



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 5.2
IJAR 2017; 3(12): 644-647
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 08-11-2017
Accepted: 12-12-2017

Akshatha Paranjyothi Kumar
Assistant Professor of
Sociology, Government First
Grade College, Rajajinagar,
Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Gender violence with special reference to child marriage

Akshatha Paranjyothi Kumar

Abstract

Studying various problems related to women is not a new issue in Social Sciences. One such study is on violence of women. Violence on Women is not a new concept in Indian society as Indian society is bounded by Patriarchal System. In patriarchal system always male dominates and we witness the subordination of women. Since ages, in almost all the historical periods, women are humiliated and they are the victims of exploitation. Though there is rapid spread of education, economic interdependence, legislative measures, women are still the puppets in the hands of men. With this background the present study is an attempt to understand gender violence in terms of child marriage. Most of the government reports including NCRB, UNICEF, and Karnataka Child Development reports indicate the rise in child marriage especially in girls rather than in boys as girls or women are always subordinates. Though Karnataka ranks high in economic parameters, still it is outdated in certain social and traditional concepts which have led to increase in girls ratio in terms of child marriage. The present study gives an insight into the magnitude of gender violence on women that has culminated into more number of child brides when compared to boys.

Keywords: Exploitation, gender issues, legislation, patriarchal system, violence

1. Introduction

Child marriage is a very complex issue and its roots can be owed to gender inequality and the strong belief that girls are inferior to boys as India is predominantly characterized by patriarchal society. It is still made worse by lack of education, poverty, harmful social norms, and superstitious beliefs and so on. Child marriage definitely results in threatening the lives, well-being, and personality development of the girls around the world. UNICEF reports that each year, at least 1.5 million girls fewer than 18 get married in India, which contributes to the largest number of child brides in the world ^[1]. Nearly 16 percent of the adolescent girls aged between 15-19 years are currently married. According to the data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) ^[2], Karnataka has reported that highest number of child marriage-185 followed by Assam-138, West Bengal-98, Tamil Nadu-77 and Telangana-62.

Before looking into the core of the present study, let's understand what the meaning of violence and also Gender Violence is.

Definitions

1. The term 'violence' has been described by Gelles (1979) ^[3] as "an act of striking a person with the intent of causing harm or injury but not actually causing it."
2. Strauss (1980) has described a violent act as "an act where there is the high potential of causing injury" ^[4].
3. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993, defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual,
4. or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" ^[5].

The above definitions summarize the way women or girls are exploited in various types of violence which results in the insecurity, low feeling and deterioration of the personality of the women folk.

Correspondence
Akshatha Paranjyothi Kumar
Assistant Professor of
Sociology, Government First
Grade College, Rajajinagar,
Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Types of Violence

There are multiple approaches to look into the victims of gender violence who are the suppressed and victimized group in social hierarchy. Many scholars have identified Personality approach or Situational approach to explain this issue.

Violence against women can be categorized

1. Criminal Violence-Rape, abduction, murder
2. Domestic Violence-Wife battering, dowry-deaths, sexual abuse, ILL-treatment of widows/women.
3. Social Violence-Sati System, harassing for dowry, female foeticide, child marriage and so on.

In most of the cases it is found that women are the victims of violence due to the fact that they feel helpless, poor-self-image, lack of social maturity and so on.

Factors Responsible for Child Marriage

Before looking into the factors responsible for child marriage, it is essential to define what is child marriage?

According to UNICEF, child marriage is defined as a marriage of a girl or boy before the age of 18 and refers to both formal marriages and informal unions in which children under the age of 18 live with a partner as if married [6].

According to Prohibitions of Child Marriage Act 2006

India defines child marriage is marriage of individuals before they attain the legal age of 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys [7].

The following are the factors that are responsible for child marriage

1. Gender inequality
2. Poverty
3. Attitude of parents towards girl child as they are always considered as burden or commodities.
4. Stereotype mentality of the parents
5. Superstitious Beliefs
6. Where there is the practice of bride price, parents marry off their daughters due to economic constraints.

Theoretical Explanation of Gender Violence

There are many theoretical explanations regarding gender violence. Some of the theories revolving gender violence are as follows.

1. **Psychiatric Explanation:** It was propounded by scholars such as Kempe (1972), Steele and Pollock (1968), Gelles (1973), and Parke and Collmer (1975), link child abuse factors that will lead to personality defects or individual abnormalities. According to this theory, due to the unmet emotional needs of parents, the abuse on children takes place.
2. **The Socio-Cultural Explanation:** According to this theory several external factors or socio-demographic variables within any society causes child abuse. It may be the level of education, awareness, personality issues, superstitious beliefs and so on.
3. **The Social: Situational Explanation-** According to this theory the factors of stress and cultural norms lead to abuse of a child. Certain social and cultural factors lead to violence on girl child. Gil (1970) says social class, family size; Light (1973:556-598) has referred to

unemployment and Garbarino (1977:721-735) has referred to social isolation as the major factor for violence of women.

