT	462,000,000BDT/\$5,500,000	

Table: 1

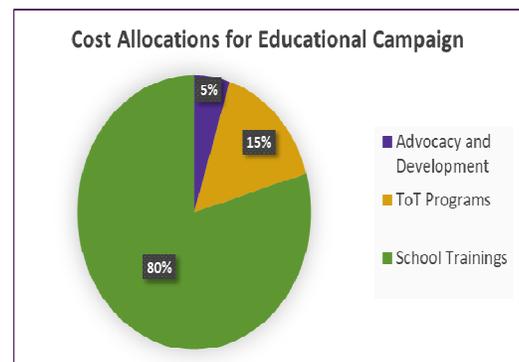


Figure: 4

SADTM-Stakeholder Advocacy and Development of Training Materials

PoDM-Procurement of Distribution Materials

TTM-Train the trainers Method

TSLT-The School Level training

Economic Impact:

31% in the prevalence of child marriage for the target population can be reduced by showing similar type of educational interventions. If it is possible to achieve similar results by the program, tree model estimates that 1,64,768 [Source: BBS].

Child marriage would be prevented among the grade 5 where cohortly the educational program was delivered; the government of Bangladesh would spend 3500 BDT (\$44) for each child marriage in this cohort. It is obvious that the full benefit to this cohort will be realized across the 6-7 years time horizon until these children turn 18.

Eliminating child marriages and early childbirths between 2016 and 2030 could save an estimated 3.6 million and 4.4 million under-five children respectively from stunting. It could also save the lives of another 4.6 million under five children. This could also save the world \$98 billion annually by 2030 [10].

Public Health Impact:

Because child marriage is strongly linked to increase rates of multiple adverse health outcomes for both the new bride and her future children, we anticipate that our program will reduce the prevalence the population of Bangladesh for the following public health areas:

The following table has been formed on the base of DHS survey :

HE	Relative risk in child marriages vs. adult marriages
UP	1.21 as likely
UToP	1.16 x
FS03+C	3.94 x
LBW	1.33-1.55 x
MM	5x as likely(marriage 10-14 yrs) 2x as likely (marriage 15-19 yrs)

Table: 2

HE-Health Effect

UP-Unplanned Pregnancies

UToP-Unconditional Termination of Pregnancies

FS03+C- Family Size of 3+ Children

LBW-Low Birth Weight

MM-Maternal Mortality

Feasibility:

There are two types of feasibilities of this program. These are:

1. The operational feasibility
2. The political feasibility

Both feasibilities are high because for the operational feasibility similar training programs already exist for health and other educational topics. The information about preventing child marriage can be easily merged into existing structures to reach the intended audience and for the political feasibilities; the new law of child marriage has brought fresh attention to the problem of child marriage in Bangladesh. In addition, the total cost as well as the cost per child marriage prevented would not be difficult to implement in a national budget.

Some steps are given below to neutralize the Child Marriage:

Child marriage is a complex problem. To reduce the rates of child marriage, the following steps should be taken:

1. Different organizations or NGO's can be set up communication with communities engaging with key decision makers and stakeholders at every level.
2. Combing empowerment and education programs with poverty reduction activities will address additional drivers of child marriage, providing increased impact towards ending child marriage completely.
3. At advocacy level, the issue of child marriage is steadily being integrated within main stream education, health, nutrition, protection and poverty reduction programs.
4. Enforcement of existing marriage act with appropriate legal action taken against violators.
5. These activities reach out to care givers of children in their extended family and community, local and religions leaders as well as governmental representatives and frontline workers.
6. The methods for engaging with the people involve participatory theater, community dialogues, courtyards meetings, radio and TV drama serials and phone-in shows, community declarations and others.
7. Promote a single; memorable number to dial to reach child marriage helps lines.
8. Increase awareness and strengthen operations of "one-stop" services that provide health, legal, and law enforcement assistance in a single location.
9. There have also been efforts to create awareness and develop life skills and push for girl's education through stipends and empower girls to negotiate prevent and report on child marriage.
10. To decrease child marriage and also to aware parents or community level, organization should use constant dialogue with adolescents and especially fathers who are critical to decisions over child marriage.

Conclusion:

The study shows that child marriage is still common and alarming position in Bangladesh. In this paper, mainly depicts the reason, impacts and consequences of child marriage. Then it is also mentioned who are the victims of prevalence. After that it is illustrated some impacts such as budgetary impacts, economic impacts, public health impacts. In addition, two feasibilities have also been focused. To decrease the rate of child marriage few crucial steps are also discussed in this paper.

To reduce the child marriage and teenage motherhood, the marriage act may be reviewed, and the legal age at marriage may be set at 19 years for females as the country has been passing through a transition period in its economic development.

Further, door-step delivery of services for modern contraceptive methods may also reduce teenage motherhood. Healthcare facilities should be made available among the poor and in remote areas for better health of both mother and child in Bangladesh.

Working together with partners from donor and national governments, multilateral institutions, private enterprises and donors and civil society around the world, we are confident we can end child marriage and unleash the full potential of girls everywhere.

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