

Causes and Consequences of Early Marriage: A Legal Study on Singra Upazila Under Natore District

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Abstract: Marriage is a universal phenomenon in the world context. It represents a unique social relationship between two human beings and cannot be compared to any other relationship. While marriage is perhaps the most enjoyable event and holy festival in our society, early marriage differs as it brings about physical and social problems. It adversely affects the mother's health, leading both mother and children to suffer from malnutrition, which contributes to an increased death rate among mothers and infants. As a result of early marriage, individuals are deprived of education and may face divorce, sexual diseases, psychophysical issues, and more. Despite its many negative consequences, early marriage is still practiced in Bangladesh, driven by factors such as illiteracy, poverty, and weak infrastructure; the rate of early marriage continues to rise in our country. Though there is a set law and direction of the Apex Court to stop early marriage, it still exists in our country. So, it is crucial to identify the reasons for early marriage in our society. For these reasons, we selected the topic "Causes and Consequences of Early Marriage: A Legal Study on Singra Upazila under Natore District."

Keywords: Early Marriage, Social Relationship, Enjoyable Event, Malnutrition, Sexual Diseases.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the child marriage rate has increased alarmingly in Bangladesh. The rate of child marriage is 66 percent whose age is below 18.¹ Between 2010 and 2017 in our country, the percent of child marriage is 22 whose age is below 15, and below the age of 18 is 59 percent.² According to United Nations ICEF figures, 66 percent of Bangladeshi girls enter into marriage before the age of 18 years.³ It is a very worst matter that, young girls

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1 Tahera Ahmed, "Child Marriage: A Discussion Paper", *Bangladesh Journal of Bioethics*, (2015). p.8

2 UNICEF Child Marriage Report "A Scoping Analysis of Budget Allocation for Ending Child Marriage in Bangladesh" (March 2018).

3 Chronic Poverty Research Centre, *Stemming Girl's Chronic Poverty*, p.5.

are considered as an economic burden for their families in rural areas.⁴ Parents believe their daughters should marry early to reduce dowry costs. In rural areas, sexual harassment from acquaintances drives early marriages, with the belief that this can protect girls from unsafe environments. A marriage is considered child marriage if it occurs before the girl turns 18 and is physically and psychologically prepared for marital responsibilities.⁵ In recent years, there has been a rise in the prevalence of child marriage in Singra Upazila, located in the Natore District. A concerning aspect of this issue is that parents are facilitating their children's marriages while concealing their identities, which makes it challenging for law enforcement to identify and take action against them.

In this article, literature review works are aided by sources from books, journals, newspapers, and periodicals. Cases related to child marriage, which have been adjudicated by courts both at home and abroad, were also reviewed for this article. Although many articles address various aspects of child marriage, it remains impossible to get a complete and accurate picture of child marriage in Singra Upazila, located in the Natore District of Bangladesh. Besides that, as the home district of one of the researchers of this article is Natore, we have selected this area. For that reason, we can collect information related to our article easily, as most of the people were known. So, we conducted a comprehensive study on the 'Causes and Consequences of Early Marriage: A Legal Study on Singra Upazila under Natore District'.

1.2. Research Objectives

The periphery of this research denotes the following objectives:

- i. to realize the perception of local people about early marriage;
- ii. to understand the causes behind early marriage;
- iii. to know the consequences of early marriage;
- iv. to perceive the practical situation and current laws about early marriage;
- v. to suggest possible recommendations for mitigating child marriage.

1.3. Methodology

The research work used a qualitative method for completing and identifying a real picture of child marriage in Singra Upazilla under the Natore District of Bangladesh. In this article, primary and secondary data have been used. Among them, first of all, primary data has been collected from questionnaires and also from the legislation of Bangladesh. For collecting primary data by

⁴ <https://www.wikigender.org/wiki/early-marriage-in-bangladesh/>.