4. **The Social Control Explanation:** This theory was propounded by Gelles in 1973. According to him, parents use violence against their children because they have no fear of being hit back. Thus violence is used when
 - The cost of being violent is to be less than the rewards
 - The absence of effective social control over family relations decreases the cost (of one member being violent towards another) and
 - Family structures reduce social control in family relations (Gelles and Comell, 1985:121).

5. Theory of Change Through Ecological Framework

The interdependence of various factors can be easily understood within an ecological framework, where a girl's life impacts and is impacted upon by factors that operate at various levels. There are five important layers that influence on a girl's life. These can be considered as five pillars of the theory of change intended to end child marriage:

1. Child
2. Family
3. Community
4. Institutions
5. Policies

Interdependence among these five pillars can be visually seen in the following diagram which shows how each pillar impacts and is impacted by the other [8].

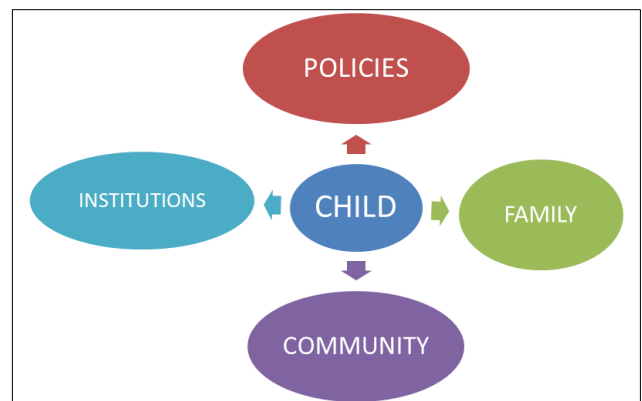


Fig 1: Show five pillars can be visually seen

Review of Literature

1. **Discrimination and Violence-Child Marriage, Vol 1; Divya Soni:** This book focuses on the discrimination and violence faced by women and how the social and cultural aspects contribute for the child marriage. This book provides a thought provoking analysis of the reasons why such marriages, which effectively deprive children of their childhood, in particular the girl child, are allowed to take place.
2. **Child Marriage: A Curse for Girl Child; Prabhat Singh:** highlights that child marriage is a curse on the life of girls as it deprives the right to education and child marriage also results in lot of health complications and it also affects their mental health.. It increases the risk of depression, sexually transmitted infection, cervical cancer, maternal mortality and so on.

3. **The Dangers of Child Marriage; Nadaba Sibanda-describes:** The dangers of child marriage such as illiteracy, dependency, health complications, deterioration of personality and so on. It also highlights the importance of the strict legislations that should be implemented to eliminate this dangerous problem.
4. **Child Marriage in India; KP Yadav:** Reports that in India 45 percent of girls are wedded below 18 year. Majority of the girls belong to lower economic groups and they are felt as dependents of the family. They are forced to get marry early as they are considered as major burden in the family.
5. **Determining the Unlawfulness of Child Marriages; Obrien de Carvalho Marcos:** highlights the lacuna of government policies and legislative policies in order to make any country free from the evil practice of child marriage. Child marriage is a universal problem that hinders the development of any nation.
6. **An Echo of Silence; A comprehensive research study on Early Child Marriage in Iran; Kameel Ahmady, Nova Publications, 2017** is a research book on the problems of child marriage. It also identifies the various factors that contribute for the existence of child marriage. Poverty, illiteracy, lack of strict law of action, superstitious beliefs have resulted in increasing the numbers of child brides.
7. **The Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929:** The practice of child marriage is a violation of human rights. Though many acts have been implemented towards the eradication of child marriage, the problem still prevalent in our country. The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 says that marrying before the age of 18 is illegal and it results in economic backwardness of the country.
8. **According to UNICEF:** Marriage before the age of 18 is a fundamental violation of human rights. Many factors interact to place a child at risk of marriage, including poverty, the perception that marriage will provide protection, family honor, and social norms, customary or religious laws that condemn the practice, an inadequate legislative framework and the state of a country's civil registration system. While the practice is more common among girls than boys, it is a violation of rights regardless of sex.

Magnitude of the problem of child marriage

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reports, despite near-universal commitments to end child marriage, 21 percent of the girls are married before the age of 18, and on an average, 5 percent of girls are married before age 15 globally. Child marriage also leads to several health complications among girls. It affects her both physically and mentally. In developing countries, 9 out of 10 births to adolescent girls occur. It will also lead to pregnancy and child birth complications and sometimes causing death between the age group 15-19 year old girls.

