

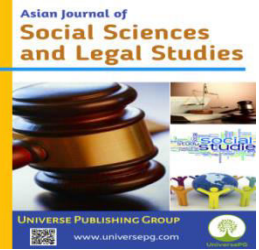


Publisher homepage: www.universepg.com, ISSN: 2707-4668 (Online) & 2707-465X (Print)

<https://doi.org/10.34104/ajssls.021.089098>

Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Legal Studies

Journal homepage: www.universepg.com/journal/ajssls



Determinants of Early Marriage among the Women: A Study on Khulna District

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ABSTRACT

Early marriage is one of the major social problems in Bangladesh. Poverty has been the major factor leading to early marriage in Bangladesh. However, this study was an attempt to investigate the determinants affecting early marriage. The study is explanatory in nature as it tries to explain the determinants that affect the early marriage in the Khulna district of Bangladesh. The study was carried out in two areas, i.e, Paikgacha Village under Paikgacha Upzilla and 23 No. ward of Khulna city. The study adopted a survey research design. The population targeted by the study included only female respondents of 18 ages or above age group. 287 respondents were selected through a simple random sampling procedure using an interview schedule as survey research for data assortment. The major finding of the revision was that most of the respondents (64.5%) were married and got at an early age. Results revealed that the majority of the respondents were affected by socio-economic factors as for their early marriages. The study, however, identified association of premature marriage of the respondents with socio-cultural factors ($p < .001$), economic factors ($p < .005$), areas of residence ($p < .001$) at a strong significant level. So the study concluded that early marriage is affected by different socio-demographic factors such as parental education and income, parental early marriage, husband education, and income, area of residence.

Keywords: Early marriage, Parental, Socio-economic, Residence, Income, Education and Social status.

INTRODUCTION:

Around the world, marriage is considered a moment of celebration and a milestone in life. Actually, marriage is a universal social institution (United Nations, 1999). Through which an adult male and an adult female generally involve in a socially accepted relationship and acquire a new social status as husband and wife. But, sometimes, such an important social institution brings numerous problems for a couple, especially for the girl's woman, when it happens at an early age (Nasrin & Rahman, 2012). UNICEF declared that marriage before 18 years of age is a reality for more than 60 million girls. Adolescent marriage (AM) re-

mains quite prevalent in some parts of the developing countries, especially in South Asia, Western Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. It has been estimated that about 100 million teenagers would have been married before their 18th birthday by 2013 (WHO, 2011; United Nation Fund for Population Activities, 2013). Pre-mature marriage deceptively denies a girls right towards health, education and a life free of violence (Singh & Samara, 1996; Jensen & Thornton, 2003). About 90% of the total population of Bangladesh is Muslim (Fleischer *et al.*, 2010). However, the average age at first marriage for girls in Bangladesh is 18.7 years (BBS, 2009). Therefore,

early marriage is seemingly a social norm in Bangladesh (Islam & Mhamud, 1996) and it is specially practiced in poor families or in rural areas in the third world countries like Bangladesh. Although plenty of studies have been being declared that the female's age at first marriage in Bangladesh is still one of the lowest in the world, the situation remains spectacularly unchanged. In a study showed on 43 developing countries, the age at marriage of Bangladeshi girls was reported to be 14.1 years, the lowest amongst the studied countries (Singh & Samara, 1996). Additionally, this study includes many case studies that show that early marriage rate is about 66 percent in Bangladesh and its position is 4th in the world (BBS, 2011).

Interestingly, early marriage is more common for females than their male complements. In rural Bangladesh, there are many social compressions on the parents to marry their pubescent girls off (Aziz & Maloney, 1985). The premature nuptial of young and adolescent girls as persists across countries is caused mainly by poverty, ignorance, social and cultural norms, societal conflicts and wars. The father in-law or husband to the daughter is well accepted most especially for their wealth and riches as they are expected to provide for the daughter and the daughter's family (UNDP, 2013). Families' distress from poverty often wants to reduce their number of children. As an approach, they marry off their daughters. Some families believe that it brings blessings to their family if they marry off girls before their puberty (Tristam, 2014). Now and again young girls 'expression less interest to carry on their education and in some cases, poor families are inept to bear the cost of education (Verma *et al.*, 2013). Poverty is one of the major factors under-pining early marriages. Where poverty is acute, a young teenager may be regarded as an economic burden and the parents look for pre-mature marriage for their daughters as an alternative way of reducing the burden where one less daughter is one less mouth to feed (Mathur, 2003; Nour, 2006). This research further exposed that social cultural and religious factors are responsible for the first marriage (Barnes *et al.*, 1998). On the other hand, for many societies that lead virginity before marriage, early marriage can visible it in a number of performs designed to protect a girl from illegal sexual activity.

