

Determinants of Early Marriage amongst girl Children in Dasda Block of Tripura State

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Abstract

Child marriage encroaches on children's rights and exposes them to experience violence, exploitation, abuse, and forced sexual relations due to unequal power relations. They are more vulnerable to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Early pregnancy is one of the most dangerous causes and consequences of this harmful practice. Tripura occupies the second position in the country with respect to the prevalence of child marriage amongst girls aged 15 - 19 years. A study was conducted with the broad objectives to explore the causes and consequences of early marriage; and to design strategies for interventions to curb the menace of early marriage amongst girl children of Dasda block of Tripura State. Descriptive research method was followed in carrying out the study. Data are collected from teachers, girl students, parents and school heads of five Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools in the study area with the help of interview schedules and focus group discussions. The study revealed that most of the girls, who marry at an early age, drop out of school and only a few can manage to attend school post-marriage. Schools should organize awareness programs for girls, parents, and community/SMC members, from time to time, against the early marriage of girls on the contents such as the consequences, characteristics, and challenges of adolescence, etc.

Key Words: *Teenage pregnancy, early marriage, school dropout*

1.0 Introduction

Child marriage infringes on children's rights and exposes them to high risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse. Child marriage affects both girls and boys, but it affects girls disproportionately. Child marriage disrupts childhood and ushers in adulthood. It negatively influences children's rights to education, health, and protection. A girl who is married as

an adolescent is more likely to be out of school and fail to avail educational opportunities and subjugates them to lives of oppression, domestic violence, and childbirth. According to the World Health Organisation, the primary causes of death among girls between 15 to 19 years of age are pregnancy or childbirth. Adolescent girls are more likely to have children during adolescence. There are threats to her life due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Estimates suggest that each year, at least 1.5 million girls under 18 get married in India, which makes it home to the largest number of child brides in the world – accounting for a third of the global total. Nearly 16 percent adolescent girls aged 15-19 are currently married. If current trends continue, more than 140 million girls will marry early in the next decade or nearly 40,000 per day (UNICEF, 2014 a).

In India, early marriage has been declining slowly over time, but the number of girls and boys getting married before legal age (girls below 18 years and boys below 21 years) remains large with 12.1 million child marriages as per the Census of India, 2011. The causes of child marriage are complex and varied, based on various customs and traditions across contexts, and remain rooted in existing socio-cultural norms. Besides this, economic and regional factors play a significant role in determining the prevalence of child marriage. While Census, 2011 allows us to investigate the incidence of child marriage, the fourth round of National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) 2015-16 data highlights the prevalence of child marriage. Research in this area has revealed that child marriage is usually associated with teenage pregnancy. An overall comparison at the national level of the prevalence of child marriage amongst 15-19-year-old girls, who were married below 18 years of age between NFHS-3 and NFHS-4 shows a considerable decrease. According to NFHS-4, the rate of child marriage has reduced from 26.5% to 11.9% (14.1% in rural areas and 6.9% in urban areas). However, it is important to note that the prevalence of child marriage differs substantially across States. As per NFHS-4, there are 12 States in India, including Tripura, that show a higher prevalence of child marriage than the national average (11.9%).

2.0 Review of Related Literature

There has been substantial research over the last decade on some of the factors that contribute to child marriage, and some of its consequences (e.g., Jain, & Kurz 2007; Klugman *et al.*, 2014; Malhotra *et al.*, 2011; Lloyd 2005; Santhya, Haberland & Singh 2006; UNICEF, 2005; UNFPA, 2012; UNICEF, 2014; Vogelstein, 2013). The review suggests that social and cultural norms, including those related to faith, influence the age at which a girl is expected to marry. In addition, socio-economic status, education levels, and community context also influence the likelihood of a girl being married early. The poorest countries have the highest child marriage rates, and child marriage is most common among the poor who have fewer resources and opportunities to invest in alternative options for girls. Social norms around girls' education and women's participation in the formal labour force may mean that girls are not prioritized in a household's education investment decisions. A systematic review of child marriage interventions

