
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON EARLY MARRIAGE IN PAKISTAN: IMPACT ON EDUCATION AND HEALTH

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The purpose of this research is to reveal the impact on education and health the one who has been got married at very young age. Early marriage is still a challenge issue in developing countries especially in Southern Asia countries. Early marriage defines as a marriage in which a child is putting into marriage before the age of 18. Globally, according to UNICEF, 12 million girls marry before the age of 18 each year. If sustainable action is not taken seriously now, more than 150 million girls will become child brides by 2030. Although child marriage affects the health of both sexes, girls are either physically or mentally directly influenced on their health and also are deprived on their education because they are to leave from the school, the UNFPA's report estimates that due to early marriage, the students of secondary level have decreased which is around 3.4% in 2017, is called a human rights violation. A million girls are suffering not only related to physical issues, but they are also making victims by double burden by stereotype practice which is totally destroying young girls' life. This paper talks about the element of culture factors behind the practice of Child Marriage that some culture exists in Pakistan which continues to perpetuate by practicing early marriage in most communities due to discrimination and inequality amongst boys and girls. Marriage customs vary in culture to culture and region to region. In Pakistan, child Marriage is exercised through old tradition such as "Watta Satta" means that girls are exchanged between two families, and "Pait Lekhi" means that a girl is engaged before her birth. In Pakistan, Marriage in nearest or distance relatives is very common which causes early marriage and sometimes not given the importance of education for girls. It is said that early marriage provides a girl's honor

and keeps pure. It will also be with the hope to examine the health implications on the life of the children.

KEYWORDS

Child Marriage; Sex; Discrimination; Inequality; Girl's Honor; Old Tradition, Health Complications

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is formed by a precious and pleasant bond between a groom and bride. As opposed, it may not always go as planned. The ambition to have a prosperous life is uninhabited, and the notion of having a satisfying life is non-existent. All of this becomes an actuality when a girl is exposed to married at an early age which defines by UNICEF as marriage before the age of 18 (Raj, Saggurti, Balaiah & Silverman, 2009). Child marriage violates the rights of children and has widespread of which long term consequences for child brides and grooms. As reported by UNICEF's 2020, marriage at an early age is quite widespread in Asian countries, and its negative impact touches both boys and girls, although it is more likely among girls who face early marriage-related concerns than boys. And sudden shift in roles, responsibilities, and environment creates stress due to which not only losses childhood fun but also destroys her psychological well-being, and the health of their offspring (Nour, 2009). Furthermore, underage marriage puts girls towards violence, health risk, or expiry level and may be other most of the serious health impact of child marriage, and also abolishes her educational background and her coming opportunities subside, and has to face health risk, rather her responsibilities are increased.

Child Marriage around the World

Globally, it is around 21% young girls were married before 18 whereas 12 Million girls are married each year before 18. During this time, the prevalence of child marriage in South Asia fell the most from 49% to 30%. 25 million child marriages have been prevented in the last decade. While 37% girls were married before 18 in Sub-Saharan Africa; 76% Niger, 68% Central Africa Republic, and 67% Chad. If sustainable action is not taken seriously now, more than 150 million girls will become child brides by 2030. (UNICEF, 2020).

As specified by a report of UNICEF that 3% girls are put into marriage at before 15 while, 21% before 18. The highlighted recent report in only 2020, 119 cases of child marriages were come to light with 95% girls versus 5% boys in Pakistan (UNICEF, 2020). As per World Health Organization, in Pakistan demographics of early marriage is more prevalent in rural area wherein overly 140 million girls have been marriage for one decades than urban areas. According to international agency states that Pakistan is the sixth largest country in the world where child marriage is more prevalent.

Child marriage are widespread in Pakistan provinces including; Sindh, wherein 72% girls and 25% boys are victims of early marriage, whilst in Punjab and Baluchistan, 66% girl and 22% boys are targeted of early marriage. In tribal areas, the rate of girl child marriage is the highest reported with 99% girls are given for marriage at early age which is under dishonest and fraudulent practices (WHO reports).