⁵ Chronic Poverty Research Centre, *Stemming Girl's Chronic Poverty*, (2010).

questionnaire, the Oraon Tribe (ethnic group) and the community in general (Hindu and Muslim) were selected in Singra Upazilla. This study is an outcome of a short fieldwork that we have conducted in Shukash Union under Singra Upazilla of Natore District. Anthropological techniques of observation and also, we have conducted intense interviews of the selective area for collecting data, but due to time constraints, it is not possible to conduct a household census. Intensive interviews of some randomly selected people, reports received from the concerned key informants, informal discussions about the selective topic with the Oraon and general communities, and our observations about the study area are the major sources of primary data. We made frequent visits to our study area, Belowa village (Belowa was selected purposively and is located on the Natore and Bogura highway approximately 40 km northward from the Natore city center area) during the period of fieldwork, and we have also interviewed both Oraon and general communities to comprehend why they are entering into child marriage. In village Belowa there are separate localities called Para, such as Hindu Para, Majhi Para (also living in the Oraon community), and Muslim Para, etc. But the Oraon, now are converted to the Christian religion, and they follow the Christian customs, and the rest are following their religion. We have discussed this only with the non-Christian Oraon community. The duration of our fieldwork was more than two months (June-August 2023). Besides primary data, we have also used secondary sources of data for completing this paper. For collecting secondary data, we have taken help from existing sources such as textbooks, leading cases, international and regional conventions, municipal laws, journals, articles, newspapers, research work, print media, electronic media, and so on.

1.4. Limitations

Although we have tried to complete the research very artistically, responsibly, and consequently, we have faced some problems that have been indicated as our research limitations. As new researchers, we have a little experience in the fieldwork. We have made some questions for the respondents, but most of the respondents did not agree to answer. So, it was very difficult for us to get more information at the time of fieldwork. Moreover, the victims feel fear of providing information. When we went to the office of UNO and the police station to collect information, they did not provide enough information. Though child marriage is a matter of concern all over Bangladesh, we have not covered a vast area due to the shortage of time. The selective respondents for this study are taken from a certain rural area and also limited in number. The related document about child marriage is sometimes restricted from being published, and in that case, we have followed a supplementary way, which is very complex for us. So, our research work is not free from limitations.

2. Definition of Marriage and Child Marriage

2.1. Definition of Marriage

Marriage is a union between two human beings (a man and a woman) that is approved and regulated by enacted laws, existing rules, customs, and beliefs. By marriage rights and duties of the concerned partners arise and by it, their offspring (if any) accords valid status. The universal character of marriage is that it attributes basic social and personal functions. Such as sexual gratification, economic production, and satisfaction of personal needs for affection and status.⁶ Marriage is defined by personal law such as Muslim law, Hindu law, and Christian law. Marriage in Islam is a purely civil contract⁷ and it involves an agreement between the husband and wife, so it must satisfy all the basic conditions of a contract.⁸ However, a contract of marriage differs from other contracts in some respects. In all other contracts, the terms and conditions are settled earlier. But a contract of marriage is not like other contracts allowed by law for a limited or period fixed. Marriage is considered as a contract and it is permanent based on mutual free consent.⁹ According to Quranic law, marriage is a sacred act and it guides a better, purer, and happier life.¹⁰ Marriage is one of the oldest institutions in the history of human civilization and it is the foundation of all civilized communities. Like Muslim law Hindu law also defines marriage. Hindu law defines marriage as the ceremony of carrying a bride from her father's house to her husband's house¹¹ and it is considered as a sacred relation between husband and wife and also their concerned families. For the performance of religious duties marriage is a holy spiritual union in Hindu law,¹² and it is a religious sacrament and not a civil contract. Hindu marriage is full of varieties of ceremonies and rites, which are scrupulously followed but it may differ from caste to caste, different social groups, and so forth. Supreme Court of Bangladesh established the principle that, for validation of Hindu marriage, two ceremonies are essential before the sacred fire; one is Invocation before the holy fire referred to as Viva-Homa or Joggo; and another one is Saptapadi which involves the taking of seven steps around the holy nuptial fire.¹³

⁶ www.britannica.com.

⁷ Abdul Kadir V. Salima ILR (1886) 8 Allahabad 149 (Full Bench).

⁸ Section 2(h), The Contract Act, 1872.

⁹ Ameer Ali, Mahomedan Law, Vol.II, (1979). p.241.

¹⁰ Al Quran, 7:189.

¹¹ Puja Mondal, 'Concept of Marriage in Hindu Hinduism'.

