

Causes and Consequences of Child Marriage in Tamang Community: A Study of Fikuri VDC of Nuwakot District

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Abstract:

Child marriage is a global problem which affects millions of children throughout the world. It is a common practice in many countries around the world, especially in developing countries. Nepal holds 8th position with 51 percent among the countries worldwide to have high prevalence of child marriage. The objectives of this paper are to understand causes and consequences of child marriage in Tamang Community of Nepal.

The Fikuri Village Development Committee of Nuwakot district is purposively selected for this study. A total of 108 households were selected randomly for quantitative survey and 2 adolescent groups were selected for focus group discussions. Overall analysis of quantitative data was done using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software, version 14 and the qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis approach.

The result shows that there is decreasing trend of child marriage. Self-desire of children, use of modern technology, local and ethnic rituals and ceremony found the major causes of child marriage. Several negative impacts such as miscarriage, still birth, infant death, maternal death, problem in their reproductive health, school dropout and problem in social relationship at later. Likewise, fulfilment of the desire of children in time and support on household chores has been noted as positive impact of child early marriage practice.

Keywords : Child Marriages, Education, Social Studies, Maternal Death, Economy

I. INTRODUCTION

Child marriage is a global problem which affects millions of children throughout the world. It is a common practice in many countries around the world, especially in developing countries. Globally, around 10 million girls of below the age 18 marry each¹. One in every five girls in the developing world is married by the age of 18 and

one in nine married before they reach the age of 15². If this trend continues, 142 million girls will be child brides before their 18th birthday over the next decade and 50 million will be married under the age of 15 between 2011 and 2020³. The variation of child marriage exists between boys and girls in developing countries; about 16 per

cent of girls (excluding China) marry before age 18, compared to 3 per cent of boys⁴.

The prevalence rate of child marriage in South Asia is the highest in both relative and absolute terms (46 percent and 24.4 million respectively) in the world⁵. More than half of all the world's women 20–24 years old who were married or in union by age 18 live in South Asia⁶. Behind the reason for early marriage in South Asia, poverty and lack of education is a key driver⁷.

Although the governments in these regions have set 18 years as the minimum legal age for marriage, they are not only unable to enforce existing laws. Most of the countries of these regions have their own laws to prohibit child marriage; however, child marriage tends to be perpetuated by custom and religious practice of these regions⁸.

Although child marriage in Nepal seems to be in declining trend, it still remains a major and prevalent social problem throughout the country. Unfortunately, Nepal holds 8th position with 51 percent among the countries worldwide to have high prevalence of child marriage⁹. Although an overwhelming progress is seen in literacy of Nepal, the marriage status still paints a gloomy picture where 48.9 percent of the youths get married between the ages of 15 to 19 year and 11.5 percent of the people still get married before they reach the age of 14¹⁰. According to Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2011, 40.7 per cent of Nepalese women aged 20 to 24 were married before they turned 18¹¹.

In Nepal, the civil code of 1963 (The Eleventh Amendment) states that individuals can marry at 18 with parental consent and at 20 without consent. The punishment for child marriage is imprisonment for up to three years and a fine of up to 10,000 rupees¹². Similarly, with parental consent, legal minimum age at marriage for both girl and boy has been set at 18 years¹³. The boys and girls want to marry on their own then the minimum legal age at marriage for both girls and boys is 20 years. Constitution of Nepal has also

declared that child marriage is illegal. However, there are still some communities, which are highly rooted in their socially established practices, which across the world on child marriage have been arranging the marriage of children before reaching the age of 18.

The child marriage situation in Nepal varies according to geographical regions and ethnic groups. One of the major reasons of child marriage in Nepal is cultural and traditional practices. Child marriage specially occurs in different social and ethnic groups in Nepal even though no religion formally endorses it. Harmful practice of child marriage is most prevalent among illiterate and Janjati (indigenous and ethnic groups) and the Dalit of Nepal¹⁴. Previous studies conducted in Nepal have examined the several causes of child marriage in Nepal. The major causes among those are family pressure, the need to support on household chores, traditional values, and social beliefs and own desire¹⁵. Child marriage negatively affects the overall wellbeing of children who are not mentally, psychologically and physically prepared to enter in married life. It deprives them from good education as well as good health services, the chances to learn skills and develop their personalities and leave them vulnerable indeed¹⁶.

Some electronic and print media of Nepal has been frequently reporting the stories of child marriages among ethnic community of rural area, but no study seems to have been conducted regarding in-depth understanding of those stories. Therefore, this paper aims to understand the situation of child marriage in Tamang Community as well as its causes and consequences. Furthermore, it provides the evidence-based fact that enables policymakers and programmers themselves to take action to eliminate child marriage practice in the local context.

