

Awareness Regarding Early Marriages among School Girls in Karachi

Tafazzul H Zaidi, Faheem Ahmed and Kiran Mehtab

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To assess the awareness of school girls regarding early marriages in Karachi

Study Design: A Cross-sectional Study

Place and Duration of Study: This study was conducted at the Al Hameed School in Karachi from July 2018 To November 2018.

Materials and Methods: Structured individual questionnaire containing 30 questions was used to collect information from the respondents. Young females between the ages of 12 to 17 were considered eligible for the study. It was used to collect most of the quantifiable information on the causes and impact of early marriage before 18 years. The questionnaire was administered to a representative sample of 284 female students in a specified age group which was conducted in three sessions that took 20 minutes on an average. An informed verbal consent was taken from the candidates. Pilot study was conducted to assess the authenticity of the questionnaire. Data was entered and analyzed using SPSS version 20, with 95% confidence interval and 0.05 p-value.

Results: All the respondents were aged 17 or less. Most of them (94.7%) belong to religion of Islam. The survey was taken by people belonging to different ethnic groups. Almost 70.1% Urdu speaking, 11.3% Sindhi, 8.5% Punjabi, 2.1% Balochi and 6.3% were Pathan.

More than half (73.90 %) girls knew about the correct age of marriage. 81% girls believe that early marriage leads to discontinuation of education and inadequate maturity of young girls. 28% of girls thought early marriage extends women's potential child bearing capacity. 40.85% view increased risk of pregnancy complications, a correlation to early marriage. 38.70 % of the respondents knew that first 3 months of pregnancy is the most sensitive period of pregnancy. 10.90% girls were of the opinion that mothers' health would suffer more, if teenage mother did not get proper antenatal care. 36.30% young females were aware that a woman can get high blood pressure and sugar due to pregnancy. about 89.40 % respondents view hospital and maternity homes to be the safest place for delivery. 58.50% girls think that early motherhood alter the mood of young females. 38.40% girls were aware that pregnancy at early age can lead to child having low birth weight. 28.50% young girls thought that early marriage/motherhood and depression are associated and it is a driving force for addiction. 13.70% girls supported early marriage.

Conclusion: The study concluded that measures should be taken in order to aware the young girls of our society regarding this important issue or the consequences can be detrimental as less awareness can lead to an incline in maternal mortality.

Key Words: Early marriage, pregnancy, complications, awareness

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INTRODUCTION

Early marriage and early conception is a nascent matter across the world and remains widespread problem particularly in developing countries.¹ Marriages in which a child under the age of 18 years is involved occur worldwide, but are mainly seen in South Asia,

Africa, and Latin America. Early marriage does not imply that children are involved, and the term is vague because an early marriage for one society may be considered late by another. Most of these marriages are arranged by parents, and girls rarely meet their future husband before the wedding. The girls know that after the wedding they will move to their husband's household, become the responsibility of their in-laws, and might not see their own family or friends for some time.² The issue remains prevalent in our society and is a matter of concern because it prevents girls from obtaining an education, enjoying optimal health, bonding with others their own age, maturing, and ultimately choosing their own life partners. Poverty is one of the major factors underpinning early marriage.³ Early marriage is driven by poverty, is perpetuated to ensure girls' financial futures and to reinforce social ties and has many effects on girls' health.⁴ The rationale behind addressing this issue has always been the health

