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Factors associated with the practice of child marriage among rural women

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Abstract

The present study was designed to know the factors associated with the practice of child marriage among rural women. A total of 106 respondents married at the early age selected from six villages of Dharwad taluk formed the population for the study. Self structured general information schedule and socio economic status scale were used to interview the respondents. The respondents were selected through snowball sampling method. It was found that, women's age at marriage varied by type of marriage, education level and occupation of the parents, caste, religion, type of family, size of family and family status. Girls access to education and information on reproductive health should be emphasizes and providing them with basic life skills to enable them to avoid child marriage.

Keywords: Child marriage, Risk factors, Age at marriage

1. Introduction

Globally, child marriage (CM) is defined as marriage before the age of 18 years which applies to both boys and girls. However in India, as per 'Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006', a marriage is legally considered as child marriage when girl is less than 18 years old or boy is less than 21 years old.

Child marriage, also known as early marriage, is defined as "any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, physiologically, and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing" (UNIFPA, 2006) [9].

Poverty is one of the major factors under-pining early marriages. Where poverty is acute, a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden and parents looking for early marriage of their daughters as an alternative way of reducing the burden.

Hence the present study was conducted with the objective to know the factors associated with the practice of child marriage among rural women.

2. Material and Methods

A correlation research design was employed to test the relationship between child marriage and influential factors like caste, religion, ordinal position, socio-economic status of parents, type of family, size of family and type of marriage.

Respondents married at the early age selected from villages of Dharwad taluk formed the population for the study. Out of 110 villages in Dharwad taluk, five per cent of the villages, i.e. six villages namely Tegur, Karadigudda, Kurabagatti, Hebballi, Narendra and Yettingudda were randomly selected. Respondents from these villages were selected through snowball sampling method. Local leaders, socially active individuals and Anganawadi teachers were contacted to gather information about families having individuals who married early. A total of 106 respondents were interviewed by using self structured schedules.

Self structured general information interview schedule was used to collect information about respondents, regarding their ordinal position, occupation, caste, religion, family type, family size, type of marriage and family composition. The Socio economic status scale developed by Aggarwal *et al.* (2005) was employed to assess the SES of the family. The scale consists of 22 statements which assess parents education, occupation, parent's family income from all sources and socio-economic status of family during their time of marriage.

Factors associated with the practice of child marriage were classified into three groups as respondents, parental and familial factors.

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3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows association between age at marriage and respondents characteristics such as ordinal position and type of marriage. With respect to ordinal position (Table 1a), most of them (34.28%) married at the age of 16-18 years were first born followed by second born (31.42%), third born (25.71%) and only 8.57 per cent of them were later born. Thirty nine per cent of them married at the age of 13-15 years were first born followed by second born (23.07%) and equal percent (19.23%) of them were third born later born. Half them married at the age of less than 12 years were first born and second born. None of them were third and later born. There was no significant association between age at marriage and ordinal position of the respondents. Regarding type of marriage (Table 1b), Majority of the respondents (80.00%) married at the age of less than 12 years had consanguineous type of marriage followed by 13-15 years (50.00%) and 16-18 years (40.00%). The analysis showed no significant association but negative correlation was found between age at marriage and type of marriage. Sheela and Audinarayana (2000) who revealed that child marriage had positive significant correlation with type of marriage. Marriage in blood relatives (consanguineous marriage) resulted in earlier age at marriage (by 1-4 years) as compared to non-relatives. Similar results observed by Iyer *et al.* (2013) [4] vast majority (61.3 %) of them revealed that their marriages were consanguineous type and the remaining 38.7 per cent said that their marriages were not consanguineous type. Association between age at marriage and parental characteristics of respondents such as education and occupation of mother and father is depicted in Table 2. With regard to mother education (Table 2a), respondents who married at 16-18 years, 45.71 per cent of their mothers were illiterates followed by just literates but no schooling (34.28%) and had primary education (20.00%). Respondents who married at 13-15 years, 69.23 per cent of their mothers were illiterates followed by just literates but no schooling (23.07%) and only 7.69 per cent of them completed primary education. Respondents who married at less than 12 years, all of their mothers were illiterates and none of them had primary and above education. There was significant Association between age at marriage and respondents' mother education at 1per cent level. Similar results were observed by the study conducted by Iyer *et al.* (2013) [4], where results found that parents education was the important factor influencing age at marriage. It was observed that in the case of a majority the mothers of the child bride were illiterates as against 16.4 per cent whose mothers were literate. Ali *et al.* (2014) [1] who revealed that child marriage was more common among women whose parents had less than secondary education wherein 84 per cent mothers had less than secondary education. Regarding mother occupation (Table 2b), respondents who married at 16-18 years, 87.14 per cent of their mothers were housewives followed by those who married at 13-15 years (61.53) and less than 12 years (30.00%). Respondents who married at less than 12 years, forty per cent of the respondents' mothers self employed with income less than 5000 followed by those married at 13-15 years (7.69%) and 16-18 years (2.85%). Respondents who married at less than 12 years, ten per cent of their mothers were self employed with income more than 5000 followed by those married at 13-15 years. Respondents who married at less than 12 years, 20 per cent of their mothers were service at own cultivation of land followed by 13-15 years (15.38) and 16-18 years (7.14%). Respondents who married at 13-15 years, 11.53 per cent of their mothers were service in private

