



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 5.2
IJAR 2016; 2(12): 33-35
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 07-10-2016
Accepted: 08-11-2016

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Study on awareness of child marriage among parents

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Abstract

According to the CEDAW-marriage before the age of 18 shouldn't be allowed since children don't have the full maturity and capacity to act. Many parents marry their daughters after puberty without understanding the causes and consequences of child marriage. The practice has been seen especially in the rural community and the parents awareness about the problems of child marriage is low. Descriptive research design was adopted in the present study to describe the socio-economic status and understand the awareness of parents about child marriage. Simple Random Sampling was used to collect primary data from 250 parents by administering a self-prepared interview schedule. The major findings of this study revealed that there is significant relationship between the age of the respondents and awareness of child marriage, reasons for child marriage and legal age for marriage of girl children. Also it showed that there is significant difference between gender of the respondents with regard to their awareness about reasons for child marriage and about rights of children regarding marriage.

Keywords: Awareness, child marriage, parents

1. Introduction

The children don't have the full maturity and capacity to act, so marriage before the age of 18 should be discouraged. There are several factors that have contributed to the prevalence of child marriage. The girl is considered as a burden and therefore she is married at an early age when they are not capable of giving their consent. Parents believe that it is easy for the child-bride to adapt to a new environment. They believe that once married, boys will not flirt with the girls.

For any number of reasons, everyone is equally guilty of such practice especially the parents in rural communities who marry their daughters very young. It is imperative that the awareness about child marriage among parents should be understood to enable for preventing such practice.

2. Review of Literature

S. Mishra, (2013) [2] indicated that early marriage in which girls were married before they reached puberty were prevalent though not universal. Commentators on both Hindu and European Jewish communities (where early arranged marriages has also gained prevalence) have hypothesized that the system may have emerged because "the answer to the raging hormones associated with teenage sexuality was early arranged marriage."

Mathur, Greene and Malhotra (2003) revealed that poverty leads to higher prevalence of child marriage because poor families feel they have fewer resources and incentives in alternative options for girls. Many families say they marry their daughters early because girls are an economic burden that can be relieved through marriage.

Muazzam Nasrullah, Rubeena Zakar, Muhammad Zakria Zakar, Safdar Abbas, Rabbia Safdar, Mahwish Shaukat, and Alexander Kramer (2014) in their study on the knowledge and attitude towards child marriage practice among women as children- a qualitative study in urban slums in Lahore, Pakistan found that a majority of the participants were unaware of the negative health outcomes of child marriages. Most women favored child marriage practice and intended to marry their daughters before the age of 18 years. The participants were satisfied by their parent's decision of marrying them before the age of 18 years, and condemned banning child marriages in the country. Strong influence of culture and community perceptions, varying interpretation of religion, and protecting family honor are some of the factors that may play role in the continuation of child marriage practice in

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Pakistan. They suggested raising awareness of the negative health outcomes of child marriage by the government, local and international NGOs, implementing and enforcing strict laws against child marriage practice, promoting civil, sexual and reproductive health rights for women, and provision of economic opportunities for girls and their families such as microfinance schemes to eliminate child marriage practice in Pakistan. The studies provide no evidence about the awareness of parents on child marriage and this is the area of study which is undertaken for investigation.

3. Methods and Materials

The researcher adopted Descriptive research design. The universe of the study was 751 parents of Thiruvananthapuram village in Perambalur district and using simple random sampling the data was collected from 250 respondents. A self-prepared interview schedule was administered to the respondents.

3.1 Objectives

- To understand the socio demographic status of the parents
- To find out parental awareness on child marriage
- To suggest suitable measures to enhance parental awareness on child marriage

3.2 Research Hypotheses

1. There is significant relationship between the age of the respondents and awareness about child marriage
2. There is significant relationship between the age of the respondents and awareness about the reasons for child marriage
3. There is significant relationship between the age of the respondents and their awareness about legal age for marriage of girl children.
4. There is significant difference between the gender of the respondents with regard to awareness about reasons for child marriage
5. There is significant difference between the gender of the respondents with regard to awareness about rights of children regarding marriage.
6. There is significant difference between the gender of the respondents with regard to awareness about main victims of child marriage
7. There is significant difference among the education of the respondents with regard to awareness about main victims of child marriage.
8. There is significant difference among the education of the respondents with regard to awareness about child marriage
9. There is significant difference among the education of the respondents with regard to awareness about reasons for child marriage
10. There is significant difference among the education of the respondents with regard to awareness about legal protection for girl children.
11. There is significant difference among the education of the respondents with regard to awareness about rights of children regarding marriage
12. There is significant difference among the occupation of the respondents with regard to awareness about legal protection for girl children.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by their Socio-Demographic variables