¹² D.F. Mulla, Principles of Hindu Law (14th edited by Sunderlal T. Desai), N.M. Tripathi Private Ltd, Bombay, 1974, p 507.

¹³ Shahnaz Huda, 'Combating Gender Injustice: Hindu Laws in Bangladesh-ceremonies of marriage' (Dhaka: SAILS, 2012).

Available...http://www.academia.edu/1586976/Combating_Gender_Injustice_Hindu_Law_in_Bangladesh_Dhaka_SAILS_2011_ [Accessed on August 27, 2023].

2.2. Definition of Child Marriage

In general, personal laws don't have defined child marriage. Only statutory law defines it concerning the age of parties. A marriage can be defined as a child marriage when it is completed before the age of 18 and also refers a formal and informal unions in which both are lived as a married couple under the age of 18.¹⁴ Though marriage is defined as a celebrated union, it has been often chosen as a scapegoat for reducing the burden of parents in many developing countries like Bangladesh. For various reasons, in many developing countries marriage takes place at an early age, i.e., during childhood, which is known as 'early marriage' or 'child marriage'.¹⁵ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines a 'child' as any person under the age of 18. From a child rights perspective, marriage is not permissible during infancy, childhood, or adolescence. So, 'early marriage', therefore means the marriage of anyone under the age of 18 for both male and female. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017 defines "minor" concerning marriage, as a person who in the case of the male, has not completed 21 years of age, and in the case of a female, below the age of 18 years and "Child Marriage" means a marriage on which either or both of the concern parties are minor according to this Act.¹⁶

2.3. Historical Background of Early Marriage

Before the 20th century, in Bengali society, most marriages happened at an early age even before arising of feelings of love and affection. Even this system was also accepted in the case of boys in that society. Only in kulin aristocratic families, the children were given marriage at their adult age. Besides the problem of polygamy, early marriage also became a great problem in the early 19th century in Bengali society.

2.4. Local People's Perception of Early Marriage

In the village, most of the people are farmers and they work in the field and their wives work at home. In the field of agriculture, it requires the labor of both men and women. They need more manpower to work in the field and at home. As a result, they get their sons married earlier and in the case of daughters, their thinking is that the daughter's last destination is another family, so they need to be married earlier. At the time of the survey, we interviewed the research area and gathered some perceptions from local people regarding early marriage. Most of the persons think that girls are very sensitive issues for their prestige until their marriage. A common misconception is that, if girls become higher age, then it becomes very

¹⁴ <https://www.unicef.org.>child-protection>.

¹⁵ Supra note 12.

¹⁶ The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017 (Act No. vi of 2017), 11 March 2017.

difficult to get married to a good groom. They think that women are mainly responsible for performing household activities so they need not more education. They lead a strict social system against women and Oraon people are not aware of the consequences of early marriage. They think that early marriage is not a crime or against the law because they are not aware of the law. They believe that "Marriage is a sexual relationship between two persons of opposite sex that is legalized by society and it gives legality to their child. In the social system, teenage girl's marriage has become one kind of custom. Most of the girls are married at the age of 15 years and villagers think that it is the proper age for a girl's marriage. About their children's higher study, they said that, as they feel insecure about the girl child so they didn't send them outside for higher education.

2.5. Causes of Child Marriage in Rural Areas of Bangladesh

We have surveyed twelve households and talked to other people about the reasons and consequences of early marriage. In most cases, the respondents were spontaneous and gave exclusive information. According to the villagers, different causes are responsible for early marriage and they also admitted the consequences of early marriage in our national life.

2.5.1. Poverty

Among the reasons for child marriage poverty plays an important role in our country. In a family where poverty is acute, a girl is considered an economic burden. For that reason, the girls are married to even a double-aged person than her. Poverty plays a role in early marriage in two ways. Firstly, because of the poor economic condition, the parents want to get rid of their girl's burden by getting married earlier. Secondly, the groom's parents want to have a dowry to develop their condition by giving their son's marriage.

2.5.2. Lack of Education

Most of the rural people are illiterate and there are fewer facilities for their education. As they are deprived of proper education, they become anxious about their daughters and for that reason, they give early marriage. As most of the girls drop out of educational institutions, they spend their whole life by doing household occupations and they get married very early age.