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of that person who has remained a victim of the events which culminates into a vicious cycle. The timing of marriage appears to affect school enrollment among teenagers through its impact on living arrangements. However, the negative impact of marriage on educational achievement does not seem to be a consequence of earlier differences in educational expectations among the teenagers.⁵ Now a girl remains fertile with entering a phase in which adolescent pregnancy, often unplanned and unwanted, has a negative impact on the physical, emotional, educational, and economic condition of the pregnant teenager⁶. On the other hand the adolescents who become sexually active need access to reliable contraceptive methods & parenting need psychological support and proper information and motivation not to conceive again during adolescences.⁷ Young married girls are a unique, though often invisible, group. Required to perform heavy amounts of domestic work, under pressure to demonstrate fertility, and responsible for raising children while still children themselves, married girls and child mothers face constrained decision-making and reduced life choices⁸. Girl child marriage (i.e., <18 years of age) affects more than 10 million girls globally each year and is linked to maternal and infant morbidities (e.g., delivery complications, low birth weight) and mortality. 1 - 2 Half (46%) of child marriages occur in South Asia⁹. Our estimates indicate that each additional year that menarche is delayed postpones marriage 0.74 year¹⁰. This article sheds light specifically on reason behind perpetuation of early marriages its harmful consequences, shows how it constitutes a barrier to education and enjoyment of girl's human rights and how it further threatens the development of countries¹¹. It focuses on the relationship of age of marriage with: age of onset of sexual activity, timing of first pregnancy and spacing of births, use of contraception and the level of unintended pregnancies, and vulnerability to contracting HIV and other STIs.¹²

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This cross sectional descriptive study was conducted in Al Hameed School in Karachi from July 2018 to November 2018. Structured individual questionnaire containing 30 questions was used to collect information from the respondents. Young females between the ages of 12 to 17 were considered eligible for the study. It was used to collect most of the quantifiable information on the causes and impact of early marriage before 18 years. The questionnaire was administered to a representative sample of 284 female students in a specified age group which was conducted in three sessions that took 20 minutes on an average. An informed verbal consent was taken from the candidates. Pilot study was conducted to assess the authenticity of the questionnaire. Data was entered and analyzed using

SPSS version 20, with 95% confidence interval and 0.05 p-value.

RESULTS

All the respondents were aged 17 or less. Most of them (94.7%) belong to religion of Islam. The survey was taken by people belonging to different ethnic groups. Almost 70.1% Urdu speaking, 11.3% Sindhi, 8.5% Punjabi, 2.1% Balochi and 6.3% were Pathan.

More than half (73.90 %) girls knew about the correct age of marriage. 81% girls believe that early marriage leads to discontinuation of education and inadequate maturity of young girls. 28% of girls thought early marriage extends women's potential child bearing capacity. 40.85% view increased risk of pregnancy complications, a correlation to early marriage. 38.70 % of the respondents knew that first 3 months of pregnancy is the most sensitive period of pregnancy. 10.90% girls were of the opinion that mothers' health would suffer more, if teenage mother did not get proper antenatal care. 36.30% young females were aware that a woman can get high blood pressure and sugar due to pregnancy. about 89.40 % respondents view hospital and maternity homes to be the safest place for delivery. 58.50% girls think that early motherhood alter the mood of young females. 38.40% girls were aware that pregnancy at early age can lead to child having low birth weight. 28.50% young girls think that early marriage/motherhood and depression are associated and it is a driving force for addiction. 13.70% girls support early marriage.

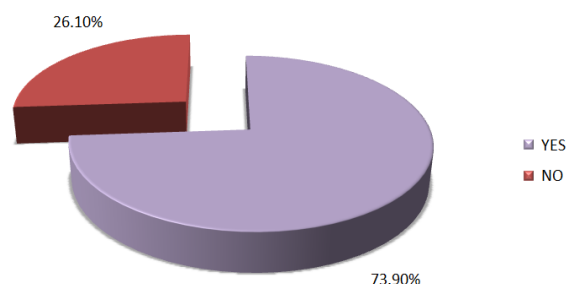


Figure No.1: Awareness amongst young girls about minimal age for marriage.

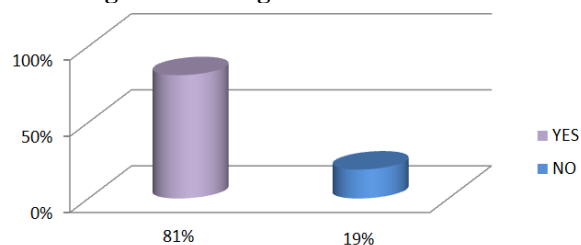


Figure No.2: Early marriage - A cause of discontinuation of education and inadequate maturity of the young girl