Some parents withdraw their girls from school as soon as they begin to menstruate; fearing that exposure to male pupils or teachers puts them at risk (Amin, 2008).

Another study shows that, in Bangladesh, early marriage is one of the major social problems and it is the reason for girls' dropout of school. It is mainly related to the cultural background or custom (Shahidul, 2012). Moreover, There is a strong relation between higher age at marriage and higher education levels. In a study conducted by (Raj *et al.*, 2010; Santhya *et al.*, 2011) indicate that early marriage is associated with a range of adverse sexual and reproductive health outcomes for young girls and poor health outcomes for the children they bear. Besides, Studies in a number of south Asian countries, including Bangladesh, India and Nepal, show a direct association between early marriage and unintended pregnancy. Given the context, this study tried to find out the socioeconomic determinants of affecting the first marriage and the changes in the effects of these factors over time in Khulna district of Bangladesh.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The existent study is quantitative and explanatory in nature as it attempts to explain the relation between women's early marriage and its covariates. The study was approved by in two areas, i.e., Paikgacha Village under Paikgacha Upzilla and 23 No. ward of Khulna city. The study adopted survey research design approach. A total of 287 (out of 1144) women. We used to sample size calculation procedure revealed and applied simple random sampling to select the participants from the population where every single had an equal possibility of being selected. A semi-structured interviews Schedule having both open-ended and close-ended questions was developed and used as the main tool for attaining data from the respondents. The interviews Schedule were developed in English primarily to collect the data from the field. After developing the interviews Schedule, a pre-test of the interviews Schedule was conducted on 30 respondents, before the actual study, in order to find out anomalies. After necessary corrections, the final data collection process began. The data collection continued from the month of January to February, 2018 following group administration and short briefings to the participants. Once

collected, the data were processed by SPSS and analyzed for further interpretation. We used both descriptive and inferential statistics to discuss potential factors that affected early marriage among the participants in this study. The descriptive statistics contain percentage analysis while inferential statistics was

used to test association through Pearson's Chi-square test and Multiple Linear Regression modeling. The main outcome variable, determinants marriage was categorized as i.e. early marriage (below the 17 years) and late marriage (18 and above years) in this study.

Variable list for the study

Serial No.	Variable name	Variable description	Unit of Measurement
1.	Residence	Residence	Dummy(1= Urban, 2= Rural)
2.	Income	Income of the Household	Thousand taka/Month
3.	Parent's education	Numeric	Numeric
4.	Education	Education of the respondent	Year of the schooling
5.	Husband's Income	Husband's Income	Thousand taka/Month
6.	Husband's Education	Husband's Education	Year of the schooling
7.	Age at marriage	Age at marriage	Year

RESULTS:

Table 1 shows the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents. It is found that the majority (64.5%) of the participants got married at the age of below 17 or 17 years. whereas, (35.5%) respondents got married at the stage of 18 years or above. In this study revealed that most of the respondents (35.2%) were attained primary level of education whereas followed by secondary education (34.1%). The percentage of the respondents having higher education is as low as (12.2%). In this study (47.7%) of the respondent's husband were attained higher education and income level of 37.3 % respondent's family income was 10001-20000 per month from all

sources. The data indicate that 76.7% respondent's mother got age at marriage Early and (38.7%) of the respondent's mother were attained primary level. This study noted that (86.1%) respondent's father got age at marriage within 21 years. Besides around partial of the participants (50.9%) were belonged to urban area and (49.1%) percent were rural area belonged to urban area. Moreover, around more than partial of the (61.3%) respondents have their monthly household incomes between 3000-15000 Taka and rest of the (38.6%) respondent's household income 30000 and above.

