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Child Marriage in the Context of Women Empowerment

Keya Ghatak**Abstract:**

Marriage has been considered as an interactional system in the field of family studies as per systems theory. The comparison between two groups of married women such as marriage below 18 years and marriage at or after 18 years, has proved that child marriage prevents child brides from being empowered. Child brides have to face different types of problems resulting from various degrees and forms of discrimination and exclusion on account of their marriage. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, has been amended in 1978 for increasing the minimum age of marriage to 18 years for girls to avoid early marriage, a harmful traditional practice. By replacing the amended 1978 Act, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, has been introduced on November 1, 2007. The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021, recommended by the Union Cabinet in December 2021, looks for increasing the minimum age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 years. In spite of it, child marriage has affected women's empowerment. Delayed marriage is much more powerful to empower women. Increase in age always plays an important part for physical and mental empowerment of women. Age also helps to understand a cultural definition of their position in society and its institution. The growth of body and mind makes women both physically and mentally strong. Their strong body and mind will help them to know how to empower themselves to face the realities of life.

Keywords: Child Marriage, Empowerment, affected, harmful.

1. Introduction:

Marriage has been considered as an interactional system in the field of family studies as per systems theory (Springer 2011).¹ The comparison between two groups of married women such as marriage below 18 years and marriage at or after 18 years, has proved that child marriage prevents child brides from being empowered. Child brides have to face different types of problems resulting from various degrees and forms of discrimination and exclusion on account of their marriage. Childhood is the best time for the growth and development of mind and body. After marriage, a child bride has to perform different types of duties and responsibilities for the family of her husband. At that time the mind and body of child bride have not the power of taking proper decision for solving a problem faced by her. In childhood, a child can enjoy the chance of increasing physical and mental stability, mental abilities, satisfying forceful curiosity,

¹Springer, 2011, [Systems Theory](https://link.springer.com); <https://link.springer.com> › doi



keeping contact with real world, getting pleasure in creative activities, developing social qualities and moral traits. But child marriage deprives a child of these types of enjoyment.

In patriarchal system, gender inequality is the hidden cause of child marriage. As a result, girls do not get their proper value on account of their sex. The social norms and economic and patriarchal systems based on these discriminations most of the time deny their basic needs and rights. Lack of access to education, the impact of climate change and insecurity and poverty have made the situation worse. Poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes like unintended pregnancy, poor mental health, HIV infection, unsafe abortion and loss of life by suicide are the results of child marriage. Sometimes the age difference between child bride and her husband makes an arrangement of experiencing intimate partner violence. Child brides are forced to marry in order to fulfill the desire of their parents, avoid poverty, and help their parents by raising their family status.

The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, [Punjab and Haryana High Court, (1929)]² has been amended in 1978 for increasing the minimum age of marriage to 18 years for girls to avoid early marriage, a harmful traditional practice. By replacing the amended 1978 Act, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, has been introduced on November 1, 2007. The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021, [PRSIndia, 2021]³ recommended by the Union Cabinet in December 2021, looks for increasing the minimum age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 years. In spite of it, child marriage has affected women's empowerment. Delayed marriage is much more powerful to empower women. Increase in age always plays an important part for physical and mental empowerment of women. Age also helps to understand a cultural definition of their position in society and its institution. The growth of body and mind makes women both physically and mentally strong. Their strong body and mind will help them to know how to empower themselves to face the realities of life.

The ending of child marriage is essential for saving the life of girl brides. Girl brides have the right to enjoy equal status with boys and men. Girl brides must get equal opportunity of taking part in education just like boys. Their participation in learning lessons from school is one of the best ways of delaying marriage. Their empowerment through education helps them to make themselves to be gender-aware teachers in future, get appropriate comprehensive sexuality education, avoid unintended pregnancies, enjoy the benefit of delayed marriage and keep up healthy relationship throughout lives. Their empowerment will help them to end child marriage by changing the masculine mentality of boys and men.