sector/central/state/public undertaking followed by 16-18 years (2.85%). There was no significant Association between age at marriage and respondents' mother occupation. With regard to father education (Table 2c), respondents who married at 16-18 years, 47.14 per cent of their fathers had primary education followed by just literates but no schooling (44.28%), high school (7.14%) and illiterates (1.42%). Respondents who married at 13-15 years, equal per cent of their fathers (50.00%) were just literate but no schooling and primary education. None of them had high school education. Respondents who married at less than 12 years, eighty per cent of their fathers were just literate but no schooling followed by had completed primary education (20.00%) and none of the fathers had high school education. There was no significant association but positive correlation between age at marriage and respondents father education. These results are supported by the study conducted by Nasrin and Rahman (2012) [5] who said that fathers with lower level of education had a higher tendency to the early marriage of their daughters and the association between different levels of father's education and the age at first marriage of their daughters were statistically significant. Regarding father occupation (Table 2d), respondents who married at 16-18 years, 80 per cent of their fathers service at shops, own cultivation of land. Respondents who married at 13-15 years, 69.23 per cent of their fathers service at shops, own cultivation of land followed by equal per cent of them self employed with income more than 5000 and service in private sector. Around 8 per cent of them were service in central/state/public undertaking and none of them self employed with income less than 5000. Respondents who married at less than 12 years, sixty ninety per cent of their fathers were service at shops, own cultivation of land followed by were service in central/state/public undertaking. None of them were self employed with income less than 5000/- and more than 5000/-. There was no significant association between age at marriage and respondents' father occupation. Ali *et al.* (2014) [1] who reported that majority (66.3%) of the respondents fathers were unskilled workers compared to non child married women. But there was no significant difference regarding father occupation. Association between age at marriage and familial characteristics of respondents such as caste, religion, type of family, size of family and family socio-economic status is presented in Table 3. With regard to caste (Table 3a), 64 per cent of the respondents belonged to OBC category followed by lower caste (22.64%). Among the respondents married at the age of 16-18 years, 67.14 per cent of them were from OBC category followed by lower caste (24.28%) and upper caste (8.57%). Most of the respondents married at the age of 13-15 years were from OBC category followed by upper caste (26.92%) and lower caste (19.23%). Among the respondents married at less than 12 years, 70 per cent of them were from OBC category followed by lower caste (20.00%) and upper caste (10.00%). There was a significant association and positive correlation between age at marriage and caste. These results are in line with the findings of the study conducted by Chandrashekar (2010) who reported that women from scheduled caste (16.60 %) households and other backward classes (31.90 %) were likely to marry earlier than women from upper social groups (38.40 %). Pandya and Bhanderi (2015) [6] revealed that 64 per cent of the early married couples belonged to scheduled caste (SC)/schedules tribe (ST)/other backward classes (OBC). With regard to religion (Table 3b), most of the respondents (57.14%) married at 16-18 years were Muslims followed by Hindus (42.85%).