Table 1: Demographic and socio-economic information of the respondents

Age at Marriage respondent year)	Frequency	Percent
≤ 17	185	64.5
≥ 18	102	35.5
Respondent's Education		
Illiterate	53	18.5
Primary	101	35.2
Secondary	98	34.1
Higher	35	12.2
Husband's Education		
Illiterate	18	6.3
Primary	35	12.2
Secondary	97	33.8
Higher	137	47.7
Husband Income		
6000-12000	107	37.3

	12000-20000	106	36.9
	≥ 20000	74	25.8
Mother age at marriage			
	Early	220	76.7
	Late	67	23.3
Mother's education			
	illiterate	77	26.8
	primary (1-5)	111	38.7
	Secondary(6-10)	81	28.2
	Higher	18	6.3
Father Age at marriage			
	≤ 20	40	13.9
	≥ 21	247	86.1
Residence			
	Urban	146	50.9
	Rural	141	49.1
Household(Father) Income			
	3000 -15000	176	61.3
	15000-30000	104	36.2
	≥ 30000	7	2.4

Source: Authors' compilation, 2018

Bivariate analysis

Table 2: Information about socio-economic determinants affecting the early marriage

Variables	Age at first Marriage		Test statistic ^(df)	P value
	Below 18	18 and Above		
Residence				
Urban	50.7%	49.3%	24.614 ⁽¹⁾	.000***
Rural	78.7%	21.3%		
Respondent's Education				
Illiterate	66.0%	34.0%	13.317 ⁽³⁾	.004***
Primary	70.3%	29.7%		
Secondary	67.3%	32.7%		
Higher	37.1%	62.9%		
Husband's Education				
Illiterate	77.8%	22.2%	11.936 ⁽³⁾	.008***
Primary	82.9%	17.1%		
Secondary	68.0%	32.0%		
Higher	55.5%	44.5%		
Husband Income				
≤ 12000	67.3%	32.7%	11.547 ⁽²⁾	.003***
12001-20000	72.6%	27.4%		
≥ 20001	48.6%	51.4%		
Mother age at marriage				
Early	73.2%	26.8%	31.293 ⁽¹⁾	.000***
Late	35.8%	64.2%		
Mother's education				
Illiterate	77.9%	22.1%	14.521 ⁽³⁾	.002***
primary (1-5)	60.4%	39.6%		
Secondary(6-10)	64.2%	35.8%		

	Higher	33.3%	66.7%		
Father Age at marriage					
	Early	82.5%	17.5%	6.603 ⁽¹⁾	.010**
	Late	61.5%	38.5%		
Household (Father) Income					
	≤ 15000	64.2%	35.8%	12.356 ⁽²⁾	.005**
	15001-30000	68.3%	31.7%		
	≥ 30001	14.3%	85.7%		

Source: Authors’ compilation, 2018

The result reported in **Table 2** reveals the socio-demographic features of the respondents and their impact on the age of first marriage. The results of chi-square tests clarifies that respondents’ residence, educational status, mother’s age during her marriage, father’s age during his marriage mother’s educational status, husband’s income and household income were significantly associated with their marital age. Alongside, we found that there is a statistically

significant relationship between the residence of the origin as well as Mother’s age at marriage and the age at first marriage of the respondents (P<.001). Similarly, Mother’s education plays a vital role in the early marriage of their daughters. Mother with lower level of education have a greater inclination to the early marriage of their daughters and the association between different levels of mother’s education and the age at first marriage of their daughters are statistically significant (p<.05).

OLS predicting early marriage

Table 3: OLS predicting early marriage

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: Age At First Marriage
(Constant)	β (S.E.)
Age	-.081(.239)
Age of the husband	-.170(.061)
Age at Marriage of Husband	.531**(.000)
Position among the siblings	.266*(.002)
Father’s age during his marriage	.229*(.010)
Mother’s age during her marriage	.188*(.042)
Respondent’s Monthly income	.293*(.002)
Residence of the origin	.260**(.000)

Source: Authors’ compilation, 2018

Regression is a broad class of statistical tools though in common usage that shows how one variable influence other variable linearly. In the study respondent’s age at marriage is influenced by Age, residence of the origin, Age of husband, Husband age at marriage, respondent’s position among the siblings, parent’s age during their marriage and respondent’s monthly income. This **Table 3** shows that Husband age at first marriage, respondent’s position among the siblings, respondent’s monthly income, and father’s age during his marriage, respondents’ residence of the origin and mother’s age during her marriage had positive relation with early

marital of the respondents, with regression coefficients .531, .266, .293, .229, .260 and .188 respectively, while participant’s husband age and age of the respondents had negative relation with early marriage of the respondents with regression coefficients -.081 and -.170 respectively.