II. Methods

Nuwakot district, central development region of Nepal as the study area has reported the high prevalence of child marriage¹⁷. The Fikuri Village Development Committee of Nuwakot district, where majority of Tamang are residing is purposively selected for this study.

A mix method approach was applied for this study. The researcher used a set of structured questionnaires for quantitative survey and a checklist for the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to collect the data for this study. Quantitative information was collected from 108 randomly selected households whereas qualitative information was collected through two focus groups (one each separately with boys and girls). For the selection of households, the researcher firstly prepared all the list (ward-wise) of Tamang households of the VDC as a sampling frame. After prepared the list (sampling frame) of 392 households within the VDC, required 108 numbers of households were selected through systematic sampling method. The survey was done either household head or other known person of the selected households. The FGDs were conducted with purposively selected the adolescents of the study area.

Overall analysis of quantitative data was done using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software, version 14, whereas the qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis approach.

III. RESULTS

This section presents the major causes consequences behind child marriage in Tamang community.

3.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of study population

Table I shows the demographic characteristics of study population. The age of the household population ranges from 0 to 95 years having majority population in the working age

population 15-59 years. With compare to the national figure based on 2011 census, the older age population was higher in the study population and also found the lower proportion of children in the age groups 0-14 years. The household population suggest that majority were belongs to the joint family (56.7%) compared with single (43.3%).

Agriculture was the major sources of income of the households in the study population. Education status of the households population suggest that around one fifth (24.5%) were illiterate. Around 59 percent of the household populations were married which is followed by unmarried (36.1%) and widowed (4%) respectively.

Table I: Socio Economic Characteristics

Particulars	Male %	Female%	Total%
Age Group			
0 to 14 years	18.0	21.9	20.0
15 to 59 years	72.8	66.4	69.6
60 and above	9.2	11.7	10.4
N	283	283	566

Religion	Male %	Female%	Total%
Hindu	16.6	15.5	16.1
Buddhist	77.7	80.6	79.2
Christian	5.7	3.9	4.8
Total	283	283	566

Type of family	Male%	Female %	Total%
Single	43.8	42.8	43.3
Joint	56.2	57.2	56.7
N	283	283	566

Income source of family	Male %	Female%	Total%
Agriculture	53.3	62.5	54.6
Service	4.3	0.0	3.7
Business	8.7	6.2	8.3
Wage/ Labour	17.4	6.2	15.7
Other	16.3	25.0	17.6
N	92	16	108

Educational Status (>5 Yrs)	Male%	Female%	Total%
Illiterate	15.6	33.5	24.5
Informal Education	11.0	6.2	8.6
Pre-Primary	3.4	1.9	2.7
Primary	11.4	12.3	11.9
Lower Secondary	17.9	10.8	14.3
Secondary	29.3	20.0	24.7
Higher Secondary	11.4	15.4	13.4
N	263	260	523

Martial Status (>5 Yrs)	Male%	Female%	Total%
Unmarried	38.4	33.8	36.1
Married	58.2	59.6	58.9
Separated	1.1	.4	.8
Divorced	0.0	.4	.2
Widow/Widower	2.3	5.8	4.0
N	263	260	523

Source : Field Survey

3.2 Causes of marriage in early age

Table II shows that the major causes of early marriage were self-desire of the children (72.0%), general trends (12.0%), and cultural practices (12.0%), need the people to support

households' chores (8.0%), parent's presser (8.0%), and the issues related to social prestige (8.0%).

Table II : Major Causes of Early Marriage in Past Five Years

Reasons	N	Percent
General Trend	6	12.0
School Dropout	2	4.0
Household Chores	4	8.0
Parent's Pressure	4	8.0
Prestige Issue	4	8.0
Self-Desire of Children	36	72.0
Socio-Culture Process	6	12.0
Without expenses	2	4.0

*total percent is more than 100 because of multiple responses

The quantitative data also supported by qualitative data. It showed that early marriage of children is influenced by local ceremony and festivals among the Tamang community. "Fakaune and Bhagaune" is one of the most prevalent marriage practices in this community which was also reported in the survey part. Especially this type of marriage occurs specially during local festivals and carnivals.

According the FGD participants, it has become a more common practice in the community which was also allowed by the society. The participants illustrated that household has to face no extra economic burden by this practice of marriage so this is easily acceptable in the community. It was also found that modern technologies such as mobile phone and Facebook are also supporting to marry children in early age.

3.3 Age at marriage practices among girls in past 5 years

Of the total study households, 64 percent households head reported that, they got marriage their daughter below the age 18 years and the major reason were self-desire of the children,

general practices, and parent’s pressure and need the people to support household’s chores (Table III). The major influencing factor for early marriage was the self-desire followed by pressure of parents, friend and community people.

