



Nexus between Economic Factors and Practice of Child Marriage: A Case Study of District Mohmand Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Syed Haroon Shah, Ph.D. Scholar Department of Sociology, University of Peshawar, Pakistan

Niaz Muhammad, Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Peshawar, Pakistan

***Aman Ullah**, Lecturer Department of Sociology, University of Swabi, Pakistan

*Corresponding author's email: aman@uoswabi.edu.pk

ARTICLE DETAILS

History

Revised format: Feb 2022

Available Online: Mar 2022

Keywords

Economic, Poverty, Illiteracy, Child Marriage, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

JEL Classification

D1, P4, P5

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to examine the economic factor as a stimulant behind the phenomena of child marriage in District Mohmand Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Methodology: For this purpose, 200 sample respondents were selected through quota sampling from the selected Tehsil of Mommmand agency. Furthermore, a chi-Square test was performed for measuring the association between study variables at Bivariate and Multivariate levels of analysis.

Findings: Findings of the study unveil that economic factors significantly contributed to the phenomena of child marriage practices for both genders

Implications: Based on study findings it has been recommended that efforts on micro and macro levels should be made to decrease the level of poverty, particularly in rural areas where the practice of child marriage is more prevalent than in urban areas. By providing social alternatives to marriage, such as education, skill, and technical development opportunities, especially for young girls, and the provision of loans to the poor families for entrepreneurship, the unfortunate practice of child marriage can be significantly overcome.



© 2022, The authors, under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0

Recommended citation: Shah, H. S., Muhammad, N., and Ullah, A., (2022). The Nexus between Economic Factors and Practice of Child Marriage: A case study of District Mohmand Khyber Pakhtunkhwa . *Journal of Accounting and Finance in Emerging Economies*, 8 (1), 25-32

Introduction

Marriage is a culturally endorsed union between individuals of the opposite sex which sets specific obligations and rights for them, their offspring, and extended family members such as their in-laws. Marriage can involve a formal, legally recognized partnership between consenting adults, which legalises sexual encounters and legitimises any progeny (Dillingham & Isaac, 2011; Stirnitzke, 2011; Talukder et al., 2020; Ullah et al., 2020). Child marriage, on the other hand, occurs when one or both couples are minors It can occur both with or without legal registration, and under religious, civil, or customary rules (Efevbera & Bhabha, 2020; Nour, 2006; Parsons et al., 2015;

Schaffnit et al., 2021; Wahi et al., 2019).

Child marriage subjects its participants to a life of dreadful expectations, putting them in greater danger of exploitation, violence, bad health, and/or early mortality. Despite the fact that males get married at a young age as well, child marriage has a greater detrimental impact on girls, with costs that may be shocking for their well-being and health (Davis et al., 2013; Godha et al., 2013; Wodon, 2016). Because children rarely express free and informed agreement or understand the long-term consequences of marrying at a young age, child marriage is sometimes referred to as forced marriage. Parents may force their children to marry, while children may choose to marry if they believe it will improve their circumstances (Gangoli et al., 2009; Myers, 2013).

Frequency of Child Marriage

Child marriage is a global issue, with almost 700 million women alive now who were married as youngsters, with 15 million more marryings every year (Fatusi, 2016; Petroni et al., 2017). Hundreds of millions more are at risk, and the number will only grow as the world's population grows. If the current trend continues, an estimated 280 million girls will be forced to marry as children. By 2050, this figure will have risen to 320 million due to population increase. By 2030, the total number of females married as children would have risen to over 950 million, and by 2050, it will have risen to around 1.2 billion. Each year, the number of females under the age of 18 who marry will increase from 15 million presently to 16.5 million in 2030 and above 18 million in 2050 (Ahmed, 2015; Chalasani et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2014; Vogelstein, 2013).