indicates that reform of the legal and policy framework is although necessary but insufficient part of the answer (Malhotra *et al.*, 2011). Child marriage is rooted in sociocultural practices and religious beliefs in many communities, and the relationships between faith and child marriage are complex and change depending on the community (Gemignani and Wodon, 2015). Engaging with faith and community leaders as well as faith-based organizations to critically examine the causes and consequences of early marriage can help in building support for policies towards the elimination of the practice (Karam, 2015). Married girls are typically out of school, and most have little to say in decisions about whether they should continue or return to school (Malhotra *et al.*, 2011; Plan UK, 2011; Vogelstein, 2013). By virtue of their low levels of education, they are often not seen by their husbands and in-laws as capable of earning or managing finances or making financial decisions for the household (Becker Fonseca-Becker & Schenck-Yglesias, 2006; Blumberg *et al.*, 1995; Haddad, Hodinott, & Alderman, 1997; Jain & Kurz, 2007; The World Bank, 2012). Isolation from school, friends, and the workplace hampers their access to social support (Duflo, 2011). In addition, married girls often lack the ability to negotiate sexual activity, contraceptive use, or birth spacing with their husbands (Raj, 2010; UNFPA, 2013); and in many cases, are unable to speak up against the physical or emotional violence they experience in the hands of their husbands or in-laws.

3.0 Scenario of Child marriage in Tripura

Tripura, a State in North-East India, is the third-smallest State in the country in terms of area. It is bordered by Bangladesh to the north, south, and west, and the Indian States of Assam and Mizoram to the east. According to Census, 2011, Tripura is one of the most literate States in India with a literacy rate of 87.2%. It is an agrarian State with more than half of the population dependent on agriculture and allied activities. However, due to the hilly terrain and forest, only 27% of the land is available for cultivation. According to NFHS-4, of the total population of Tripura, 27.7% is under 15 years of age, and the overall infant and under-five mortality rate for five years preceding the NFHS-4 were 27 and 33 per 1,000 live births, respectively. Tripura occupies the second position in the country with respect to the prevalence of child marriage amongst girls aged 15 - 19 years at 21.6%, which is significantly higher than the national average of 11.9%. Surveys reveal that prevalence of child marriage in the age group 15-19 years is significantly higher in rural areas across all districts of Tripura except for West Tripura. A study was undertaken in a rural block, namely, Dasda Block of North Tripura District of Tripura State, *inter alia*, to make an in-depth analysis of the factors contributing to early marriage among in-school girls.

4.0 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To find out the magnitude of Early Marriage amongst girl children of Dasda block of Tripura State;

2. To find out the age at first marriage among girl children of Dasda block of Tripura State;
3. To study the factors contributing to early marriage amongst girl children as perceived by teachers, parents, community leaders and the victims of early marriage of Dasda block of Tripura State; and
4. To plan / design strategies for interventions to curb the menace of early marriage amongst girl children of Dasda block of Tripura State.

5.0 Methodology

Descriptive method was employed in carrying out the study. The details of the research methodology followed, particularly with reference to Population and Sample, tools and techniques used for data collection, and techniques of data analysis, are presented as follows:

5.1 The Population and Sample

The Population of the study consisted of all the in-school adolescent girls (married or unmarried) and all the out-of-school adolescent girls, who have married before the age of 18 years; head teachers and teachers of all the Secondary and Higher Secondary schools of Dasda Block of North Tripura District of Tripura State.

The sample for the study consisted of the following:

- a) **Sample of Schools:** Five (5) Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools of Dasda block of Tripura State are selected following purposive sampling technique so as to represent interior and road-side schools and schools with students from varying communities.
- b) **Sample of Subjects / Key Informants:** The subjects/key informants of the study included: fifty (50) adolescent girl children, 2 out-of-school girl children who have recently married before they reached 18 years of age, 26 teachers, 5 school heads and 3 parents, associated with the schools included in the sample. Purposive and incidental sampling techniques are followed in selection of key informants. Besides, 10-12 adolescent girls from each of the five schools included in the sample, are selected for Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in consultation with the teachers/head teachers.