The situation is not happier in India. UNICEF reports that every year, at least 1.5 million girls under the age group of 18 get married in India, leading to largest number of child brides in the world. It accounts for one third of the global total statistics. Nearly 16 percent adolescent girls aged 15-19 are married at current situation. Over half of child brides are present in the five states of India according to UNICEF reports. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh among which Uttar Pradesh contributes for 36 million child brides according to UNICEF reports.

Though Karnataka's situation is better in terms of economic parameter, its still lagging behind in social indicator. National Crime Records Bureau(NCRB) reports that Karnataka stands in number one position in terms of child marriage around 66 percent more than 111 cases recorded in 2019. In all these studies, it is very much significant to note that girls are the major victims of child marriage when compared to boys due to certain social and cultural environment of the particular region. The present study concentrates on the factors that contribute towards more number of child brides in the entire nation. Executive Director of Child Rights Trust, Vasudev Sharma says, "It is the time the minor girls' legal position is explored. He said financial crisis unleashed by lockdowns might have contributed to a spike in child marriages and it is the responsibility of parents and family to be aware of the ill-effects of child marriage.

Research Gap

1. To understand the importance of child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 in order to eradicate the burning problem of child marriage.
2. To study the factors responsible of child marriage.
3. To understand the sex ratio that leads to more number of girls as victims of child marriage when compared to boys...

Research Objectives

1. To study the causes of child marriage.
2. To study factors that will lead to the high occurrence of child marriage among girls
3. To study the gender ratio with reference to child marriage in order to find out the ratio among girls is more when compared to boys.

Hypothesis

1. Poverty, Illiteracy and superstitious beliefs are the major causes of child marriage.
2. Girls are more susceptible to child marriage when compared to boys.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on the non-doctrinal methods, relying on the secondary sources of data which includes reports, policy papers, judgements, government, UN agencies, civil society and so on.

The sampling was based on non-probability sampling and the works which are published by various agencies. It is mainly a qualitative study focusing on case study reports and narratives.

Findings

The reports of the various departments of the government show that girls are the major victims of child marriage and the causes of child marriage can be owed to illiteracy of the parents, superstitious beliefs, economic hardships and lack of strict laws. The major causes are reflected in the following table.

| Sl No | Causes of child marriage among girls | No | Percentage | Total |
|-------|--------------------------------------|----|------------|-------|
| 1 | Illiteracy | 55 | 55% | 55% |
| 2 | Superstitious beliefs | 25 | 25% | 25% |
| 3 | Economic hardships | 15 | 15% | 15% |
| 4 | Lack of strict laws | 05 | 05% | 05% |
| | | | | 100% |

Source: UNICEF, NCRB, Karnataka Women and Child Welfare Department reports

Conclusion and Suggestions

Child marriage is indeed an important topic due to several reasons.

1. Girls who are required to enter into marriage at an early age are at risk of domestic violence and abuse.
2. They cannot escape from the vicious cycle of poverty.
3. If they have children at very young age they have high risk of health complications, death in child birth and infant mortality.
4. Child brides are much more likely to drop out of school and complete fewer years of education than others who do not marry at an early marriage.

It is the high time to strictly implement the laws which will facilitate the eradication of child marriage. Children should be given right to education and they should be encouraged to develop their personality. Child marriage should be eradicated completely as it leads to lot of health complications among girls and also hindering their right to education and also to lead an independent life. If all the citizens of the country join hands with the government can definitely give a full stop to this critical and enrooted problem of the Indian society.

References

1. Ahuja R. Social Problems in India. Rawat Publications; c2003.
2. Soni D. Discrimination and Violence-Child Marriage. Brilllopedia. 2008;1(3). Notion Press Publication.
3. Singh P. Child Marriage- a Curse for Girl Child. Notion Press Publications; 2014.
4. Sibanda N. The Dangers of Child Marriage. PenIt Publications, LLC; c2015.
5. Yadav KP. Child Marriage in India. Adhyayan Publishers; c2016.
6. Marcos OC. Determining the Unlawfulness of Child Marriages. Lambert Academic Publications; c2016.
7. Ahmady K. An Echo of Silence; A comprehensive research study on Early Child Marriage in Iran. Nova Publications; c2017.
8. Government of India. The Child Marriage Restraint Act; c1929.
9. UNICEF. UNICEF Report [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.unicef.org>
10. National Crime Records Bureau [Internet]. Available from: <https://ncrb.gov.in>
11. India Code [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.indiacode.nic.in>