Situation in Pakistan

Sindh has the highest rate of child marriage in Pakistan, at 43.1 percent, followed by the Northwest Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) at 29 percent, Balochistan at 21.6 percent, and Punjab at 29.9 percent. In Pakistan the practice of registering the marriage is very low, it's difficult to quantify the exact frequency of child marriages. The fact that most births in Pakistan's rural areas are also unregistered exacerbates the problem, making it difficult to determine a child's age at the time of their marriage. Though, it is indisputable that the phenomena of marriages of children are practiced throughout Pakistan (Sotirova et al., 2020; Zafar, 2021).

Economic Factors

Economic factors have a huge impact on many parts of people's lives, including family decisions about the age at which their girls should marry (Smock et al., 2005). Female economic liberty has a significant impact on their marriage age. The existing literature also points out that the practice of child marriage is triggered by a low level of economic status (Bunting, 2005; Hotchkiss et al., 2016), whereas improving women's economic freedom is the primary cause of late marriage (Oppenheimer, 1997; Smith et al., 2012). Child marriage is common in poor communities, with the greatest rates in the world's poorest regions (Bank, 2017; Lemmon & ElHarake, 2014). Moreover, poor socioeconomic situations generally encourage the practice of child marriage, and its frequency is linked to home income. Child marriage decreases as affluence rises (Davis et al., 2013; Misunas et al., 2021). Between the poorest and wealthiest families, there has been a considerable difference in the frequency of child marriage. In each of the 49 nations studied, the practice of child marriage was most prevalent among girls aged group of 20 to 24 years in the lowest twenty percent of households (Godha et al., 2013; Yaya et al., 2019; Yount et al., 2016). In 2014, Pakistan's headcount poverty rate was 29.5 percent, with Pakistani women, who make up about 40% of the population, bearing the brunt of this high poverty (Bank, 2020). Empirical findings of Bhanji and Punjani (2014) and Winkvist and Akhtar (2000) demonstrated that in rural areas of Pakistan, daughters are seen as an economic liability, and their marriages are frequently scheduled before those of sons, who are expected to help sustain the family's finances particularly (Atif et al., 2016), it is the primary cause for child marriage is observed. Bagahl et al. (2016) stated that in Sindh females are sold for financial benefits or to pay their loans and that this is a common practice amongst the

impoverished. In Pakistan's Baluchistan province, poverty is a direct contributor to the rise of underage marriages (Umer et al., 2017). Most Pakhtun households in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are eager to marry their children at a young age in order to alleviate the family's financial burden (Daraz et al., 2014; Hashami, 2018). In addition, Daraz et al. (2014) conducted study in Dir Lower, Pakistan and explored that parents married their female offspring at a younger age due to financial pressure. According to the report, 85 percent of respondents feel that financial insecurity encourages the practise of underage marriage. Poverty is a major factor in child marriage, most of the parents' view that marrying their daughters will protect their upcoming life. More precisely poverty largely intensifies the financial and social constraints placed on females and their parents in the context of deep ingrained gender inequality, which explains why child marriage is so common (Bunting, 2005; Paul, 2019; Raj et al., 2009).

Statement of the Problem

Child marriage is most prevalent in FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Area), which has since been integrated into the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as a result of the 18th amendment to Pakistan's constitution. Pakistan's tribal areas have not received the same level of assistance as other sections of the country. Mohmand Agency, which is part of FATA, has a slew of socioeconomic issues, including an alarming rate of underage marriage. The government and humanitarian organisations have paid little attention to the problem, which is causing various problems in the lives of youngsters who marry before they reach the age of 18. Thus the present study will ascertain the relationship between economic factors and child marriage practice in the study area.

Methodology

Universe of the Study, Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study was carried out in Mohmand agency. In addition, Mohmand Agency has seven Tehsils, from which Ambar Prang ghar, Utman Khel, Pindilai, Safi, Halimzai, were selected as a universe of the current study. Moreover, the participant was selected with equal representation on the basis of Tehsil and gender (See Table 1). Since, the exact number of the target population in the research area was unknown, thus non-probability sampling methodology while using quota sampling strategy was adopted.