5.2 Tools and Techniques Used for Data Collection

Separately constructed tools for each category of informants were used for the collection of data:

- i. Interview schedule for the adolescent girls
- ii. Interview schedule for the teachers and head teachers
- iii. Interview schedule for the parents.
- iv. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guideline for the adolescent girls.

Apart from collecting data through the tools mentioned above, field–notes were extensively used to capture first-hand experiences and observations by the researchers. These tools and techniques were used to obtain information from the key informants, who constitute the stakeholders of education, about the factors responsible for early marriage among girl children and their suggestion to curb the menace of early marriage in the area,

5.3 Techniques of Data Analysis

The data collected with the help of interview schedules and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the subjects are analyzed with the help of a thick description of opinions, events, and situations derived from the data.

6.0 Results

The data collected from the key stakeholders of School Education, viz., teachers, head teachers, and girl children, through interview schedules separately constructed for teachers/head teachers and girl children, and focus group discussions with the girl children, presented in four sections as follows:

6.1 Perception of Teachers and Head Teachers

In this section, the perception of teachers and head teachers pertaining to different aspects/variables associated with the early marriage of adolescent girls of the study area, particularly with reference to the minimum age at marriage, dropout/retention of girls after marriage, the incidence of early marriage, early marriage and age at first mother, early marriage and family size, early marriage and family relation, early marriage, and marriage type, and causes and consequence of early marriage, are presented as follows:

A. Knowledge of Minimum Age at marriage

The data collected from the teachers and head teachers pertaining to their knowledge about the minimum age of marriage of girl children revealed that all the respondents are aware of the fact that the minimum age of marriage is 21 years for females as per the declaration of Govt. of Tripura.

B. Retention vis-a-vis Drop out of Married Girls in Schools

The teachers and head teachers were asked to report as to how many girls retained in and dropped out from their respective schools in the last three academic sessions: 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, as a result of marriage. The results can be seen from table 4.1 as follows:

Table 4.1: Number of Girl Students Retained in and Drop out of Schools after Marriage in the last Three Academic Sessions: 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022

		2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022	
		Retention	Drop out	Retention	Drop out	Retention	Drop out
1.	Kanchanpur Col. Girls H.S. School	1	5	2	7	Nil	10
2.	Satanala H.S. School	Nil	2	2	1	Nil	2
3.	DurgaramReang Para School	1	2	2	2	1	Nil
4.	Barcherra High School	Nil	3	Nil	4	Nil	1
5.	Gachiram High School	Nil	5	Nil	1	Nil	6
	Total	1	17	6	15	1	19

It can be seen from the results of table 4.1 that the majority of girls drop out of school after their marriage. The total number of girls, retained after marriage, in five schools included in the sample in the last three academic sessions: 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022, is 8 (13.56%) as against 51 (86.44%), who dropped after marriage. Thus, the percentage of drop out in case of married girls is as high as 86.44%

C. Incidence of Early Marriage

The response of teachers and head teachers regarding the usual age at marriage in respect of the girls, who marry before the appropriate age, i.e. 18 years, can be seen from the results of table 4.2 as follows:

Table 4.2: Perception of Teachers and Head Teachers on Usual Age at Marriage of girls, who marry before 21 years of Age

N=26

Sl. No.	Name of the School	Perception of Teachers and Head Teachers about Age at Marriage of Adolescent Girls		
		Between 14 and 15 years	Between 16 and 17 years	Between 18 and 21 years
1	Kanchanpur Col. Girls H.S. School		–	–
2	DurgaramReang Para School	✓	–	–
3	Satanala H.S. School	–	✓	–
4	Gachiram High School	–	✓	–
5	Barcherra High School	✓	–	–

The results of table 4.2 show that early marriage amongst girls usually happens between 14 and 17 years of age as reported by teachers and head teachers.