As per a World Bank research published in 2017, underage marriages could cost developing nations trillions of dollars by 2030. Given the rate of child marriage in Pakistan, it is critical to comprehend the economic impact of underage marriage in various aspects (World Bank Research, 2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gynecol (2009) deliberated that the effect of child marriage may lead to sexually transmitted infection, cervical cancer, isolation, depression and infant mortality. After marriage a girl child is limited the role of wife, domestic work, and mother (Nour 2009). Child marriage is a global phenomenon, with various causes. As per UNFPA, poverty, gender inequality, family honor, tradition and culture, and so on may be caused of early marriage.

Effect

Child brides, their children and families are all extremely poor impacted by child marriages. It poses a substantial health danger to women and girls. Those women, psychologically, who was entered into marriage at early age they have to suffer from symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression. Marriage below the age of 18 has the psychological well-being and intellectual, and bodily consequences (Marphatia et al 2017). An immature girl who is physically unable to give birth. The risk of miscarriage, postpartum hemorrhaging, and obstetric fistula can be increased due to not well physically development when a young girl become a mother between 12-16 years her body has not ready to do so because the pelvis and birth canal are fully development before 18, which outcomes during and after pregnancy (Sezgin Et al. 2020). Children is taken overburdened responsibilities and duties and also subject to domestic violence, there are high risk of depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in such children.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), problems in early pregnancy and delivery are the greatest risk of mortality rates because of obstructed labor, sepsis, postpartum hemorrhaging, and HIV transmission among 10 to 15 years girls have small pelvis, indicated by 70,000 girls becomes a casualty of death from early pregnancy and delivery on a yearly basis. 90% cases during pregnancies of adolescent are in poor countries in which 65% are cases of obstetric fistula may be prolong consequences in case of not taken proper treatment. Also, a greater risk of

infant mortality, newborn deaths and stillbirth occurs an adolescent women as opposed to those 20s and older women.

Factors of Early Marriage

There are many factors of early marriage. One of them is poverty which is very common. Girls is mostly considered as economic burden and not given important to educate to them for that reason. Early marriage is frequently associated with poverty causes dropping out from the school. Females have to drop out from their school after marriage. Their in-laws or husband, sometimes, let their not go to school that they must fulfill their responsibilities, perform housework and duties, look their children after, or other relative, or may be facing complications related to pregnancy due to not able to attend their school (Stark et al. 2018). When a girl are stopped to go to school which makes difficult from accessing education, not only their economic opportunities are limited, but also locking them in a cycle of poverty due to which the opportunities of education of their children will also be limited and, in consequence, their own economic growth are more prospects to stop (Goel, 2004).

Research has illustrated that early marriage is directly related to low level of education. As claimed by UNICEF, 21% of young girls in Pakistan are entered into marriage life before age 18 and 3% before 15. Research from 2018 shows that 53.7% girls, who were only 15 to 19 years old, had never been to school. A major problem is also highlighted that the enrolment rate on primary level is 54%, 21% middle school, and 13% secondary school (UNICEF, 2018). All children aged 5 to 16 have the right to free education under Article 25-A of the constitution of Pakistan. Unfortunately, for most females in Pakistan, to end till 12 years of schooling is a pipe dream.

This is a terrible breach of a girl's fundamental rights which have taken away their schooling. Not only they are stopped getting education, but in certain cases, they are also sold while education has been made obligatory by the "*Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2012*". Under section 3 stated that "*Right of Child to Free and Compulsory Education*" and under section 8 make responsible to parents are to take properly care of their children. This duty is recognized by law of which is totally being violation. Child marriage excludes girls from their school. Around 60% children, in the developing countries, deprives from their school due to early marriage. But school going girls, they are frequently considered as children who are not yet ready for marriage. As long as girls continues their schooling, their chance of getting marriage before the age of 18 and becoming mothers at an early age are reduced.

Many parents get their daughter to leave the school due to cost of education and safety risks associated and what they think that incompatible to the lives of females, and safeguard girls by marriage. To be addressed must be done that why families believe

to stay away their children in school and would provide all facilities and secure life without schooling, instruction that is appropriate to their needs and methods to overcome the financial barriers that keep many girls out of school (khokhar, 2018). However, An educated girl has a very great confident, and information about the rights and talking well, all which make strong in taking a decision of marriage.