Table 1: Sample Composition and Selection Procedure

s.no	Sample Respondents	Sample Size From each Tehsil				Total
		Ambar	Utman Khel	Prang ghar	Pindilai	
1	Male practitioners of child marriage	25	25	25	25	100
2	Female practitioners of child marriage	25	25	25	25	100

Tools for Data Collection and Analysis of Data

A comprehensive questionnaire covering the study objectives was developed. Moreover, primary data was collected through well-trained interviewers. Besides, Data was analyzed at uni-variate, bivariate and multivariate levels. Moreover, information about the demographic profile of the participants was analyzed through univariate analysis. To correlate and obtain the relationship of the variables Bivariate and Multivariate analysis was carried out. All of the aforementioned analysis was done on SPSS 25.

Results

Table 2 unveils that, 39% were in the age group of 16-27 years, and about half of the sample respondents i.e. 49.5% were illiterate. Besides, one-fourth 25% of the participants were laborers, 8.5% and only 10.5% of the respondent were students. About one-third of the sample size (29%) of the child marriage practitioners was employed in low-paid government/private sectors.

Likewise, their father's occupation was farming stated by 36.5% of the respondents and their family monthly income were between 11,000 to 20,000 disclosed by more than one-fourth of the respondents.

Table 2: Respondents' Demographic Information

Item	Frequency	Percent
Age (Years)		
16 to 27	78	39.0
28 to 37	43	21.5
38 to 47	52	26.0
48 to 57	18	9.0
58 to 67	05	3.0
68 to 77	04	2.0
Total	200	100.0
Respondents' Educational Level		
Illiterate	99	49.5
Primary	42	21.0
Under Matric	24	12.0
Matriculate	18	09.0
F.A/F.Sc	10	05.0
Graduate	04	02.0
Post Graduate	03	01.5
Total	200	100.0
Spouse Educational Level		
Illiterate	170	85.0
Primary	22	11.0
Under Matric	03	1.5
Matriculate	02	1.0
FA/F.Sc	02	1.0
Graduation	01	0.5
Total	200	100.0
Respondents' occupation		
Farming	45	22.5
Labourer	50	25.0
Govt./Private Servant	58	29.0
Student	17	8.5
Businessman	21	10.5
Any other	09	4.5
Total	200	100.0
Respondents' Father Occupation		
Farming	73	36.5
Labourer	66	33.0

Govt./Private Servant	25	12.5
Businessman	25	12.5
Any Other	11	5.5
Total	200	100.0
Family Type		
Joint Family	127	63.5
Extended Family	15	7.5
Nuclear Family	58	29.0
Total	200	100.0
Monthly Family Income in PKR		
5,000-10,000	26	13.0
10,001-20,000	54	27.0
20,001-30,000	54	27.0
30,001-40,000	26	13.0
40,001-50,000	17	8.5
51,000-60,000	6	3.0
60,000 and above	17	8.5

Association of Economic Factors with Child Marriage Practice (Controlling Gender)

Table 3 represents multivariate analysis which unveils the correlation of economic factors as contributing factors for child marriage in the prevalent society. Results of the descriptive statistics depict that more than half of the female respondents (57.1%) agreed with economic incompetence as contributing factor of child marriage practice. In addition, more than two-thirds (78%) of the male respondents were agreed with economic incompetence as determining factor of child marriage practice in the study area. Furthermore, for the female participant, the chi-square value derived from the statistical analysis among economic factors and child marriage shows a highly significant ($p=0.000$). Besides, for male respondents, the aforementioned variables were found only significant ($p=0.001$). Likewise, the table as a whole disclosed that economic factors significantly contributed to the phenomena of child marriage practices ($p=0.000$). Thus, it could be inferred from the aforementioned findings obtained from the chi-square statistic that disclosed a spurious correlation for both genders.