Table III: Girl marriage practices below the age 18 in the past five years

	N	Percent
Yes	32	64.0
No	18	36.0
Total	50	100.0

Reasons for marriage if responded, “Yes”

General Practice	8	25.0
Household Chores	2	6.3
Parent’s Pressure	6	18.8
Self-desire of children	22	68.8
Total	38	100.0

Influencing people to marry early

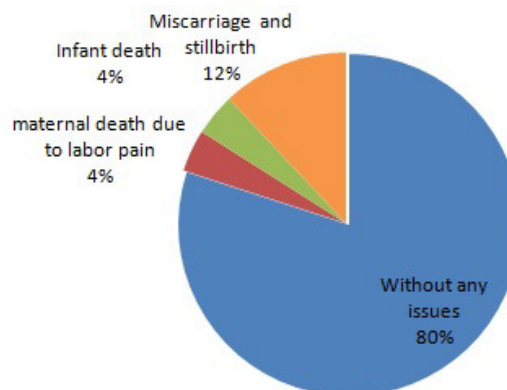
Parents	12	24.0
Friends	4	8.0
Self	30	60.0
Community	4	8.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey

3.4 Problems of early marriage

It was found that the majority of married people of the community did not face any problem because of the early marriage. Eighty percent of the household’s head reported to have no problem because of early marriage. Some major problems such as miscarriage, still birth, infant death and maternal death are identified due to pregnancy complications those who attempted early marriage (figure 1).

Figure I : Problems of early marriage reported by head of households



Source : Field Survey

3.5 Positive and negative consequences of early age at marriage

Positive consequence of the early marriage by the children who got married below the age 18 in past 5 years found that fulfilment of the desire of children in time (46.2%), followed by support on households chores (7.7%). Likewise, around 54 percent reported the problem because of early marriage (Table IV). The major problems reported by children were disturbance on study, unemployment and less participation in social activities. From the data, it can be shown that majority of the children (85.7%) who got married in early age have reported that their study was disturbed due to marriage.

Table IV : Positive and Negative Consequences of Early Marriage

	N	Percent
Positive aspect of early marriage		
Fulfilment of the desire of children	12	46.2
Support of household chores	2	7.7
No Response	12	46.2
Total	26	100

Problems faced due to early marriage

Unemployment	2	14.3
Less participation in social activities	2	14.3
Hamper in studies	12	85.7

Source : Field Survey

As the listed the consequences in the survey, qualitative study (FGDs) also supports this. Most of the negative consequences of early marriage in study community were argued in FGDs. The participants themselves shared their bitter experiences and felt guilt due to early marriage. The mostly common problems found due to child marriage among Tamang community were school drop-out, pregnancy related compliant, miscarriage and quarrelling relation among the couple.

3.6 consequence of early age marriage in education

More than half of the respondents (53.8%) who got marriage below the age 18 in past 5 years, reported the impact of early marriage in their education. The major impacts reported by the respondents were school dropout and not interested in education because of family matters (Table V).

Table V : Consequences of Child Marriage

Impact on Education	N	Percent
Yes	14	53.8
No	8	30.8
Don't know	4	15.4
Total	26	100.0

If yes,.... *		
School Drop out	12	85.7
Family Matter	4	28.6
Total	16*	

If Dropout, why....* ?		
Felt shame to join school	6	42.9
Pressure of household chores	6	42.9
Need to support household chores	2	14.3
Raising Children	4	28.6
Pregnancy	4	28.6

*total percent is more than 100 because of multiple responses

The major reasons for dropped out reported by the respondents were felt shame to go school (42.9%), pressure of households chores (42.9%) and followed by spent time to support HH chores, rearing and caring of children and pregnancy and child birth causes.

IV. Conclusions

The study results suggest that the incidence of child marriage still exists in the Tamang community. The situation of child marriage is still in practice however the mean age at marriage is increasing this year compared to previous year. The study discloses that the trend of marriage among Tamang is somehow improving. The major causes identified that local ceremony, festivals and ethnic rituals leads to get marry in early age among Tamang. Self-desire of children, socio-cultural practices and modern technologies such as mobile phone and face book are also reported major causes of child marriage.

Study results show that people observed different negative as well as positive impacts of early marriage. The negative impacts are noted mainly in children's health and education. The impacts such as labour pain, complication of pregnancy and child birth, miscarriage, school dropout were commonly reported problems in this study. In order to improve maternal and child health as well as school enrolment, the activities related to awareness regarding late marriage (age 20 above) is essential. The concerned authorities should also pay attention on to eradicate early marriage

in various ethnic communities where child marriage practice is high.

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