D. Early Marriage and Age at First Mother

The teachers and head teachers were asked to report about the time period from the date of marriage of the girls below 18 years of age usually become the first mother, i.e., whether within 1 year or 2 years or 3 years of marriage. The results can be seen from table 4.3 as follows:

Table 4.3: Perception of Teachers and Head Teachers about the duration at which adolescent girls become first mother after Marriage

N=26

Sl. No.	Name of the School	Perception of Teachers and Head Teachers			
		within 1 year of marriage	within 2 years of marriage	within 3 years of marriage	No information
1	Kanchanpur Col. Girls H.S. School	80 %	-	8%	12%
2	DurgaramReang Para School	70%	22%	–	8%
3	Satanala H.S. School	72.2%	19.7%	5%	3.1%
4	Gachiram High	82%	-	7%	11%

	School				
5	Barcherra High School	70.8%	18.3%	–	10.9%
Total average		75%	12%	4%	9%

The results of table 4.3 show that three-fourth (75%) of the teachers and head teachers reported that the girls who marry before 21 years of age become first mother within 1 year of marriage. The corresponding figures in respect of the teachers / head teachers, who reported that girls who marry below 18 years usually become first mothers within 2 years and 3 years of marriage, is 12% and 4% respectively. These results imply that majority of the girls who marry before 21 years of age become first mother within 1 year of marriage.

E. Early Marriage and Family Size

More than four-fifth of the teachers and head teachers (86%) reported that the girls, who marry before 21 years of age, have more children than their counterparts who marry at a later age.

F. Early Marriage and Family Relation

The response of the teacher and head teachers about relationships between the girls who marry at an early age and their family members including spouses can be seen from table 4.4 below:

Table 4.4

Perception of Teacher and Head Teachers about Family Relation of the Girls who Marry at an Early Age with their In-Laws

N=26

Sl. No.	Family Relation	Percentage of Respondents
1	Stays with in-laws	70%
2	Separated and stay with their husband	2%
3	Separated from in-laws and stay with parents along with husband	6%
4	Divorced and stay with parents	22%
5	Any other	-

The results of table 4.4 show that the majority of the teachers and head teachers (70) have reported that the girls, who marry at an early age, i.e. before 18 years of age, stay with their husbands and in-laws. The corresponding figures for those who reported that such girls remain separated and stay with their husbands / separated from in-laws and stay with parents along with husband and divorced or separated are: 2%, 6% and 22% respectively. These results imply that the majority of girls, who marry at an early age, use to stay with their husbands.

G. Early Marriage and Marriage Type

The response of the teacher and head teachers about the incidence of different marriage types, viz., love marriage, arranged marriage, marriage by capture, and elopement, can be seen from table 4.5 below:

Table 4.5: Response of the Teacher and Head Teachers about Different Marriage Types in the Case of Girls who Marry before 21 years of Age

N= 26

Sl. No.	Types of marriage	Responses of teachers (%)
1	Love marriage	86%
2	Arranged marriage	21%
3	Marriage by capture	-
4	Marriage by elopement	80%

The results of table 4.5 reveal that about four-fifth of the teachers and head teachers have reported that love marriage and marriage by elopement (86% and 80% respectively) are prevalent in the case of girls who marry at an early age. The corresponding figure for those who reported the prevalence of arranged marriage is as less as 21%. These results imply that the prevalence of love marriage, as reported by the teachers and head teachers, is highest (86%) followed by marriage by elopement (80%).

H. Reasons of Early Marriage

The reasons of early marriage among girls as reported by the teachers and head teachers of sampled schools, is presented in table 4.6 below:

Table 4.6: Response of the Teacher and Head Teachers about Factors Contributing to Early Marriage amongst Girls

N= 26

Sl. No.	Factors of Early Marriage	Response of the teacher (%)
1	Parental Pressure	33.6%
2	Self-interest	82%
3	Poverty	22.8%
4	To get money from groom's side	-
5	Lack of interest/poor in studies	53%
6	Any other	3%

The reasons of early marriage among girls, as reported by the teachers and head teachers, reveals that around four-fifth (82%) of such marriages happen due to interest of girls themselves

followed by lack of interest of such girls in studies (53%). The percentage of respondents, who reported parental pressure and poverty as the reasons for early marriage among girls are: 33.6% and 22.8% respectively.