Respondents who married at 13-15 years, 57.69 per cent of them were Hindus followed by Muslims (42.30%). Among the respondents married at less than 12 years, 60 per cent of them were Muslims followed by Hindus (40.00%). There was significant Association between age at marriage and religion. These results are in accordance with the study conducted by Zahangir *et al.* (2008) [8] who reported that the results revealed that child marriage in Muslim religion was significant determinant to age at marriage. Chowdhury *et al.* (2013) [3] showed that adolescents belonged to Muslim religion (64.20%) married earlier compared to non Muslim adolescents. With respect to type of family (Table 3c), respondents who married at less than 12 years majority of them (70.00%) belonged to joint family followed by those who married at 16-18 years (44.28%) and 13-15 years (42.30%). Among the respondents who married 16-18 years, 51 per cent of them belonged to joint family followed by those who married at 13-15 years (42.30%) and less than 12 years (30.00%). Respondents who married at 13-15 years, fifteen per cent of them belonged to extended family followed by those who married at 16-18 years (57.14%) and none of them married at less than 12 years were from extended family. There was no significant Association between age at marriage and type of family. The results are supported by the study conducted by Pandya and Bhanderi (2015) [6] who reported that respondents lived in joint family (62.10%) had child marriage compared to their counterparts, but not statistically significant. With regard to size of family (Table

3d), respondents who married at less than 12 years majority of them (90.00%) belonged to large size family followed by 13-15 years (38.46%) and 16-18 years (17.14%). Among the respondents who married 16-18 years, 67 per cent of them belonged to medium size family followed by 13-15 years (57.69%) and less than 12 years (10.00%). Respondents who married at 16-18 years, 16 per cent of them belonged to small size family followed by 13-15 years (3.84%) none of them married at less than 12 years were from small size family. There was significant association and negative correlation between age at marriage and size of family. Similar results observed by Iyer *et al.* (2013) [4] who reported that majority of the girl child brides were from large families. Regarding family socio-economic status (Table 3e), respondents who married at less than 12 years majority of them (70.00%) belonged to medium status followed by 16-18 years (52.85%) and 13-15 years (38.46%). Among the respondents who married 13-15 years, 61.53 per cent of them belonged to low status followed by 16-18 years (47.14%) and less than 12 years (30.00%). There was no significant association but positive correlation between age at marriage and family socio-economic status. However similar results are shown by Chowdhury *et al.* (2013) [3] who revealed that most of the adolescent women married (67.5%) before or at median age were belonged to middle status of family and poor status of family (38.60%). There was a strong positive association between age at first marriage and family status.

Table 1a: Association between age at marriage and child characteristics N=106

| Characteristics | Age at marriage (years) | | | Total | Modified χ^2 Value | r value |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| | ≤12 | 13-15 | 16-18 | | | |
| Ordinal position | | | | | | |
| First born | 5(50.00) | 10(38.46) | 24(34.28) | 39(36.79) | 0.418 ^{NS} | 0.90 ^{NS} |
| Second born | 5(50.00) | 6(23.07) | 22(31.42) | 33(31.13) | | |
| Third born | 0 | 5(19.23) | 18(25.71) | 23(21.69) | | |
| Later born | 0 | 5(19.23) | 6(8.57) | 11(10.37) | | |
| Total | 10(100.00) | 26(100.00) | 70(100.00) | 106(100.00) | | |

Figures in the parentheses indicates percentages
NS- Not significant

Table 1b: Association between age at marriage and child characteristics N=106

| Characteristics | Age at marriage (years) | | | Total | Modified χ^2 Value | r value |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------------------|---------|
| | ≤12 | 13-15 | 16-18 | | | |
| Type of marriage | | | | | | |
| Non-consanguineous | 2(20.00) | 13(50.00) | 42(60.00) | 57(53.72) | 5.33 ^{NS} | -0.20* |
| Consanguineous | 8(80.00) | 13(50.00) | 28(40.00) | 49(46.23) | | |
| Total | 10(100.00) | 26(100.00) | 70(100.00) | 106(100.00) | | |