In 2017-18, both girl and boys are missing out from the school due to which girls are more affected. 32% girls in primary school are not in school than 21% of boys, this figures have 59% increased for girls versus 49% in six grade, while only 13% girls are still in ninth grade. A report of Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2018) reveals that the Government of Pakistan has failed to provide education to girls a large number of the girls in all four provinces; Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Baluchistan. According to HRW, a country of 207 million population, about 22.5 million of Pakistan's children are not attending the school in which the number of girls is more. HRW found that poverty is one of the many factors girls are not attending their school, which effect education and childhood of a girl because a normal life cycle of a human being consist of education life, get a job, find a partner, and have children. When only one part of life cycle gets disrupted then other parts automatically disordered. Similarly, if an indolence's education is neglect or disregard that can stop a great economic opportunities. Education is a way of income, and becoming economically strong and independent could be very limited in the context of child marriage.

The country has been suffering from a chronic problems of child marriage. According to a recent report, the poverty rate in Pakistan has reached at a dangerous level of 31.3%. As per a new research, one of the main concerns of the people is the marriage of their children, owing to the fact that the poor families rarely send their children to school that is why the boys start working at a very young age, whereas girls are trained for domestic work from their childhood and get married at early age in these poor families. Feminist economists argue that Pakistan government needs to resolve the educational sector, especially improve women's education, and also needs to eliminate all those factors that prevent girls from going to school (klasen, 2008).

Aside from poverty, other factors for child marriage in Pakistan are influenced by culture, tribal traditions and exchange marriage, but experts say poverty is the most serious of them all. There is also a history in the northern portions of the country of accepting money in exchange for marriage with young girls. The reason for this custom is that families believes girl as a burden, so they rush their daughters to get married at very young age (Awaz Foundation Pakistan, 2010). In Pakistan, child marriage is primarily connected with old tradition, culture, and customary customs and may also be involved in the payment of debts, or maybe exchanged of daughters via "*Vani, Swara*", or "*Watta Satta*", and other customs "*Pait lekhi*," in which a girl gets engaged

before she is born or while she is surviving in her mother's Gynecology womb (Awaz Foundation Pakistan, 2010)..

In Pakistan, a ritual known as “*Vani or Swara*” is performed to marry off daughters by unprivileged people because of resolving disputes and the amount of balance. Minor girls are usually forced into “*Vani or Swara*” marriage for settlement of disputes and compensation of sufferer party, and they are occasionally slain between the parties (Awaz Foundation Pakistan, 2010). This old traditions are called as a social issue by local media, while international community considers that this is a violation of human rights and the compensation of resolving the dispute between the parties, sometimes, also in murder cases. This practice is used to resolve misconduct acts such as fornication or adultery, murder, settlement of debts, abduction, or kidnapped. Such disagreements are settled by marrying a minor girl to a man from the opposing clan (zaman 2012).

“*Vani*” is considered to be an ancient period. This were came into practice over 400 years ago, when bloody war was between two Pashtun tribes of Miawali. Hundreds of individuals were slain throughout the fighting. At that moment, an attempt was made to resolve the issue. A local court was called Jirga took the decision that girls would be assigned as Qisas, after that this decision came into families practices that is carried down from all generation. This practice is carried out in many parts of Sindh, Punjab, and KPK. These marriages have different name in different places of Pakistan such as, “*Vani*”, “*Sakh*”; “*Sawara*”, “*Sharam*”, “*Khoon Baha*”; and “*Sang Chatti*”. The age of girls between 4 to 14 years is given for purpose of resolving dispute to men who are between 25 to 60 years. Vani is engrained in the Pashtoon culture, known as Sawara in Pashto. This practice is, even in present era, observed in rural KPK and tribal regions (Tribune new, 2021). This practice reminds us a time when girls did not have the rights and were not count as a human being but this practice even today reminds us that they are not seen as a human being even today. Despite the fact that legislation in 2005 and 2011 made the practice illegal but the practice such could not be ended by local elder people supports that if sacrificing of a girl of family can save the entire family’s life, there is no harm in doing so. This ritual is so firmly ingrained that even the victim females must pose voluntarily making such a sacrifice. The Sindh High Court, in 2004, declared all comparable integrity justice systems illegal. However, the rule of law is weak in rural region, and local police frequently do not take seriously (Sher Ali Khalti, 2018). Any girl can be given, according to custom, however in fact, there are several chosen girls, who may be the sisters, daughters, and so on of guilty party, as compensation for the purpose of forgiving mistake. Oppositely, the effected side party may be brother, son, or father, who is older, the demanded girl with whom the marriage is impossible (Tribune news, 2021).