I. Consequences of Early Marriage

The perception of teachers and head teachers about the consequences of early marriage, based on their observations, is presented in table 4.7 below:

Table 4.7: Response of the Teacher and Head Teachers about Consequences of Early Marriage amongst Girls

N= 26

Sl. No.	Consequences of early marriage	Response of the teacher (%)
1	Domestic violence at in-laws house	-
2	Demand of dowry after marriage	7% (N)
3	Too much of domestic work	27.8%
4	Health problem (s)	78%
5	Failure to adjust with in-laws	46.3%
6	Failure to adjust with husband	27%
7	Any other	-

The results of table 4.7 show that health problem (s) and failure to adjust with in-laws, as reported by 78% and 46.3% of the teachers and head teachers, respectively, are the key consequences of girls marrying at an early age. The consequences such as too much of domestic work and failure to adjust with husbands are reported for each by 27% of the respondents. Domestic violence at in-laws' houses as well as the demand of dowry after marriage is non-existent in the study area.

J. Suggestions of Teachers and Head Teachers for Prevention of Early Marriage

The results pertaining to the suggestions made by teachers and head teachers about steps to be taken at different levels, viz., schools, parents and community / SMCcommunity and family, for prevention of early marriage among girls are as follows:

- i. Schools should organize awareness programs for girls, parents, and community / SMC members, from time to time, against the early marriage of girls on the contents such as the consequences, characteristics, and challenges of adolescence, etc.
- ii. Parents having daughters below 18 years of age should discuss adolescent issues freely with their daughters and make their daughters aware of different issues associated with adolescence.
- iii. Community / SMC members must keep strict vigil and inform police if children below 18 years get married. They should also generate awareness.

6.2 Perception of Girl Children: Outcomes of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus Group Discussion was conducted in all the five schools included in the sample, with 7-10 girls in each, on the following issues associated with adolescent girls:

- i. Knowledge of minimum age of marriage of females
- ii. Age at first marriage
- iii. Age at first mother
- iv. Marriage type
- v. Reason (s) of early marriage
- vi. Early marriage and health issues
- vii. Early marriage and family relations

The key outcomes of Focus Group Discussions are presented school-wise as follows:

A. Outcomes of Focus Group Discussions: Kanchanpur Colony Girls' H.S. School

- i. Most of the adolescent girls have very low aspirations and neither they nor their parents give any priority to academics.
- ii. Most of the girls who marry at an early age drop out of school and only a few can manage to attend school post-marriage.
- iii. Most of the adolescent girls who marry early become first mothers within 1 year of their marriage and suffer from health issues after childbirth.
- iv. Most of the adolescent girls who marry have low quality of life.
- v. Some of the girls have returned back to their parents' house because of differences with husbands and in-laws post marriage.
- vi. The young husbands too are often forced to withdraw from their schools because of the responsibility of their family.
- vii. Sporadic incidents of suicides by young adolescent married girls soon after the marriage has also been reported.

B. Outcomes of Focus Group Discussions: Satnala H.S. School

- i. Girls who marry at an early age are not allowed to continue their schooling and are confined to the household chorus.
- ii. In-laws, including the husbands, do not allow adolescent married girls to go out of the house for anything. They are also not allowed to take part decision-making process.
- iii. Most of the adolescent girls got married a to carpenter, small shop keepers, decorators, auto-rickshaw drivers or non-working youth as a result of which they face financial constraints.