Figures in the parentheses indicates percentages
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.
NS- Not significant

Table 2a: Association between age at marriage and parental characteristics of respondents N=106

| Characteristics | Age at marriage (years) | | | Total | Modified χ^2 value | r value |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------------------|---------|
| | ≤12 | 13-15 | 16-18 | | | |
| Mother education | | | | | | |
| Illiterate | 10(100.00) | 18(69.23) | 32(45.71) | 60(56.60) | 16.45** | 0.37** |
| Just literate but no schooling | 0 | 6(23.07) | 24(34.28) | 30(20.30) | | |
| Primary education | 0 | 2(7.69) | 14(20.00) | 16(15.09) | | |
| Total | 10(100.00) | 26(100.00) | 70(100.00) | 106(100.00) | | |

Figures in the parentheses indicates percentages
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 2b: Association between age at marriage and parental characteristics of respondents N=106

| Characteristics | Age at marriage (years) | | | Total | Modified χ^2 value | r value |
|---|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| | ≤12 | 13-15 | 16-18 | | | |
| Mother occupation | | | | | | |
| Housewife | 3(30.00) | 16(61.53) | 61(87.14) | 80(75.47) | 3.84 ^{NS} | 0.12 ^{NS} |
| Self employed with income <5000/- | 4(40.00) | 2(7.69) | 2(2.85) | 8(7.54) | | |
| Self employed with income >5000/- | 1(10.00) | 1(3.84) | 0 | 2(1.88) | | |
| Service at shops, own cultivation | 2(20.00) | 4(15.38) | 5(7.14) | 11(10.38) | | |
| Service in private sector/ business/ central/state/public undertaking | 0 | 3(11.53) | 2(2.85) | 5(4.71) | | |
| Total | 10(100.00) | 26(100.00) | 70(100.00) | 106(100.00) | | |

Figures in the parentheses indicates percentages

NS- Not significant

Table 2c: Association between age at marriage and parental characteristics of respondents N=106

| Characteristics | Age at marriage (years) | | | Total | Modified χ^2 value | r value |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------------------|---------|
| | ≤12 | 13-15 | 16-18 | | | |
| Father education | | | | | | |
| Illiterate | 0 | 0 | 1(1.42) | 1(0.94) | 6.96 ^{NS} | 0.192* |
| Just literate but no schooling | 8(80.00) | 13(50.00) | 31(44.28) | 52(49.05) | | |
| Primary education | 2(20.00) | 13(50.00) | 33(47.14) | 48(45.28) | | |
| High school | 0 | 0 | 5(7.14) | 5(4.71) | | |
| Total | 10(100.00) | 26(100.00) | 70(100.00) | 106(100.00) | | |

Figures in the parentheses indicates percentages

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

NS- Not significant

Table 2d: Association between age at marriage and parental characteristics of respondents N=106

| Characteristics | Age at marriage (years) | | | Total | Modified χ^2 value | r value |
|---|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| | ≤12 | 13-15 | 16-18 | | | |
| Father occupation | | | | | | |
| Self employed with income <5000/- | 0 | 0 | 1(1.42) | 1(0.94) | 4.58 ^{NS} | -0.63 ^{NS} |
| Self employed with income >5000/- | 0 | 3(11.54) | 4(5.71) | 7(6.60) | | |
| Service at shops, own cultivation | 9(90.00) | 18(69.23) | 56(80.00) | 83(78.30) | | |
| Service in private sector/ business | 0 | 3(11.54) | 6(8.37) | 9(8.49) | | |
| Service in central/state/public undertaking | 1(10.00) | 2(7.69) | 3(4.28) | 6(5.66) | | |
| Total | 10(100.00) | 26(100.00) | 70(100.00) | 106(100.00) | | |