Such practice is a violation the constitution. Article 9 of the constitution of Pakistan states that:

“No one shall be deprived of life or liberty save in accordance with law”.

It also contradicts with Article 25 of the constitution of Pakistan that:

“All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law”.

Inversely, the old tradition flagrantly breaches it.

The old tradition is claimed to be taking action at Government level and Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and different NGO are trying to abolish it. Also the taken action has been done by Pakistan Supreme Court against the forced marriage in several districts of Sindh, Punjab and KPK.

Vani practice has been labelled an un-Islamic behavior that must be penalized by National Judicial Policy Making Committee. A law was passed by former president Pervez Musharraf while visiting by the US president, George Bush in 2004 (Sher Ali Khalti, 2018). Sher Ali Khalti et al. 2018 found that unfortunately, it did not become a reality due to limited impact in rural region and strictly practicing of old traditions. Furthermore, feudalism is very prevalent in Mianwali that only 15 vani cases have been prosecuted under the new law. It is the duty of local residents, especially those who are educated, to step up and promote awareness at the grassroots level. It is essential that women be granted the same rights and status as males. Child marriage has been linked to poor health and nutrition, child mortality, old tradition, participation in labor force, population growth, not attending the school, and violence against women. For this purpose, it is necessary that women must be educated. Furthermore, societal changes by education, economy, health, and other facilities must be granted to rural regions (Kohno et al. 2020).

The emphasis of health and human rights based outlooks is often on ending child marriage, but it is overlooked that child marriage has a detrimental influence the economic growth and development of a nation. This need to be understood that girls can learn more, earn more, not as much of health risk and protect themselves, and avoid falling prey to underage marriages. More importantly, a full education would help them to eradicate the cycle of poverty and develop better their families and communities (Joar Svanemyr, 2020). Activists have kept highlighting the government to take significant efforts to address the issue, including imposing heavy penalties to discourage individuals from marrying minors. And the government should take strictly action to eliminate the local jirgas or panchaits and reinforce the rule of law in area.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. What are the reasons of early girl child marriage?
2. What are the problems they face regarding physical and mental health due to early marriage?

3. What are the percentage of school drop out of young girls due to early marriage?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data was obtained using mixed method approach comprising structured interviews based on open and closed ended questions interview schedule and used the quantitative method. The target population was girls who were made victim of oppression due to early marriage in Karachi. The sample included 200 married girls selected for this research. Simple tabular analysis was used to draw meaningful.

FINDINGS

Pakistani society is suffering from many threatening child issues. One of them is an early child marriage. The chain of stereotypical concept has been too much old its root in underprivileged areas are robust. In Pakistan, 3.3% girls are get marriage under 15, and 18.3% under age 18, whereas highly rate in rural areas than urban areas. Child marriage in Pakistan is mostly associated with tradition, culture, and customary practices. Sometimes it also comprises the transfer of money, Instead of debts or exchange of daughters through Vani, Swara or Watta Satta. Young girl marriage influences directly her education, well-being, psychological effect, and the health of their offspring. As already discussed in review in literature, the research also shows that the outcome is the same for all. The research shows too that despite being law, they have been failed to be enforced to stop child marriages. The present study explores the reason of early marriage due to which girls have to face many problem about early marriage. Majority of these girls were illiterate. Most of their married between the age of 14 to 18 having 5 to 6 children at young age which causes physically, and mentally health issues and they belongs to poor families and most of them are living in *katchi abadis*.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to what are those elements due to which early marriage are in practiced