2. Literature Review:

The reviews based on substantial research on child marriage indicate that the influence of social and cultural norms, education levels and community context play an important part to ensure child marriage.

²Punjab and Haryana High Court, 1929, https://highcourtchd.gov.in/hclsc/subpages/pdf_files/

³PRSIndia, December 2021, <https://prsindia.org/policy/monthly-policy-review/d>.



The poorest countries with fewer opportunities and resources to spend money in alternative options for girls have the highest rates of child marriage. The communities with bridal wealth want to enjoy greater financial amount from the marriage of the child brides [UNICEF, January 2023]⁴. The literature review on early marriage in the UK gives us some idea regarding the causes of early marriage such as cultural and religious justifications, familial justifications, economics and poverty and sexual and reproductive health. The review has also pointed out the outcomes of early marriage like health and reproduction risks, relationship risks and educational and social Impacts [Taylor & Francis Online, 2015]⁵. The isolation of child bride from independent living on account of their restricted mobility and limited opportunities is very much pathetic. They are forced to discontinue their habit of going to school when their marriage is settled. If someone of them can keep up the hope of going to school, they are also forced to give up the hope at the day of their wedding. For promoting women's welfare, empowerment and emancipation, further research is recommended [BMC International Health and Human Rights,2020]⁶ As per opinion of Annisatul Mujahidah, Budiman Rusli and Yogi Suprayogi Sugandi, many things such as including formal and non-formal education, strengthening regulations and legal protection, creating empowerment programmes, strengthening access to health and education, can be done to deal with the phenomenon of early marriage [ResearchGate, 2020,]⁷.

3. Research Gap:

My research topic is "Child Marriage in the Context of Women Empowerment". Previous Records of research revealed that many works were conducted on different aspects of child marriage. But this is an important area which is untouched. Extensive research work is required. Hence there is a research gap. I have selected this topic for filling up this gap. As a result, new perspectives in this area are explored by my work.

4. Immergence of the problem:

i) **Aim:** The aim of this study is to point out the difficulties of child marriage in the context of women empowerment.

ii) Objectives

The following objectives are laid down for this study:

a) To investigate about social position of girl child for empowerment.

⁴UNICEF, January 2023, Evidence Review: Child marriage interventions ...; <https://www.unicef.org/media/file> > CRANK-..

⁵Taylor & Francis Online, 2015, Economic Impacts of Child Marriage: A Review of the ...; <https://www.tandfonline.com> > ... > Volume 13, Issue 3

⁶BMC International Health and Human Rights,2020, Early marriage and women's empowerment: the case of child ...; <https://bmcinthealthumrights.biomedcentral.com> > arti...

⁷Research Gate, 2020, Early Marriage and Women's Empowerment in Rural ...; <https://www.researchgate.net> > ... > Civil Law > Marriage



- b) To separate the problematized opinions regarding child marriage.
- c) To evaluate the role of child marriage in the life of girls.
- d) To elucidate about the power of the prohibition of child marriage Act to empower women.
- e) To illustrate the chronicles of child marriage to help girl child of India to become powerful from powerlessness.

5. Rationale of the Study:

At present, child marriage as a global problem gives a warning of women empowerment. The main purpose of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)⁸5.3 is to get rid of child marriage by 2030. One hundred and ninety-three countries have concurred to fulfill 5:3 for putting an end to child marriage by 2030 for the benefits of the lives of the girls and their families through offering education and economic opportunities, protecting health and acknowledging them proper policies and laws. The KANYASHREE goal of West Bengal Government [International Growth Centre, 2020]⁹ has improved the empowerment status of girls and women in West Bengal by preventing child marriage at villages and increasing educational acquirement up to the age of 18 at least.

6. Methodology:

Methodology indicates the systematic, theoretical analysis of the method applied to a field of study. This paper written for International Conference has undertaken the study through an examination of primary source including quantitative data and secondary source related to the effect of child marriage in the life of girls. The research methodology followed here is the theoretical frame and concept of child marriage on the basis of primary data collected from Interviews and Survey, and secondary data where data were collected from newspapers, magazines, articles, websites, correspondence and documentary sources. The major concern of this writing is to highlight the effect of child marriage in the context of empowerment.