Table 3: Association of Economic Factors with Child Marriage Practice (Controlling Gender)

Gender Control Variable	Economic Factors	Child Marriage Practice				Statistics	Level of significance for the entire table
		Agree	Disagree	Don't know	Total		
Female	Agree	36(57.1%)	14(41.2%)	0(0%)	50(50%)	$x^2 = 21.489$ $p = 0.000$	$x^2 = 37.810$ $p = 0.000$
	Disagree	17(27%)	17(50%)	0(0%)	34(34%)		
	Don't know	10(15.9%)	3(18.8%)	3(100%)	16(16%)		
	Total	63(100%)	34(100%)	3(100%)	100(100%)		
Male	Agree	32(78%)	46(79.3%)	0(0%)	78(78%)	$x^2 = 18.545$ $p = 0.001$	
	Disagree	4(9.8%)	11(19%)	0(0%)	15(15%)		
	Don't know	5(12.2%)	1(1.7%)	1(100%)	7(7%)		
	Total	41(100%)	58(100%)	1(100%)	100(100%)		

Discussion

The main theme of the present study reveals around economic incompetence is a contributing factor for early child marriage practice in District Mohmand Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The findings of the study show that about half of the study participants were illiterate. Low literacy in the study area is attributable to the scarcity of schools or long-distance educational institutions in the research site. Besides the prevailing culture is also one of the hinders to getting an education as the normative system mainly emphasizes earning rather than educational attainment. Moreover, in tribal areas of Pakistan female education is considered against the honor of the family. Thus the ignorance of the local community contributed to the practice of child marriage in these communities. These findings are also supported by Davis et al. (2013) that education broadens choices and surge employment opportunity for the individual as well as increases human rational and cognitive skills for taking decision for their comfort. Some previous studies disclosed that majority of the young bride is not enrolled in schools and most of them are ignored in decision making which significantly decreases their financial skills (Malhotra et al., 2011; Vogelstein, 2013). Besides, the findings of the study also demonstrated that farming is one of the dominant professions in the research area because of inaccessibility to other business activities and main dependency on agricultural land. Moreover, majority of the study participant was living in the joint family system. Taking together the above results it could be concluded that people having the responsibility of large family and low family income along with limited sources of business are mostly wed their children in their early ages for lighting the economic liability. Slimier findings are also explored by Parsons et al. (2015) that child marriage is mostly practiced for financial transactions. Furthermore, the relationship between economic factors and child marriage was found highly significate. These findings are closely in line with the previous work of Senderowitz (1995) that majority of Pakhtun families in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are eager to marry their children at a young age in order to alleviate the family's financial burden.

Conclusions and Recommendation

Child marriage is a worldwide challenge that jeopardizes the human rights, lives, and health of children, especially among girls and their children. In South Asia and Africa, it is fairly frequent. Child marriage is a serious issue in Pakistan, as it is in many other nations. Like other parts of the former FATA, the Mohmand tribe's lineages and clans administer their affairs according to customary rules and unwritten codes. The socio-economic indicators in the Mohmand area, which is the focus of the current study, are severely poor as a result of the aforementioned issues. The study discovered that young children, predominantly females, are victims of child marriage in the study area. Due to a multitude of economic difficulties, child marriage continues to exist in the study universe. In addition, participants in the research region highlighted economic dependency of young children, family economic difficulties, and marriage offers from richer households as economic reasons for child marriage. Child marriage is more common among labourers and landless farmers, as well as the poorest households, than among the wealthy, and in larger homes than in smaller ones, as per the respondents say in this regard. Poverty is a major contributor to child marriage, as well as a poverty cycle that has been carried down through generations. Based on the previously mentioned stance, early marriage has a detrimental impact on boys' and girls' education, skills, and knowledge, and they have limited career opportunities and talents to assist their families in breaking the poverty cycle. As a matter of fact, efforts should be made to decrease the level of poverty in the study area, particularly in rural areas where child marriage is more prevalent than in urban areas, by providing alternatives to marriage, such as education, skill development opportunities, particularly for girls, and the provision of soft loans and cash transfer programs.