What are those elements	Frequent	Percentage
Prefer early marriage to girls	34	17%
Getting marriage so early of a girl as a burden, or responsibilities	21	10.5%
Due to lack of education and awareness	5	2.5%
Due to societal pressure	24	12%
Due to Islamic injunctions	Nil	Nil
Due to poverty	95	47.5%
Due to family values	15	7.5%
Under rituals and customs	6	3%

It is customary for girls to get married early	Nil	Nil
Total	200	100%

Several factors were identified leading to early marriage, such as poverty and considering to keep the girl safe by early marriage. This study confirms the study of international center for research on women (2010), the occurrence of early marriages in low income families are two times more than in higher income families. During interviews, most of them said that they were married due to societal pressure and family practices. While some said that they were married due to Islamic orders is based spoken about the safety of the girl’s honor and only fixed to the purity of unmarried girls and old tradition, which is very common among rural peoples.

Reason of Early Marriage

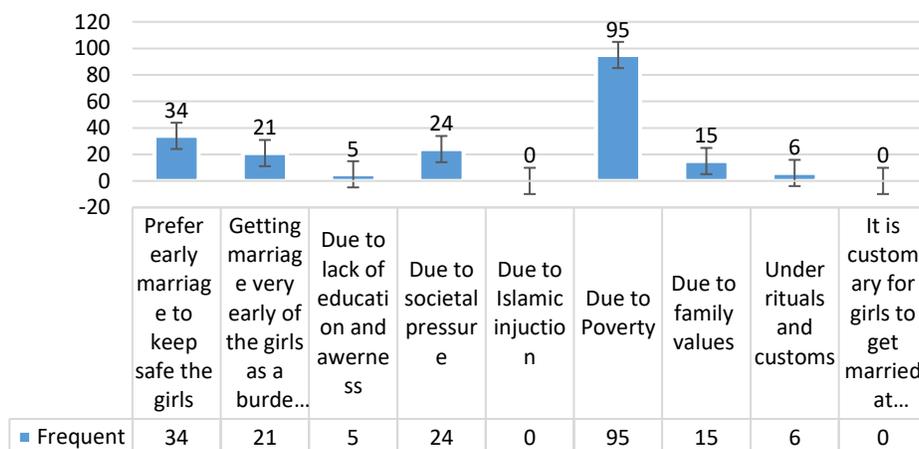


Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to have your education been affected by early marriage

Explanation	Frequent	Percentage
Yes	116	58%
No	84	42%
Total	200	100%

One of the reported effects of early marriage is that girls drop out from their school. Majority respondents had to leave from their school due to early marriage, where some of them never went to school due to poverty.