- iv. Most of the adolescent girls suffer from health issues after childbirth.
- v. Most of the adolescent married girls become first mothers within the first year of marriage.
- vi. Most of the adolescent married girls lead an unhappy life after marriage
- vii. All the members of the group are aware of the minimum age of marriage in the case of females.
- viii. All the members of the group are of opinion that girls should marry at the appropriate age and after being self-sufficient.
- ix. Poverty and lack of guidance at home, school, and community are reported to be the main factors contributing to the adolescent marriage.

C. Outcomes of Focus Group Discussions: Borcherra High School

- i. Almost all the inhabitants of the area (99%) belong to Reang tribal community. Only two (2) students one (1) from Chakma Community and one(1) from Tripuri community are in the school.
- ii. The people in the area traditionally follow *Jhum* Cultivation.
- iii. Love marriage is rampant among boys and girls in the area.
- iv. Most of the adolescent girls who got married their average age of marriage are 15 years.
- v. Most of the adolescent married girls drop out of school after marriage
- vi. In many cases, it was seen that the adolescent girls who married were also separated after a few months.
- vii. Liquor addiction among youths is also common.
- viii. Although marriages at an early age are taking place but no dowry demand from either side has been heard of..
- ix. People in the area are followers of ISKCON Society.
- x. A NGO named Young Blue Association is active and on receiving reports of adolescent marriages rescue such minor girls.

D. Outcomes of Focus Group Discussions: Gachiram High School

- i. Most of the adolescent girls were not aware of the marriageable age of girls. Some say 18 years while others say 25 years.
- ii. Most of the girls were of the opinion that marriage at 22-23 years will be good.
- iii. Most of the adolescent girls were of the opinion that pursuing their studies after marriage was not possible at all.
- iv. They felt that first studies should be completed and then look for a job. Only then one should marry.
- v. Most of the adolescent girls who got married early were not happy.
- vi. Most of the married adolescent girls have to do lot of domestic work.

- vii. Most of the married adolescent girls give birth to child early and eventually both mother and child are weak.
- viii. Adolescent girls of Class VIII reported that one girl from their class got married few months back and is pregnant. Husband is a vegetable vendor.
- ix. In another such incident a Class VIII boy got married who has no income, so doesn't come to school but helps in household work.
- x. Parents of such adolescent boys and girls do not discuss such issues with their children.

E. Outcomes of Focus Group Discussions: DurgaramReang Para H.S. School

- i. Most of the adolescent girls who get married at 15 to 16 years of age leads to early pregnancy.
- ii. Most of the adolescent girls opined that late marriage is good.
- iii. Most of the adolescent girls also reported that life at in-laws place is painful.
- iv. The adolescent girls were also of the opinion that girls who got married early also had several health issues.
- v. Most of the married adolescent girls also in many occasions had to undergo abortion / miscarriage
- vi. Most of the married adolescent girls dropped out of School after marriage.
- vii. The adolescent girls also reported that the husbands of these married girls consume liquor and in an inebriated condition causes physical torture, verbal abuse, etc on their young wives.
- viii. The adolescent girls also felt that their future were very uncertain once they were married at an early age.

7.0 Findings of the Study

The findings of the study are presented in two sections: Section A. Findings based on the Perception of Teachers and Head Teachers; and Section B. Findings based on the Perception of Girl Children.

A. Findings based on the Perception of Teachers and Head Teachers

The data collected from the teachers and head teachers pertaining to different variables of the study revealed:

- i. All the respondents are aware of the fact that the minimum age of marriage is 21 years for females as per the declaration of Govt. of Tripura.
- ii. Majority of girls drop out of school after their marriage. The percentage of drop out in case of married girls is as high as 86.44%
- iii. Early marriage amongst girls usually happens between 14 and 17 years of age
- iv. Majority of the girls who marry before 21 years of age become first mother within 1 year of marriage (reported by 75% of the respondents).