Figures in the parentheses indicates percentages

NS- Not significant

Table 3a: Association between age at marriage and familial characteristics of respondents N=106

| Characteristics | Age at marriage (years) | | | Total | Modified χ^2 value | r value |
|----------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------------------|---------|
| | ≤12 | 13-15 | 16-18 | | | |
| Caste | | | | | | |
| Upper caste | 1(10.00) | 7(26.92) | 6(8.57) | 14(13.20) | 6.32** | 0.24* |
| OBC | 7(70.00) | 14(53.84) | 47(67.14) | 68(64.15) | | |
| Lower caste (SC& ST) | 2(20.00) | 5(19.23) | 17(24.28) | 24(22.64) | | |
| Total | 10(100.00) | 26(100.00) | 70(100.00) | 106(100.00) | | |

Figures in the parentheses indicates percentages

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3b: Association between age at marriage and familial characteristics of respondents N=106

| Characteristics | Age at marriage (years) | | | Total | Modified χ^2 value | r value |
|-----------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------------------|---------|
| | ≤12 | 13-15 | 16-18 | | | |
| Religion | | | | | | |
| Hindu | 4(40.00) | 15(57.69) | 30(42.85) | 49(46.22) | 16.27** | 0.379** |
| Muslim | 6(60.00) | 11(42.30) | 40(57.14) | 57(53.77) | | |
| Total | 10(100.00) | 26(100.00) | 70(100.00) | 106(100.00) | | |

Figures in the parentheses indicates percentages

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 3c: Association between age at marriage and familial characteristics of respondents N=106

| Characteristics | Age at marriage (years) | | | Total | Modified χ^2 value | r value |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| | ≤12 | 13-15 | 16-18 | | | |
| Type of family | | | | | | |
| Nuclear | 3(30.00) | 11(42.30) | 36(72.00) | 50(47.16) | 6.66 ^{NS} | -0.13 ^{NS} |
| Joint | 7(70.00) | 11(42.30) | 31(63.26) | 49(46.22) | | |
| Extended | 0 | 4(15.38) | 3(42.85) | 7(6.60) | | |
| Total | 10(100.00) | 26(100.00) | 70(100.00) | 106(100.00) | | |

Figures in the parentheses indicates percentages

NS- Not significant

Table 3d: Association between age at marriage and familial characteristics of respondents N=106

| Characteristics | Age at marriage (years) | | | Total | Modified χ^2 value | r value |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| | ≤12 | 13-15 | 16-18 | | | |
| Size of family | | | | | | |
| Small | 0 | 1(3.84) | 11(15.71) | 12(11.32) | 72.71 ^{**} | -0.53 ^{**} |
| Medium | 1(10.00) | 15(57.69) | 47(67.14) | 63(59.43) | | |
| Large | 9(90.00) | 10(38.46) | 12(17.14) | 31(29.24) | | |
| Total | 10(100.00) | 26(100.00) | 70(100.00) | 106(100.00) | | |

Figures in the parentheses indicates percentages

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 3e: Association between age at marriage and familial characteristics of respondents N=106

| Characteristics | Age at marriage (years) | | | Total | Modified χ^2 value | r value |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| | ≤12 | 13-15 | 16-18 | | | |
| Family socio-economic status | | | | | | |
| Low | 3(30.00) | 16(61.53) | 33(47.14) | 42(39.62) | 10.34 ^{NS} | 0.32 ^{**} |
| Medium | 7(70.00) | 10(38.46) | 37(52.85) | 64(60.38) | | |
| Total | 10(100.00) | 26(100.00) | 70(100.00) | 106(100.00) | | |

Figures in the parentheses indicates percentages

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

NS- Not significant

4. Conclusion

The child marriage has become major public health problems in developing countries like India. Influential factors like parents' education, size of family, type of marriage, caste, religion and poor socio-economic status are significantly associated with child marriage. Efforts to improve the status of women through their increased participation in education should be encouraged. Education is a weapon for fighting any forms of societal problems. "Educating a girl or woman is educating people" is one of the manifestations of the good works of the government as far as girls education is concerned.

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