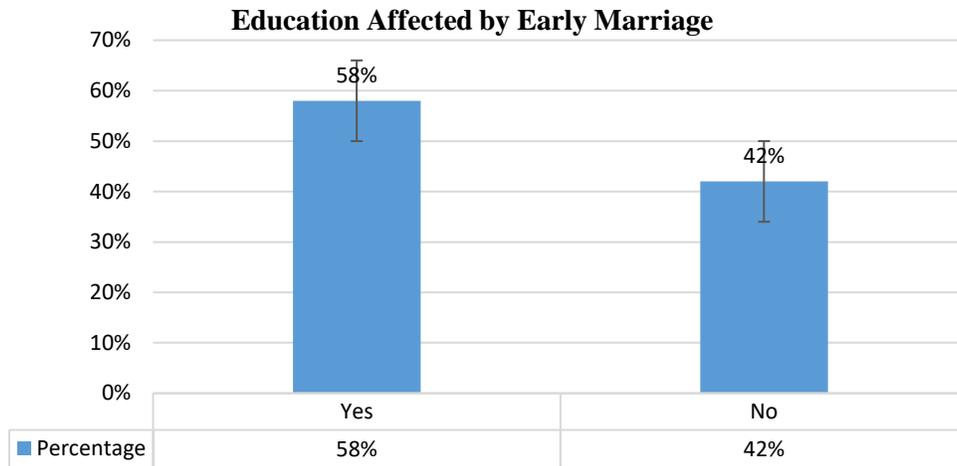
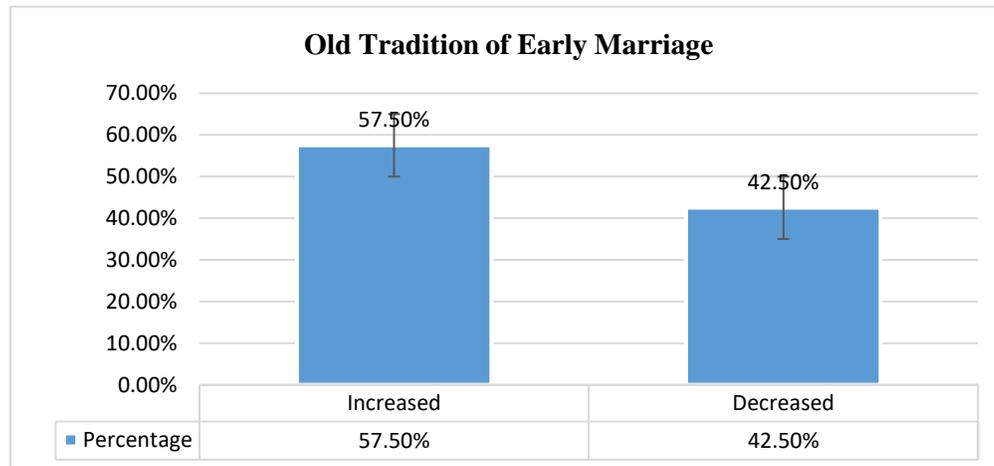


Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to what do you understand that the tradition of early marriage is increased or decreased?

Satisfied with your marriage	Frequent	Percentage
Increased	115	57.5%
Decreased	85	42.5%
Total	200	100%



Majority of the respondents considers that one of the cause of early marriage is old tradition which is being increased that is why early marriage also increase

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to girls face regarding their physically and mentally changes due to early marriage

Changes regarding physical and mental health	Frequent	Percentage
Positive changes	Nil	Nil
Negative changes	200	100%
Both	Nil	Nil
Total	200	100%

Above table describes that the impact of early marriage is totally negative, the bulk of respondents faced adversely impact of marriage at very young age.

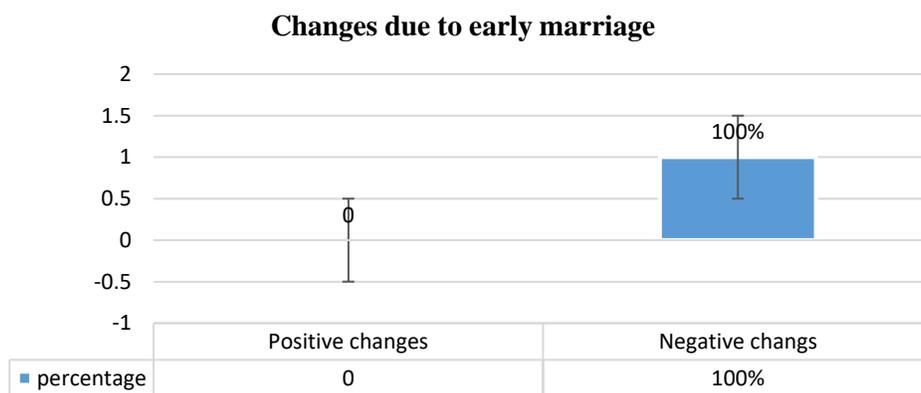


Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to what are the negative impact

Negative Impact	Frequent	Percentage
Physical weakness	94	47%
Mental weakness	66	33%
Increase your responsibilities	12	6%
Birth complication	20	10%
Child are born more due to early marriage	8	4%
Total	200	100%

It is shown by study that all respondents suffered from negative impact. While taking interview most of them said that they faced physical weakness and mental weakness, and also psychologically disturb due to increasing their responsibilities. Whereas some of them said that during delivery, serious birth complications, and increased their responsibilities. Few respondents said that they have more children due to early

marriage. Hence, it is proved that early marriage causes physically and mentally changes.

