



## **"Breaking the Cycle: Tackling Child Marriage, Social Injustice, and Gender Disparities in the Workforce"**

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### **Abstract**

While "Gender Equality" is specified by SDG 5 and must be promoted by 2030, "Decent work for all," "sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth," and "full and productive employment" are those of SDG 8. Suppose we concentrate on the labor market, where participation in the workforce by men is 80% globally percentage of women participation hardly exceeds 50%. The female participation rate in the workforce was 34.1 percentage in 1999–2000. This rate of participation decreased to 27.2 percentage in 2011–2012 (ILO report). Supply-side and demand-side factors can analyse the reasons for the low participation rate in the workforce. We get several supply-side problems for which women are unable to participate in labour market, among them, one of the most important reason is early-marriage. Marriage is the most crucial institution for the Individual and the society at large. For the Individual, it is a significant and memorable event in one's life as well as the most important foundation in the family formation process. However, "Early age marriage is one of the most prevalent forms of sexual abuse and exploitation especially among the adolescent girls. It serves as a means of perpetuating power imbalances between men and women, both in the home and outside" (Ghosh, Jan-Dec., 2011). Early age marriage has adversely influenced Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in underdeveloped countries including India. Moreover, child marriage has five domains of impacts on adolescent girls: (i) fertility rate and population growth; (ii) health, nutrition level, and violence; (iii) level



of educational attainment (iv) labor force participation, earnings, and productivity; and (v) power of decision-making and other areas (Wodon, et al., 2017).

**Keywords:** Gender inequality, Social issues & challenges, Labor force participation, Sustainable Development Goals, Child marriage.

### **Social Issues & Challenges:**

- Early-age marriage is one of the important factors which creates prevention of economic development in India. It makes a large section (means maximum percentage of the total women population) of women vulnerable. We are representing some of the literature highlighting both the causes and effects of child marriage among adolescent girls.
- Financial shocks play a crucial role in female marriage & educational success in Pakistan. The literature shows the relation between marriage market and education. Financial shocks can raise a girl's chance of early marriage and school dropout. According to Pakistani marriage customs, women receive both dowries and bride prices as marital assets. However, it is unclear how education and asset type are related to one another (Khan.S, Jan 2024). (What are the main reasons for Pakistani women of less participation in labor force?)
- There are a number of supply-sided and demand-sided factors contributing to the reduction in the female workforce participation rate in India over the past few decades. Supply-sided issues are early-marriage, child care, care giving of family members, adhering to social norms inside the home, and other issues. In contrast, labor shortages and mismatches between job searchers and available positions fall under the demand side. According to (Deshpande. A S. J., Feb 2023.) Women generally want to work closer to their homes after marriage, and mothers who have had their first child also prefer this. As a result, there are many demand-side and supply-side issues in the labor market which decline female labor force participation. Religion disparity is one of the most significant contributing factors for poor participation in the labor market by females. Because females from Islamic families have fewer opportunities to enter the workforce than females from other religious backgrounds. (What are the main reasons for a low rate of participation of Indian female in paid work? Does caste system play significant role to participate or not by women?)



- However, repeated attempts of legislative interventions were taken in India, the rate of child marriage in India is still more than 25% (specifically 27%). India ranked sixth position in child marriage across the world. At present, the highest rate of child marriage happens in West Bengal. However, West Bengal is popular for its well-deserved reputation as a pioneer in social reform in the nineteenth century. (Chauhan, 2022).
- Poverty is one of the most significant reasons for early marriage. According to Poor parents, they think that the girl child of a family is an economic burden. They try to marry their daughters at an early age to decrease expenses family and to reduce the cost of marriages (M, 2015)
- Early-age marriage may affect female labor force participation in a number of ways. Heavy burden of domestic work within the household provides lesser time for women to continue their education. After that, only two choices are left for a married woman, either to join the informal sector or not to participate in the workforce. On the other hand, the low-quality jobs in the informal sector again disappoint women to participate in the workforce after their marriage. So, there is usually a reduction in expected returns from participation in paid employment due to lower educational attainment of girls who were married early. These girls are forced to become unskilled workers (Klasen, 2012).
- According to Becker (1993), the age at marriage is more crucial to determining the accumulation of human capital because the low age at marriage implies a low level of human capital accumulation by women through education. When the age of marriage rises, the human capital and growth prospects also rise. (Raj, 2009) Pointed out that early age at marriage is likely to have inter-generational results by adversely impacting the human skills accumulation of their children. According to the Global Partnership to End Child Marriage Report (2017), late marriage and increasing mean years of schooling make girl children more productive in future years, thereby contributing to greater national productivity and higher gross domestic product (GDP). (Does child marriage affect a country's human capital and growth prospects?)
- According to (Laitner, 2000), segregation occurred in the female labour market of an underdeveloped country because adult married women are more concentrated in job market than early married women. He found out that 75% of all employed adult married female