Socio-Demographic Variables		Frequency (n= 250)	Percentage
Gender	Mother	158	63.2
	Father	92	36.8
Age (in years)	20 - 30	53	21.2
	30 - 40	75	30
	40 - 50	57	22.8
	50 - 60	48	19.2
	60 - 70	16	6.4
	70 - 80	1	0.4
Age at marriage	13 - 19	38	15.2
	19 - 25	124	49.6
	25 - 31	83	33.2
	31 - 37	3	1.2
	37 - 43	2	0.8
Age of spouse at marriage	12 - 19	16	6.4
	19 - 26	142	56.8
	26 - 33	81	32.4
	33 - 40	8	3.2
No. of children	40 - 47	3	1.2
	1 - 3	210	84
	4 - 6	16	6.4
Details of children	Son	44	17.6
	Daughter	94	37.6
	Both	88	35.2
	No Children	24	9.6
Education	Illiterate	46	18.4
	Elementary School	12	4.8
	Middle School	35	14.0
	High School	67	26.8
	Higher Secondary School	48	19.2
	Undergraduate	26	10.4
	Postgraduate	12	4.8
Occupation	Professional	4	1.6
	Farmer	47	18.8
	Coolie	140	56.0
	Government	11	4.4
	Private	27	10.8
	Professional	1	0.4
Monthly Family Income	Self employed	8	3.2
	Unemployed	16	6.4
	Below 7000	179	71.6
	7000 - 14000	37	14.8
	14000 - 21000	17	6.8
	21000 - 28000	9	3.6
Religion	28000 - 35000	6	2.4
	35000 - 42000	2	0.8
Community	Hindu	219	87.6
	Christian	31	12.4
	SC/ST	121	48.4
Type of family	BC	94	37.6
	MBC	35	14.0
Type of family	Joint	67	26.8
	Nuclear	183	73.2

4.1 Findings based on awareness of child marriage among parents

With regard to the parental awareness, the study revealed that more than half (56.4 percentage) of the respondents have heard about child marriage, nearly half (42.4 percentage) of them have given illiteracy and 36 percentage of the respondents have given family and society trend as

reasons for child marriage. Nearly two-third (63.6 percentage) of the respondents indicated that 15 to 17 years old girls are the main victims of child marriage. 25.6 percentage of the respondents have said that all of the above, 16.4 percentage have given loss of opportunities and 16.4 percentage have given poor health as physical and psychological problems of child marriage. More than half (55.6 percentage) of the respondents have not noticed oral/written reports about child marriage. Nearly two-third (63.6 percentage) of the respondents are aware that the legal age for marriage of girl children is 18 years. More than half (59.2 percentage) of the respondents do not know about the rights of children regarding marriage and more than half (56.8 percentage) of them do not know about legal protection of girl children in regard to marriage.

4.2 Hypotheses findings

- There is significant relationship between the age of the respondents and awareness about child marriage (value = .184).
- There is significant relationship between the age of the respondents and awareness about the reasons for child marriage (value = - .128).
- There is significant relationship between the age of the respondents and their awareness about legal age for marriage of girl children (value = - .213).
- There is significant difference between the gender of the respondents with regard to awareness about reasons for child marriage ($z = 2.987, P < 0.01$).
- There is significant difference between the gender of the respondents with regard to awareness about rights of children regarding marriage ($z = 8.452, P < 0.01$).
- There is significant difference between the gender of the respondents with regard to awareness about main victims of child marriage ($z = 30.816, P < 0.01$).
- There is significant difference among the education of the respondents with regard to awareness about main victims of child marriage ($F = 2.978, P < 0.01$).
- There is significant difference among the education of the respondents with regard to awareness about child marriage ($F = 4.662, P < 0.01$).
- There is significant difference among the education of the respondents with regard to awareness about reasons for child marriage ($F = 6.156, P < 0.01$).
- There is significant difference among the education of the respondents with regard to awareness about legal protection for girl children ($F = 2.585, P < 0.01$).
- There is significant difference among the education of the respondents with regard to awareness about rights of children regarding marriage ($F = 5.617, P < 0.01$).
- There is no significant difference among the occupation of the respondents with regard to awareness about legal protection for girl children.

5. Conclusion

Child marriage is an issue in Perambalur district of Tamil Nadu and there are many factors that lead to it. Though many preventive measures are carried out, the problem of child marriage is prevalent in the district. To combat such practice, the awareness among parents is one of the major challenge. This research study was carried out with the objectives to examine the socio-economic conditions and provide insight into the awareness of the parents on child marriage in Thiruvanthurai village of Perambalur district.

The research revealed that there is significant relationship between the age of the respondents and awareness about child marriage, reasons for child marriage and legal age for marriage of girl children. It showed that there is significant difference between the gender of the respondents with regard to awareness about reasons for child marriage and rights of children regarding marriage. There is also significant difference between the education of the respondents with regard to their awareness about main victims of child marriage. These findings may help the local administration, child welfare committee, NGOs, and other district child welfare agencies to plan and implement programmes focusing on creating more awareness among parents to prevent child marriages in the district.

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