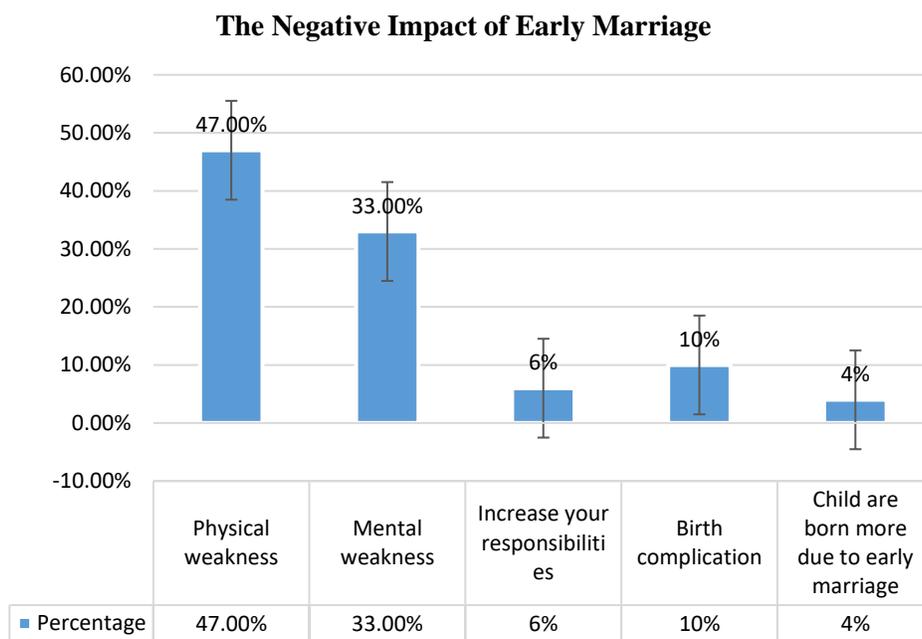


Table 6: Distribution of distribution according to what are the physical changes

Explanation	Frequent	Percentage
Victimize of domestic violence	20	10%
Faced miscarriage due to early marriage	44	22%
Child birth related complications	52	26%
Forced sexual relation	24	12%
Pain in the bones	56	28%
Total	47	100%

The impact of early marriage manifest with physical changes in many ways that majority of the respondents said that they have pain in the bones due to early marriage. Some of them gave birth with child birth related complications, and faced miscarriage are serious health risk which cause infant mortality, still birth, and newborn death, and it is estimated that 70000 adolescent mother between 15- 19 years are dying each year due to not physically development. Some of them said that they are forced for sexual relation, do not have rights of mutual consent, while other victimize of domestic

violence due to early marriage. Hence, it is proved that early marriage takes place an important health risk.