References

- Ahmed, T. (2015). Child marriage: a discussion paper. *Bangladesh Journal of Bioethics*, 6(2), 8-14.

- Atif, K., Ullah, M. Z., Afsheen, A., Naqvi, S. A. H., Raja, Z. A., & Niazi, S. A. (2016). Son preference in Pakistan; a myth or reality. *Pakistan journal of medical sciences*, 32(4), 994.
- Bagahl, G. U., Khaskhelly, N., Shaikh, E. K. Z., & Sheikh, M. A. (2016). Empirical Analytical Study on Socio-Economic Factor of Early Marriages: A Case Study of Badin District, Sindh, Pakistan. *The Government-Annual Research Journal of Political Science.*, 5(5).
- Bank, W. (2017). *Uganda Economic Update, December 2017: Accelerating Uganda's Development, Ending Child Marriage, Educating Girls*. World Bank.
- Bank, W. (2020). Islamic Republic of Pakistan: Leveling the Playing Field. In: World Bank.
- Bhanji, S. M., & Punjani, N. S. (2014). Determinants of child (early) marriages among young girls: a public health issue. *J Women's Health Care*, 3(3), 1-3.
- Bunting, A. (2005). Stages of development: marriage of girls and teens as an international human rights issue. *Social & Legal Studies*, 14(1), 17-38.
- Chalasanani, S., Maksud, N., Cappa, C., Finnie, A., & Casey, J. (2021). Tracking progress and sharing learning: data and evidence dissemination as a critical contribution to ending child marriage. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 69(6), S6-S7.
- Daraz, U., Naz, A., & Khan, W. (2014). Early Marriage: A Developmental Challenge to Women in Pakhtun Society. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(1).
- Davis, A., Postles, C., & Rosa, G. (2013). *A girl's right to say no to marriage: Working to end child marriage and keep girls in school*. Plan Limited.
- Dillingham, B. W., & Isaac, B. L. (2011). *Defining marriage cross-culturally*. De Gruyter Mouton.
- Efevbera, Y., & Bhabha, J. (2020). Defining and deconstructing girl child marriage and applications to global public health. *BMC public health*, 20(1), 1-11.
- Fatusi, A. O. (2016). Young people's sexual and reproductive health interventions in developing countries: Making the investments count. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 59(3), S1-S3.
- Gangoli, G., McCarry, M., & Razak, A. (2009). Child marriage or forced marriage? South Asian communities in north east England. *Children & Society*, 23(6), 418-429.
- Godha, D., Hotchkiss, D. R., & Gage, A. J. (2013). Association between child marriage and reproductive health outcomes and service utilization: a multi-country study from South Asia. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 52(5), 552-558.
- Hashami, M. F. (2018). Early age marriage: A barrier for women's development in khyber pakhtunkhwa society. *IMPACT: International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature*.
- Hotchkiss, D. R., Godha, D., Gage, A. J., & Cappa, C. (2016). Risk factors associated with the practice of child marriage among Roma girls in Serbia. *BMC international health and human rights*, 16(1), 1-10.
- Lemmon, G. T., & ElHarake, L. S. (2014). *Child brides, global consequences: how to end child marriage*. Council on Foreign Relations.
- Malhotra, A., Warner, A., McGonagle, A., & Lee-Rife, S. (2011). Solutions to end child marriage. *Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women*.
- Misunas, C., Erulkar, A., Apicella, L., Ngô, T., & Psaki, S. (2021). What influences girls' age at marriage in Burkina Faso and Tanzania? Exploring the contribution of individual, household, and community level factors. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 69(6), S46-S56.
- Myers, J. (2013). Untying the knot. Exploring early marriage in fragile states. *World Vision*.
- Nour, N. M. (2006). Health consequences of child marriage in Africa. *Emerging infectious diseases*, 12(11), 1644.
- Oppenheimer, V. K. (1997). Women's employment and the gain to marriage: The specialization and trading model. *Annual review of sociology*, 23(1), 431-453.
- Parsons, J., Edmeades, J., Kes, A., Petroni, S., Sexton, M., & Wodon, Q. (2015). Economic impacts of child marriage: a review of the literature. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 13(3), 12-22.
- Paul, P. (2019). Effects of education and poverty on the prevalence of girl child marriage in India: A district-level analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 100, 16-21.