work in 27 occupational categories; remaining 25% of early age marriage women work only 12 occupations categories. Therefore, the difference in occupational categories makes divides labor market participation among early and non-early brides. Due to early marriage, chances of completing schooling became low therefore years of schooling decreases which also decrease the human skills, this can be reflected in the wage also, there is an inequality in earning and wage gap. So, our next question become (how norm like child marriage in India relates to occupational choices and labor market discrimination among early and non-early bride's? Does this create any wage gap among early and non-early bride's?)

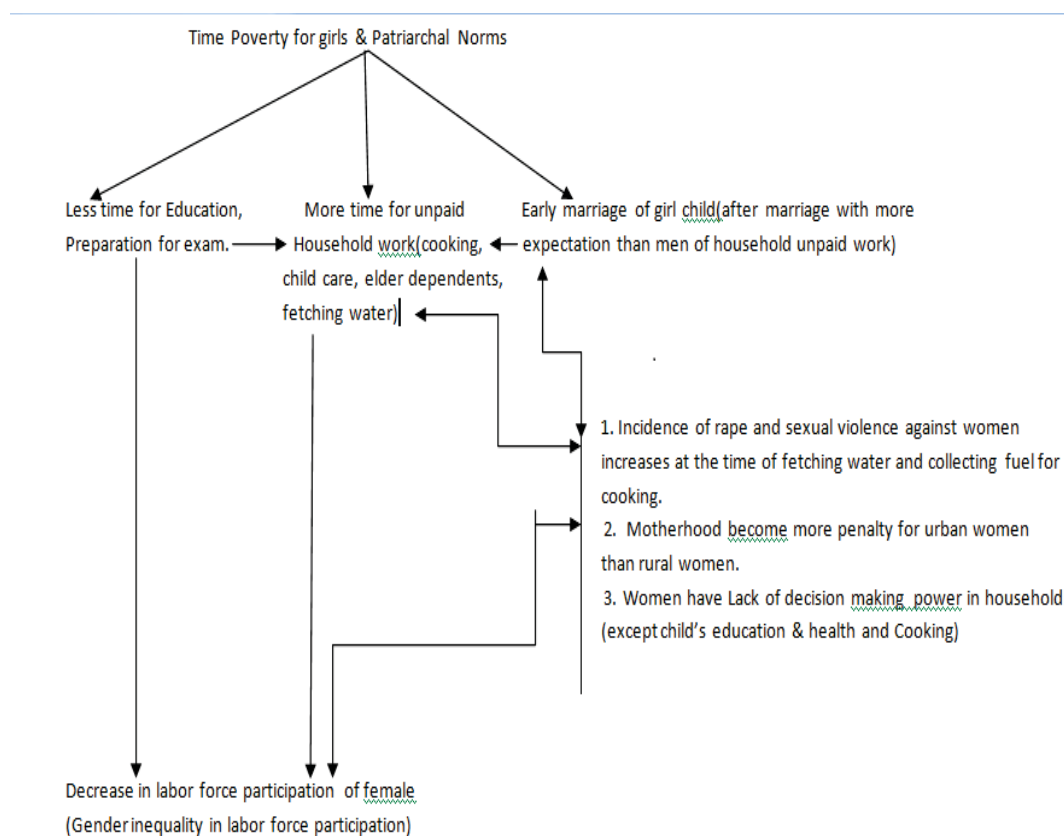
- In underdeveloped nations, it is frequently advised that for improvement in the health sector, the investment in clean fuel and piped water must be raised. This study looks at a different route, namely the connection between children's scholastic results and access to liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and piped water. Results from the second round of the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) (2011–12) for rural India show that children between the ages of 6 and 14 who reside in homes that collect water and fuel for cooking for free have lower math test marks and advantage from the low level of educational costs than children who reside in those homes from where they do not need to collect water & fuel. Additionally, there is a huge gap in the amount of unpaid work which a female child does for a male child within the household. Children's outcomes are much worse in homes where women suffer from a disproportionate amount of the collection burden, especially for boys. (Choudhuri.P, 2021). (Is there a connection between a child's education and her family's unpaid domestic work?)