2.5.3. Dowry

Dowry is a driving factor of early marriage. In rural areas, dowry has become the essential requirement of a marriage and the amount of dowry depends on the age of the girl. It is a well-established principle in rural areas that, the amount of dowry is less in the case of younger brides. So, the parents always try to give their daughter as early as possible.

2.5.4. Problem in Social System

The social system denotes the condition of the society and it includes norms and values, customs, marriage, kinship, social conflict, cohesion, etc. There is a lack of social security in the research area. If a daughter becomes an adolescent, the parents become anxious about her. If the girl is unmarried but 15 or more, the parents are hated by the society people. These kinds of unmarried girls become odd to the villagers. Very often some parents don't permit their daughter to go to school after adolescence, because they think "their daughter may fall in love with another or the wicked person can harm their daughter."

2.5.5. Concept of Vallo Patro (Good Groom)

In rural areas, people determine the condition of the groom, concerning the economic condition and education as well as the prominent lineage. Vallo Patro means the person who has a strong economic condition, is educated, and was born in a prominent family. When a good groom or his family offers the girl's parents, then he gives marriage as early as possible though the girl is a child.

2.5.6. Patriarchal Ideology

Most rural families are led by the male members of their family and in every sector of the village, male members play an important role in making decisions. In the decision-making process, women are not allowed to give their opinions in the patriarchal ideology. The male members are all in the family and the woman is under his domination.

2.5.7. Norms and Customs

Education enriches one's personality as well as the norm. Social norms and customs play an important role in the early marriage. In the studied village the norms and customs are observed somehow strictly. In rural areas before marriage, the girl (bride) is presented as like a doll in front of the groom's side. If they like then marriage occurs. She is bound to obey the opinions of her parents and other persons, without making any excuse.

2.5.8. Kinship and Family

In rural areas, the families consider their daughters as guests. They don't try to prepare their daughters, as their male child is made for the future life. The family wants to get rid of the daughter just giving her marriage as early as possible. Most of the neglects towards the girls begin with their own family. Parents take their sons more seriously rather than their daughters.

2.5.9. Lack of Consciousness

Rural people especially women are not conscious of the consequences of early marriage. Even many educated women are also not conscious of it. They don't know that child marriage is restricted by the law and it is one kind of crime.

2.6. Consequences of Child Marriage

The consequences of early marriage in the context of rural areas harm our national life. After early marriage, not only the probability of being self-reliant as a girl is demolished but also it begins various problems. The ultimate result of child marriages is adolescent pregnancies and it induces poor health to mothers and children. After a survey and study, we have found out the following consequences of early marriage.

2.6.1. Psycho-Physical Problem:

It is frequently noticeable that a young married girl faces multiple pregnancies and miscarriage of the child. It always happened that early marriage has high maternal morbidity and mortality rates.¹⁷ For early pregnancy and miscarriage of the child, the girl is unable to achieve healthy pregnancies. She cannot look after her children and family for reasons of poor physical and mental health and susceptibility to sexually transmitted diseases and fistula. In many cases, early married girls suffer from an inferiority complex and show a lack of confidence in discussing this issue with other people. For early pregnancy sometimes the girl is looked down upon by the community even home and gets limited opportunities to develop her mentality and potentiality.

2.6.2 Offspring Health

Generally, an early pregnancy produces an abnormal child. A child born from a young mother always suffers from malnourished and faces long-term debility and less stunted growth. As the mother is not emotionally mature enough, she cannot properly handle the child and bear the responsibilities.

2.6.3. Deprived of Education

Early marriage stops the girls from continuing their school. It demolishes the opportunity and rights of the education of the girl. Without having education, they cannot develop their personality and cannot be prepared for the future life. If a girl continues her school every day and does well in the examination, her parents want her to be educated. But before passing the Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C) they are given married though the girl wants to study.

¹⁷. <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Theory-of-Change-F-8-%282%29.pdf>.

2.6.4. Uncertain Life for Women

Naturally, after an early marriage, the bride cannot satisfy her husband sexually. However, she has to put up with the torture of her husband which is not seen from the outside. Sometimes, between the couple, there emerges quarrel and at the peak of the torture stage the husband divorces his wife and then she returns father's home and the people start to hate her.