- v. More than four-fifth of the teachers and head teachers (86%) reported that the girls, who marry before 21 years of age, have more children than their counterparts who marry at a later age.
- vi. Majority of the teachers and head teachers (70) have reported that the girls, who marry at an early age, i.e. before 18 years of age, continue to stay with their husbands and in-laws.
- vii. The prevalence of love marriage is highest followed by marriage by elopement. About four-fifths of the teachers and head teachers (86% and 80% respectively) have reported that love marriage and marriage by elopement are prevalent in the case of girls who marry at an early age. The corresponding figure for those who reported the prevalence of arranged marriage is as less as 21%.
- viii. Early marriages happen due to the interest of girls themselves followed by lack of interest of such girls in studies, as reported by 82% and 53% of the teachers and head teachers respectively. The corresponding percentages of respondents, who reported parental pressure and poverty as the reasons for early marriage among girls, are 33.6% and 22.8% respectively.
- ix. Health problem (s) and failure to adjust with in-laws, as reported by 78% and 46.3% of the teachers and head teachers, respectively, are the key consequences of girls marrying at an early age. The consequences such as too much domestic work and failure to adjust with husbands are reported for each by 27% of the respondents. Domestic violence at in-laws' houses as well as the demand for dowry after marriage is non-existent in the study area.

B. Findings based on the Perception of Girl Children

The data collected from the girl children, through Focus Group Discussions, pertaining to different variables of the study revealed:

- i. Most of the girls who marry at an early age drop out of school and only a few can manage to attend school post-marriage. They are not allowed to continue their schooling and are confined to the household chorus.
- ii. Most of the adolescent girls who marry early become first mothers within 1 year of their marriage and suffer from health issues after childbirth.
- iii. Most of the adolescent girls who marry have a low quality of life.
- iv. Some of the girls have returned back to their parent's house because of differences with husbands and in-laws post-marriage.
- v. In-laws, including husbands, do not allow adolescent married girls to go out of the house for anything. They are also not allowed to take part in decision making process.
- vi. Most of the adolescent girls got married to carpenter, small shop keepers, decorators, auto rickshaw drivers or non-working youth as a result of which they face financial constraints.
- vii. Most of the adolescent married girls lead an unhappy life after marriage

- viii. Almost all adolescent girls are aware of the minimum age of marriage in the case of females.
- ix. All the members of the group are of opinion that girls should marry at the appropriate age and after being self-sufficient.
- x. Poverty and lack of guidance at home, school, and community are reported to be the main factors contributing to the adolescent marriage.
- xi. The type of marriage in the case of adolescent girls is mostly love marriage.
- xii. The average age of marriage of most of adolescent girls, who got married early, is 15 years.
- xiii. In many cases it was seen that adolescent married girls are separated from their in-laws after a few months.
- xiv. Although marriages at an early age are taking place but no dowry demand from either side has been heard of.
- xv. Most of the girls are of the opinion that marriage at 22-23 years will be good.
- xvi. Most of the adolescent girls who got married early were not happy.
- xvii. Most of married adolescent girls have to do lots of domestic work beyond their capacity.
- xviii. Parents of adolescent girls do not discuss the issues associated with early marriage with their daughters.

8.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings derived from the perceptions, including suggestions, of the stakeholders of secondary education such as head teachers, teachers, and adolescent girls, on the variables associated with the early marriage of adolescent girls, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Schools should organize awareness programs for girls, parents, and community/SMC members, from time to time, against the early marriage of girls covering the contents such as the consequences, characteristics, and challenges of adolescence, etc.
- ii. Parents having daughters below 18 years of age should discuss adolescent issues freely with their daughters and make them aware of different issues associated with adolescence.
- iii. Community / SMC members must keep strict vigil and inform police if children below 18 years of age get married. They should also generate awareness.
- iv. Girls should not marry before attaining the age of 21 years. They should think of getting themselves established first and then plan to get married, as many girls are deprived of adequate food, love, and care, and experience domestic violence, etc. post marriage. The girls should try to complete at least their graduation before getting married.
- v. Adolescent Education Programme must be an important components of all In-service teacher training Programme
- vi. The Question Box Activity must be followed in each school to address the Adolescent issues.

- vii. The schools need to create a pool of student volunteers for peer counselling in each school.

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