Do women in India really not work, or do they undervalue the money they make, the savings they make, and the unpaid work they do around the house? Does a child's education have anything to do with her family's unpaid domestic work? What are the reasons for low rate of participation of educated females in rural India lower? What factors lead to Pakistani women's low rate of workforce participation?

The primary finding of the Time Use Survey (TUS) data, indicates that women are more involved in unpaid household work and care-giving work than in paid employment in India and especially in Bihar, suggests that gendered norms influenced by patriarchal notions of



female and male roles in society and due to the lack of basic public infrastructural facilities, like the accessibility of clean water and affordable fuel, eat up a sizable portion of the available time of women. Women with infants suffered more from time poverty. Female students in rural Bihar are given less time for academic accomplishment (exam preparation) than male pupils as a result of patriarchal traditions. In India, women spend twice as much time caring for children and dependent adults as men do. Females spend three times as much time performing unpaid domestic chores than men do. For those reasons, women get less time for their personal growth and girl children get less time for educational attainment, all this causes gender inequality in labor force participation. This causes problems in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well. (Nath, 2024)



(Graphical presentation of time poverty of girls and its impact in Indian context)

Source: Author (Nath, 2024)

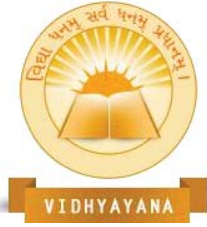


## "From Past to Present: The Evolution of Child Marriage and Its Continuous Impacts"

Beginning during the colonial era, the practice of outlawing child marriage was initiated. The first legal action against child marriage was launched in 1891. To address this "threat," a number of rules and regulations have been developed since 1947. The colonial state's attempt to implement an age of consent statute in 1891 was the first legal step. This attempt sparked a great deal of controversy and is considered to be the start of what Tanika Sarkar refers to as "cultural nationalism." She has highlighted the ways in which colonial law became involved with the issue of child marriage (Aparna Bandyopadhyay, 2021). The 1929 statute prohibiting child marriage, which was enacted on the Indian initiative, was the next significant action. In honor of Har Bilas Sarda, who pushed for this contentious law, the Child Marriage Restriction Act is often referred to as the Sarda Act. It forbade boys under the age of 18 and girls under the age of 15 from getting married. Later, in 1949, a modification to this Act was proposed, raising the minimum age of marriage for boys to 20 years old and the minimum (early) age of marriage for girls to 15. One rule remained in effect until 1978, when it was changed to raise the marriageable age for boys to 21 and for girls to 18. The previous rule was removed in 2006, and the emphasis was moved from only prohibiting young weddings to Love and Law 107 to that of prohibition. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006 (PCMA), the new law, includes much more stringent provisions than the previous one.