7. Study Conducted:

Girls have to face devastating consequences on account of child marriage. Child marriage is an act of desecration of human rights of children that rob the childhood of children. They have to accept adulthood without getting any chance of physical and mental preparation. Child brides are forced to lose their rights regarding education, health, participation and safety. Generally, child marriage is taken place in the life of school girls. As a result, their freedom is controlled by the norms of marriage which force them to be isolated from others. They have to tolerate the higher risk of physical and mental violence. Even they have to experience problematic complications like pregnancy, childbirth, contraction of

⁸indicators.report, [Target 5.3 eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early ...; https://indicators.report > targets](https://indicators.report/targets)

⁹International Growth Centre, 2020, [Kanyashree Prakalpa in West Bengal, India; https://www.theigc.org/default/files/2021/03](https://www.theigc.org/default/files/2021/03)



HIV/AIDS and domestic violence. As per Global Girlhood Report[Save the Children's Resource Centre,]¹⁰, between 2020 and 2025 an additional 2.5 million girls have to face the risk of child marriage that leads to increase all types of violence based on danger in the life of million girls by 2030. As per estimate, child marriage will be responsible for the loss of childhood of one hundred fifty girls.

8. Data Collection:

Interviews and Survey through Questionnaire prepared by the researcher were the process to collect information regarding the effect of child marriage in the life of Indian girls from secondary sources; i.e., newspapers, magazines, articles, websites, correspondence and documentary sources. Following Research Questions helped for designing the Questionnaire, on which basis survey was conducted.

- i) What is child marriage?
- ii) What is the difference between child marriage and delayed marriage?
- iii) How is the present condition of child marriage?
- iv) Does child marriage affect women's empowerment?
- v) How is it possible for Indian girls to empower themselves?

The above questions have helped me to get a clear idea regarding child marriage in the context of women's empowerment.

9. Analysis of Collected Data:

The Survey Report collected from the students of English Department of Berhampore Girls' College and boarders of New Hostel of Berhampore Girls' College on the basis of Questionnaire on child marriage in the context of women's empowerment, has helped me to conclude my topic Properly. Sixty students belonging to age group between twenty years to twenty-one years of Semester – VI (ENGH-H) and Ninety boarders of New Hostel belonging to age group between eighteen years to twenty-one years have encouraged me by pointing out that my topic is very relevant in the context of present age. Data Analysis has added a new feather to my knowledge of qualitative and quantitative Methodologies. At the time of taking Interview, the different types of language functions like Listening, Enquiring, Explaining, Requesting and Note taking have helped this study to proceed. The four language skills like Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing have spread their hands to complete the Interview process.

On the basis of Data collection, it is possible for me to come to know about the bad effect of child marriage and the good effect of delayed marriage in the context of women's empowerment. I had enjoyed the advantage of delayed marriage. My delayed marriage and the

¹⁰Save the Children's Resource Centre, [Global Girlhood Report 2024: Fragile Futures Girls' Rights ...](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document) ;
[https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net > document > g](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document)



delayed marriage of my friends had helped us to be empowered. Delayed marriage had given us the chance of making our career bright, maturing our personality and improving our financial stability.

10. Conclusion:

Child marriage always deprives the children of enjoying different types of benefits coming out from empowerment. Their marriage at early stage of life forces them to face the cruel realities of life from where they do not get any chance of being empowered in order to make themselves free from such type cruel realities. Child marriage has no power of developing their personality, strengthening their career and improving their financial stability. On the contrary, delayed marriage helps the girls to enjoy the opportunities of focusing on career, gaining educational pursuits, getting financial stability, developing personality, waiting for the right partner, taking family responsibilities, taking part in travel and exploration and maintaining health. Delayed marriage empowers them by increasing emotional maturity, establishing career, improving better communication skills, developing self-identity and increasing greater compatibility.

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