The factors of respondent’s age (.239) and respondent’s husband’s age (.061) were at significant at one percent level. So in this regard it can be said that respondent’s early marriage is influenced by resident, respondent’s income, position of the participant and parent’s age during marriage.

Predictors of early marriage among ever married women**Table 4:** Predictors of early marriage among ever married women

Variables	Type of Marriage		p value	AOR* (95% C.I)
	Early	Late		
Residence				
Urban	50.7%	49.3%	0.00	2.81 (1.55, 5.08)
Rural	78.7%	21.3%	-	1
Mother age at marriage				
Early	73.2%	26.8%	0.00	0.18 (0.09,0 .36)
Late	35.8%	64.2%	-	1
Respondent's Education				
Illiterate	66.0%	34.0%	-	1
Primary	70.3%	29.7%	0.21	0.60 (.27,1.343)
Secondary	67.3%	32.7%	0.28	0.65 (0.29, 1.42)
Higher	37.1%	62.9%	0.01	3.66 (1.29, 10.34)
Religious factors				
Yes	60.5%	39.5%	0.01	2.29 (1.19, 4.42)
No	72.8%	27.2%	-	1
Mother's education				
Illiterate	77.4%	22.6%	0.21	0.43 (0.11, 1.61)
primary (1-5)	60.2%	39.8%	0.28	0.50 (0.14, 1.76)
Secondary(6-10)	63.6%	36.4%	0.03	0.24(0.06,0.90)
Higher	33.3%	66.7%	-	1

Source: Authors' compilation, 2018

Results from binomial logistic regression represents the socio-demographic predictors of marital age of the participants in Khulna district of Bangladesh. It appears that the odds for late marriage among urban women were 2.81 in comparison to rural women which elicits that early marriage inclination among urban was much higher than the rural. Here, the odds for late marriage among women whose mother had premature marriage were 18 % indicating a very low incidence of late marriage among women whose mother had early marriage. Alongside, respondent's educational status was similarly analyzed where odds for late marriage among primary, secondary and higher were 66%, 65% and 3.66% respectively in comparison to the respondents whose educational was status low or who had no education.

Besides respondent's educational qualification, mother's education of the respondents was another potential predictor in influential the marital age of the participants as the results demonstration that the odds for late marriage among women whose mother's educational level fell into the illiterate and primary level

was only 1% for both educational levels in comparison to women whose mother's educational level fell into the higher. The odds for late marriage among the women who believed that religious factors were responsible for age at marriage was 1% in comparison to women who (Yasmin and Husna, 2020). Moreover, the odds for late marriage among those whose mother's had no education and only completed primary education was 43% and 50% respectively in comparison to women whose mother's had higher education in this study.

DISCUSSION:

The pattern of marriage (age at marriage, customs, rituals etc.) varies from one culture and society to another. Marriage pattern in South Asia reflects its societal and cultural context which affects the marital age in Bangladesh, where age at marriage is very early (Caldwell, 2005). More recently, UNICEF (2014) stated that Bangladesh has the fourth-highest rate of youth marital in the world. Hence, this revision was designed to explore the factors that determine early marriage among the women (Weerakoon, 2020).

Findings of the study expose that the majority of respondents 51.9 percent belonged to age group 18-27 years which five of every ten who were get married before age of 18 years. In line with this findings, (UNICEF, 2015) found in its study that majority of women 20-24 years old were married or in union before age 18 years. The results of this study present that the majority of the participants (64.5 percent) got married at an early age (below 18 years) which is alarming and it is consistent with previous studies (Barkat & Majid, 2003; UNICEF, 2014) that revealed most of the women were married under age 15. Findings of the study present that the majority of the respondents receive the primary and secondary level of education. This outcome is also consistent of (Shahidul, 2012) early marriage is the major causes for stopping the girl's education. In this study, the highest of the respondents' mother (73.6 percent) faced premature marriage because of family pressure and it was consistent with the result of a previous study (UNIFPA, 2006) explained that parents may genuinely feel that their daughter will be better off and safer with a regular male guardian. Most of the respondents' faced early marriage for poverty and family honor and it is consistent with some previous studies (UNICEF, 2001; Mathur, 2003) which revealed that a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden and parents therefore look for early marriage of their daughters.