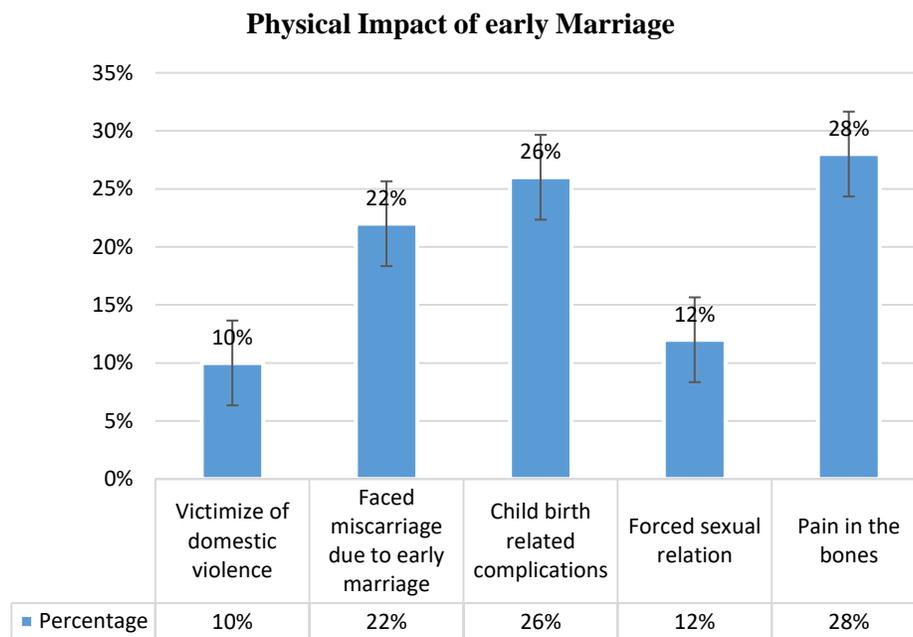
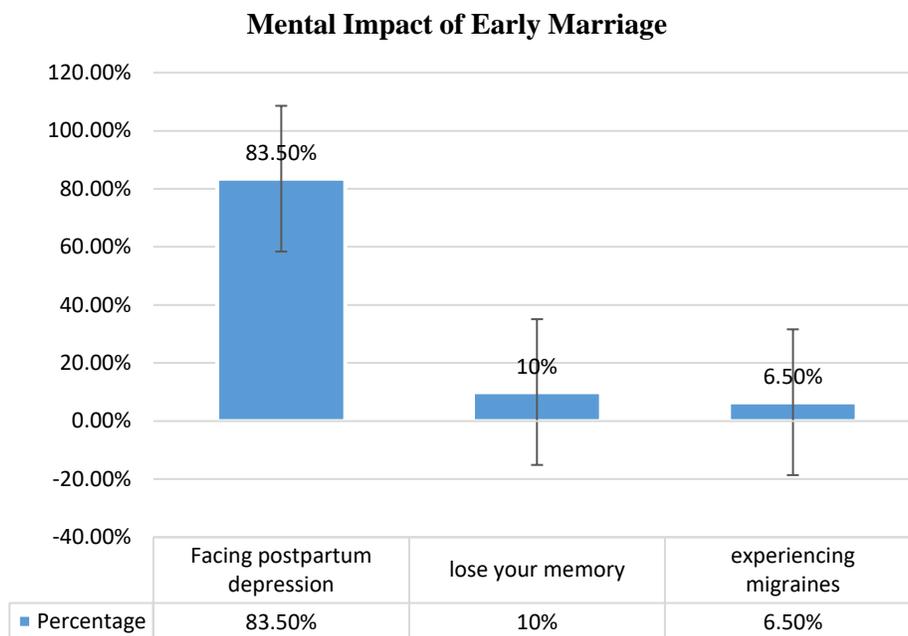


Table 7: Distribution of distribution according to what are the mental changes due to early marriage

Explanation	Frequent	Percentage
Facing postpartum depression	167	83.5%
Lose your memory	20	10%
Experiencing migraines after delivery	13	6.5%
Total	200	100%

An adolescence are more likely to face from psychologically related complications such as; traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and so on. Similarly, above table explains that majority of the respondents are facing postpartum depression. Some of them are experiencing migraines after delivery, and while other respondents lost their memory.



DISCUSSION

In conclusion, this study shows that early marriage is too dangerous for young couple especially for girls of whom a negative impact is on extensively of their physical health, mental health, education, and their children. Even today, national law is not shielding for girls to stop early marriage are practiced at large. In those countries where the age for marriage is not set out, the minimum age must be specified by enforcing the law. Today, millions of girls are married illegally even though those countries where the legal age for marriage are specified that is legal age but people violating the law by practicing at an early age.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The government should address the issue of early marriage and also focus on
1. Being such laws should be eradicated completely against widespread harmful practice and applicable to all persons involve in it including parents of groom and bride, or/and other persons.
 2. Government should take strictly action to eliminate the local Jirgas or Punchaits and reinforce the rule of law in area.
 3. The police should be given the power and authorized to invest and arrest the offender without warrant.
 4. The punishment should be increased up to five to ten years and a heavy fine.

5. The marriageable age should be fixed and clearly mention in law.
6. The marriageable age should be the same for girls and boys.
7. Awareness campaign at government level should be launched about harmful effects of early.
8. Girls should be had easy to access of education.
9. Government should provide education, health, justice and other services.
10. The budget of education should be increased.

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