2.6.5. Being Contaminated to Incurable Diseases

The girls being married at an early age, due to the lack of health knowledge and family planning programs in rural areas, could not get the opportunity to prevent pregnancy. With having a pregnancy at an early age, the bride may suffer a lot of incurable diseases, such as abortion, bleeding after childbirth, difficulties in child delivery, and other diseases like her health start breaks down.

3. International Legal Regime Against Child Marriage

Both national and international legal instruments and laws insert the provisions against child marriage. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948 is the first and foremost international legal instrument which recognized that "every man who is major according to law and also competent.... shall have right and be eligible to marry another person and forms a family". Regarding consent and rights of marriage, this declaration provides that, everyone has the same marriage rights and the parties have equal rights to dissolve it, and for the validation of marriage it must be entered into with the free and full consent of the concerned spouses".¹⁸ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is another legal instrument that provides that, all persons shall entitled same rights to engage in marriage and also free to select a partner with their free and full consent.¹⁹ The betrothal and the marriage have no legal effect if it occurs before attaining adulthood and all necessary action including enacting a law to fix a minimum age for marriage should be taken by every party of this convention.²⁰ The Convention on the Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriage states that "Marriage without full consent of concern parties shall not be valid and consent must be expressed by law by the parties."²¹ The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) determines the marriageable age for all (both men and women) to marry. It also provides that, a marriage

¹⁸. Article-16, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.

¹⁹. Article-16(1), The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979.

²⁰. Ibid a-16(2).

²¹. Article-1, The Convention on the Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriage, 1964.

that is performed without the free and full consent of the concerned spouse shall not be effective.²² World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a “state of full mental, physical and social well-being and it does not indicate only absence of diseases or infirmity” and also provides that, the concept of child marriage goes against the spirit of the WHO constitution.²³

4. National Legal Regime Against Child Marriage

Besides international legal instruments and laws, Bangladesh has also enacted laws to address child marriage. Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017 was enacted by the Bangladesh parliament and it repealed the previous law of 1929.²⁴ This is the present supreme law concerning the restraint of child marriage. To protect children from child marriage, this law imposes responsibility on the state. This law inserts provisions to protect children who conflict with the law and vulnerable situations. As per this law, anyone below 18 years of age is considered a child.²⁵ Though the preamble of this Act doesn't articulate the purpose and principles guiding it, the main objective of this Act is to prevent child marriages in Bangladesh. Our country has one of the highest prevalences of child marriages in the world. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017 deals with the issue of underage marriages comprehensively and contains several positive innovations. The offenses committed under this Act shall be considered as cognizable, bailable, and non-compoundable.”²⁶ Provision regarding the formation of Child Marriage Prevention Committees has been inserted.²⁷ To prevent child marriage this Act makes stronger government officials by exercising power²⁸ and increasing penalties for underage marriages.²⁹ The Apex Court of our country provides a series of directions for stopping child marriage in our country. *Mst. Bakshi v Bashir Ahmad & another* [1970] DLR 22 (SC) 289, in that case, the Supreme Court delivered a crucial ruling, asserting that while a marriage involving a girl under 16 years is not automatically void, the adult husband and officiants might face criminal charges under the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929. This ruling emphasized the legal consequences for adults engaged in child marriages, despite the marriage not being deemed invalid by default. In April 2017, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court ruled against the constitutionality of section 19 of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017. This section permits child marriages under "Special Circumstances"

²². Article-23, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966.

²³. <https://mymun.com/ppdb/3705>.

²⁴. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017. (Act no.VI of 2017).

²⁵. Section-4, The Children Act, 2013 (Act No. XXIV of 2013).

²⁶. Section-14, The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017.