- Petroni, S., Steinhaus, M., Fenn, N. S., Stoebenau, K., & Gregowski, A. (2017). New findings on child marriage in sub-Saharan Africa. *Annals of global health*, 83(5-6), 781-790.
- Raj, A., Saggurti, N., Balaiah, D., & Silverman, J. G. (2009). Prevalence of child marriage and its effect on fertility and fertility-control outcomes of young women in India: a cross-sectional, observational study. *The lancet*, 373(9678), 1883-1889.
- Schaffnit, S. B., Urassa, M., Wamoyi, J., Dardoumpa, M., & Lawson, D. W. (2021). "I have never seen something like that": Discrepancies between lived experiences and the global health concept of child marriage in northern Tanzania. *PloS one*, 16(4), e0249200.
- Senderowitz, J. (1995). Adolescent health: reassessing the passage to adulthood.
- Smith, C. A., Stone, R. P., & Kahando, S. (2012). A model of women's educational factors related to delaying girls' marriage. *International Review of Education*, 58(4), 533-555.
- Smock, P. J., Manning, W. D., & Porter, M. (2005). "Everything's there except money": How money shapes decisions to marry among cohabitators. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67(3), 680-696.
- Sotirova, A., Koster, W., Miedema, E., Ajaz, N., Zaal, K. v., Durrani, W., . . . Kakal, T. (2020). *Child marriage in Pakistan: evidence from three development programs*.
- Stirnitzke, A. C. (2011). Transsexuality, marriage, and the myth of true sex. *Ariz. L. Rev.*, 53, 285.
- Talukder, A., Hasan, M. M., Razu, S. R., & Hossain, Z. (2020). Early marriage in Bangladesh: a cross-sectional study exploring the associated factors. *Journal of international women's studies.*, 21(1), 68-78.
- Ullah, A., Liqat Ali, H. A., Ali, H., Gul, S., & Tariq, M. (2020). The Ubiquitous Phenomena Of Dowry Practice And Its Relation With Women Prestige In District Swabi-Pakistan. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 17(6), 14176-14189.
- Umer, S., Othman, Z., & Hassan, K. (2017). Traditional Marriages in Rural Balochistan: The Voice of Baloch Women.
- UNICEF. (2014). *Ending Child Marriage*.
- Vogelstein, R. B. (2013). *Ending child marriage: How elevating the status of girls advances US foreign policy objectives*. Council on Foreign Relations.
- Wahi, A., Zaleski, K. L., Lampe, J., Bevan, P., & Koski, A. (2019). The lived experience of child marriage in the United States. *Social work in public health*, 34(3), 201-213.
- Winkvist, A., & Akhtar, H. Z. (2000). God should give daughters to rich families only: attitudes towards childbearing among low-income women in Punjab, Pakistan. *Social Science & Medicine*, 51(1), 73-81. [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536\(99\)00440-2](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536(99)00440-2)
- Wodon, Q. (2016). Early childhood development in the context of the family: the case of child marriage. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 17(4), 590-598.
- Yaya, S., Odusina, E. K., & Bishwajit, G. (2019). Prevalence of child marriage and its impact on fertility outcomes in 34 sub-Saharan African countries. *BMC international health and human rights*, 19(1), 1-11.
- Yount, K. M., Crandall, A., Cheong, Y. F., Osypuk, T. L., Bates, L. M., Naved, R. T., & Schuler, S. R. (2016). Child marriage and intimate partner violence in rural Bangladesh: a longitudinal multilevel analysis. *Demography*, 53(6), 1821-1852.
- Zafar, M. (2021). Makran on top for under-18 girls' marriages. *The Express Tribune*.