In this study the residences of the respondents were meaningfully connected with their early marital and it is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Hoq, 2011) that revealed women of rural areas have more tendency towards early marriage than those of urban areas because of their decision is not accepted by their parents. But it is inconsistent with the result of many other studies where the researchers revealed that Muslim women had higher tendency rate of early marriage than other religion (Tsujita, 2009; Jisun, 2012). On the other hand, Parent's early marriage cultures were significantly related with the respondent's early marriage in this study. It has a great impact on child's age at marriage influence. In this study it is seen that when parent's early marriage level is high then children's early marriage level must be high. But it is not found any others studies where the researchers is not exposed this factor. Year of schooling of the participant was also significantly linked

with early nuptial which is similar with the findings (Bates 2007; Field & Ambrus, 2008) that indicated that women belonged to illiterate and primary level of education have highest tendency of early marriage than that of highly educated women. The present study did not found any positive relation between respondent's husband age and age at first marriage. But another study found that husband's age was connected with early marriage (Shryock & Siegel, 1976).

Findings depict that there was a significant relation between early marriage among the women and their mother's year of schooling and it is consistent with the findings of previous study (Nasrin & Rahman, 2012) that also shows that Mothers with lower level of education have a higher tendency to the early marital of their daughters. On the other hand, age was not significantly associated with respondent's early marriage in this study. But it is inconsistent with the effects of other study where the researchers exposed that women of age group 20-25 have higher tendency towards early marriage which is statistically proved (Unger, 2013). Husband's years of schooling were significantly associated to early marriages among the respondents. In this study it is seen that where the husband's educational level is high then early marriage tendency must be low which is consistent with the result of other study (Nasrin & Rhamna, 2012) that also found the case of husband's education of the respondents, where the illiterate husbands willingly marry a girl with an early age than those have different levels of higher education.

Statistics also reveal that monthly household income is expressively associated with early marriage. Previous studies also approved that early marriage is also very much affected by the family's monthly income and these studies showed that people from economically disadvantaged families tended to marry earlier as compared to those from advanced families (South & Crowder, 2000; Synder *et al.*, 2004). This study depict that there was a significant relation between husband's monthly income and early marriage. This result is consistent with another study which showed that a woman whose husband's income level is high then early marriage likely to must be low than those husbands' income is lower and medium (Axinn & Thornton, 1992). Conclusions from findings reveal

that, various determinants such as respondents' residence, year of schooling, husband's year of schooling and monthly income, mother's early marriage, father's early marriage, mother's year of schooling and respondent's income were knowingly linked with early marriage. On the contrary, there is no significant relationship among respondents religion, number of siblings and type of family, age of respondent and respondents husband age (Islam, 2020).

CONCLUSION:

Early marriage is an alarming matter through the world and remains a widespread problem particularly in the developing countries including Bangladesh. Early marital is still more extensive in the rural areas of Bangladesh. Bangladesh has laws to regulate initial marriage, but these laws are not followed by most of the people in our country. The findings of the contemporary study depicted that some factors affect the early marriage is related with health among the women. The study reveals that most of the women who got married at early age, did not give their decision at marriage since of low income family, poverty, respondent's education, mother's early marriage and father's age at marriage, parents education, husband's income and so on. In the rural area most of the participants were dropped out from school at primary and secondary level because were regarded as the economic burden in their family. Even the respondents had forced sexual union by their husbands and they were silently practicing traditional behavior regarding their reproductive issues. On the other hand the early marriage tendency is low in the urban areas of Khulna district. Women's health and education has improved during the past few years. But health status of women in the rural area is as improved as their demand (Shaikh *et al.*, 2021). However, the government, child work activists, policy-makers, and social workers, civil societies should come forward to prevent the adolescents from the adverse effect of child marriage in Bangladesh.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

The researcher greatly obliged for his Supervisor, Shaharior Rahman Razu, Assistant Professor, Sociology Discipline, Khulna University for his kind supervision, intellectual motivation, valuable advice and

continuous guidance. The researcher would not be able to accomplish this paper without his careful readings of many drafts, rapid and practical feedback, and guidance that he provided. Alongside, the researcher also grateful to all his teachers of sociology discipline who have supported his by their advices and guidance many times in his study period.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

The researcher declares no possible conflict of interest concerning the study, data collection & analysis, authorship, and/or publication of this present article.

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Citation: Islam MJ and Islam M. (2021). Determinants of early marriage among the women: a study on Khulna district, *Asian J. Soc. Sci. Leg. Stud.*, 3(3), 89-98. <https://doi.org/10.34104/ajssls.021.089098> 