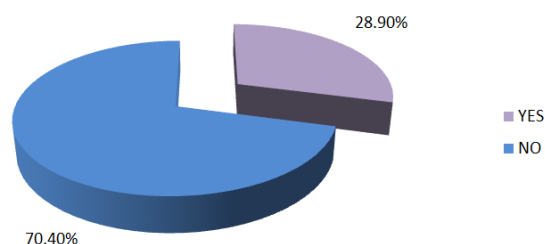


Figure No.3: Early marriage extends a woman's potential child bearing capacity

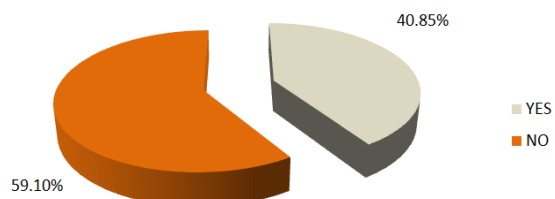


Figure No.4: Increased risk of pregnancy complications a correlation to early marriage

DISCUSSION

The cutoff expression at which a marriage is labeled 'early' remains fairly constant so far in various studies and is less than 18 years. In our study most of the respondents were either 17 years old or below it¹³. More than half (73.90 %) girls knew about the correct age of marriage. 81% girls believed that early marriage leads to discontinuation of education and inadequate maturity of young girls. Consistent findings were in regard to educational level when participants believed that when tied off early it prevents girls from obtaining an education, enjoying optimal health, bonding with others of their own age and maturing¹⁴. 40.85% viewed increased risk of pregnancy complications, a correlation to early marriage Child bearing capacity which remains a link for those who get into the socially accepted tie early in their lives provided that the adolescent is fertile remains vague for the candidates we scrutinized since very few i.e. only 28% were assertive for it. Mother's age at 1st marriage and at birth of the 1st child, intervals between consecutive births (spacing), and birth order, among other factors have been found to have a strong bearing upon a child's chances of surviving infancy and early childhood. Studies link it to affect the mother's health also with association between the conditions created by early marriages, harmful reproductive patterns, pregnancy complications, infecundity, and infant and child mortality but respondents of less in number i.e. 40.85% being positive for such link¹⁵. The Study Showed that 38.70% of the respondents knew that first 3 months of pregnancy is the most sensitive period of pregnancy. Generally the importance of first 12 weeks of pregnancy making up the first trimester lies in its role in development of all vital organs and sensitivity to foreign agents with once pregnancy moving into the

second trimester, all the risks of miscarriage and birth defects occurring drop drastically remains a bit vague for our candidates since a lesser number.¹⁶ The Study showed that 10.90% were of view that the entire vicious cycle of getting into early marriage leading to early pregnancy without adequate antenatal care has impact on just mother herself. Consistent findings remains with the impact on psyche of a mother with 58.5% agreeing that mood get altered which can be correlated with a study showing that adolescent pregnancy, often unplanned and unwanted, has a negative impact on the physical, emotional, educational, psychological and economic condition of the pregnant teenager.¹⁷ The Study showed that few participants i.e. 28.50% believed that early motherhood and depression were chained to addiction although depression is linked as part and parcel of early motherhood evident in the study showing that denial of freedom and personal development attendant on early marriage have profound psychosocial and emotional consequences.¹⁸ Adding to the fore mentioned detail various studies have proved that anxious behavior might further aggravate mother and child health who already are fore burdened with increase risk of complications.¹⁹ As this study theme works on bringing into limelight the thought process regarding early marriages, most of the participants in our study condemned being socially tied off that early with only 13.70% of them supporting early marriages as one remains prevalent in various section of this world.²⁰ Child marriage persists as a human rights violation despite widespread efforts to eliminate the practice.²¹

CONCLUSION

The current study documents that many young females of our society are still unaware regarding the causes and the consequences that early marriage and early pregnancy can lead to. It is therefore important that measures should be taken on imparting education to the young females in order to secure the future of our upcoming generation.

Author's Contribution:

Concept & Design of Study:	Tafazzul H Zaidi
Drafting:	Faheem Ahmed
Data Analysis:	Kiran Mehtab
Revisiting Critically:	Tafazzul H Zaidi, Faheem Ahmed
Final Approval of version:	Tafazzul H Zaidi

Conflict of Interest: The study has no conflict of interest to declare by any author.

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