Nevertheless, the law has not been able to stop young marriages. The legal minimum age for marriage remains at 18 for women and 21 for males. According to the 2011 Census, one in three girls gets married before turning the legal age of eighteen. Actually, "child" marriage or "infant" marriage as it was known in colonial India displays obstinate perseverance: Of all women or girls who were married or wedded in 2011, 78.5 lakhs (2.3 percent) were married before the age of ten. Additionally, 91 percent of married women were married by the time they were 25 years old, according to Census data. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), West Bengal, which is currently the state with the highest rate of child marriage, was one of the top four states in 2007–08. According to a subsequent NFHS (2015–16), West Bengal still has a 40.7 percent early-age marriage rate, while rural areas have a 46.3 percent rate.





According to the “Prohibition of Indian Child Marriage Act 2006”, nowadays, child marriage is defined as one, irrespective of gender (it may be girls or boys) who were married at the age of 18 to 21, respectively.

**Table 1: (%) of Child Marriages in India**

| State | % of married females (less than eighteen years) & (marriage duration 0-4 years among currently married women ) | % of married females (less than eighteen years) & (marriage duration 0-4 years among currently married women ) |
|-------|--|--|
|       | Census 2001  | Census 2011  |
| India | 32.1   | 17.2   |

Sources: Author's Computation from Census2001 and Census2011

## **"Shifting Boundaries: The Impact of Social Norms on Female Labor Market Participation"**

According to PLFS 2021–2022 data, major number of educated youth (especially females) are suffering from unemployment, and a person's current weekly status determines employment in PLFS. Since 2019, women have mostly shifted from wage labor to self-employment. When it comes to the percentage of females in the labor market, Indian states continuously do worse than similar emerging nations. The percentage of workers in non-agricultural jobs increased significantly more quickly than the percentage of workers in regular wage jobs in the non-farm sector. Over time, caste structure of India has played a crucial role on the participation of female in the labour market. There has been a decrease in female employment since 2004 in all caste and religion categories. A negative correlation exists between the earnings of husbands and the likelihood of women finding work. An increased chance of the woman participating in paid work is linked to the presence of an employed in-law. The link between education and employment is U-shaped. The U-shaped relation is observed between female employment and growth of economy as well. Initially structural transformation pushes female out of the workforce as demand for female labour in agricultural sector goes down. As economic growth



continues and educational attainment level of female increases, opportunities of more new employments and higher level of wage pull women into the laborforce. The primary finding of the Time Use Survey (TUS) data, indicates that females are more engaged in unpaid domestic work and caregiving and less in paid employment in India and especially in Bihar, suggests that gendered norms influenced by patriarchal notions of female and male roles in society and due to the lack of basic public infrastructural facilities, like the accessibility of clean water and affordable fuel, eat up a sizable portion of the available time of women. Female students in rural Bihar are given less time for academic accomplishment (exam preparation) than male pupils as a result of patriarchal traditions. This research presents empirical evidence that, as a result of patriarchal norms in rural Bihar, female students receive less time for educational attainment (exam preparation) and are involved more in unpaid domestic work than male students. (Bhattacharya.S, 2023). In India, women spend twice as much time caring for children and dependent adults as men do and due to child marriage females again get lesser time for their personal growth because after marriage they put their maximum time into domestic duties and commitments. Females spend three times more to completing unpaid domestic chores than men do. For those reasons, women get less time for their personal growth and girl children get less time for educational attainment all this causes the gender inequality in labor force participation. This causes problems in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well.

## Conclusion:

In India due to patriarchal norms like child marriage and other social expectations from society, women become less empower in household and society. This results an unequal participation in labour force, in rural India women have to suffer from sexual violence at the time of fetching water and other household work. Financial shocks significantly impacts marriage & educational success for Pakistani women, because parents with low income background, treats with girls as an economics burden of families. Poor Families want to marry their daughters at an early age to reduce family expenses for marriage and try to minimize the cost of marriages. After child marriage due to heavy burden of household commitments they get lesser time for self-growth and educational attainment. Due to low level of education they become unable to





participate in labor market. This is a kind of vicious circle of social norms and poverty which hinders women to become self-sufficient economically. If this process continues for long period in future then it will be difficult for developing nations like India, Pakistan to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

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