²⁷. *Ibid* s. 3

²⁸. *Ibid* s. 4

²⁹. *Ibid* s. 7

with court approval and parental consent. The court sought clarification on why this clause should not be deemed unconstitutional, voicing concerns about potential misuse and the risks associated with perpetuating child marriage. In October of that same year, the High Court Division issued another *Suo Moto* ruling directing government officials to combat early marriages. The court queried why the Union Parishad Chairmen, Ward Members, and Ward Councilors should not be held liable for early marriages happening in their areas and subject to suitable legal measures. This directive underscored the role of local government officials in addressing child marriage. Recent initiatives, including the launch of a mobile app to verify the ages of brides and grooms, aim to strengthen the enforcement of the Child Marriage Restraint Act. These efforts target a reduction in child marriages, particularly in rural regions. In summary, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh has played a vital role in scrutinizing and shaping the legal framework surrounding early marriage, aligning law enforcement with constitutional rights and social realities.

5. Child Marriage Analyses with Case Study

The prevalence of child marriage is on the rise in the Singra Upazila within the Natore District. For our research, we chose Belowa village from the Shukash Union in Singra Upazila. We conducted direct interviews with respondents, their guardians, and officials from the Upazila, as well as representatives from various organizations in the region. This study aims to identify the reasons and effects of child marriage.

5.1. Case Study No.-1

Name of the girl's (child) – Torita Baro

Name of father – Tarapada Baro

Name of mother – Sushila Baro

Torita Baro got married at the age of 15 while she was in the class nine. Following her marriage, she completed her S.S.C. examination. When she was 16, she gave birth to a baby girl. We spoke with her mother, and when we inquired about the reasons for the early marriage, she explained that their family is poor and lacks land for farming, as her father works as a day laborer and they struggle to meet their household expenses. She has two girls, and it is a kind of burden to their family. The bridegroom's party, like Torita, agrees to marry without a dowry, so they give their daughter's early marriage.

5.2. Case Study No.-2

Name of girl's – Janata Baro

Father's name – Mohindra Baro

Mother's name – Maloti Baro

Janata Baro was married when she was 17 years old. She gave birth to a child after one year of her marriage. But the child died after one night. We wanted to know the reasons behind the early marriage from her parents. They said that, as they felt social insecurity the bridegroom's family was so rich, and also no dowry was demanded by the bridegroom's party, so they gave their girl's early marriage.

5.3. Case Study No.-3

Name of girl's – Kabita Teerki

Father's name – Krishna Teerki

Mother's name – Tara Teerki

Kabita Teerki was married at the age of 13 years when she was in class seven. We have talked with her parents about their daughter's early marriage. They said that, as they are very poor and they have three girl children and one male child, they cannot bear their expenses, so they give early marriage.

5.4. Case Study No.-4

Name of the girl – Bithi Teerki

Father's name – Niranjan Teerki

Mother's name – Parul Teerki

The girl was married at the age of 15 years when she was in class 10. From the conversation with her guardians, we have identified the following causes of early marriage:

- ✓ poverty;
- ✓ local touts disturb their daughter and they feel social insecurity;
- ✓ no dowry is demanded by the groom's family; and
- ✓ rich bridegroom family.

5.5. Case Study No.-5

Name of the girl – Minoti Tappo

Father's name – Chandra Sardar

Mother's name – Surati Sardar

Minoti was married at the age of 15, and she was in class 10. For the reason of poverty, the guardian cannot bear expenses. The bridegroom's family is wealthy, and no dowry is demanded by them. Their concept is that an old-age girl cannot marry a good groom.

6. Analysis of Child Marriage with Case References of the Community in General

Besides the Oraon community, we have also discussed it with the general community in the research area. The general community mainly includes the Hindu and Muslim communities of that area. To know the existing condition of early marriage among the Hindu and Muslim communities of that area, we have also conducted interviews with them.

6.1. Case Study No.-1

Name of the girl – Trisna Rani

Father's name – Krishno Saha

Mother's name – Surjo Rani Saha

Trishna was married at the age of 12 years old. The girl's mother said that she has a total of five children. Among them, three are males and two are females. For the reason of poverty, they work outside the home. They cannot bear their child's maintenance and cannot provide enough education to their children. They give their daughter early marriage with very little dowry which is demanded by the groom's family.

6.2. Case Study No.-2

Name of the girl – Sohagi Saha

Father's name – Monoranjon Saha

Mother's name – Lota Rani Saha

At the age of 13, Sohagi Saha was married, and at that time she was in class seven. The girl's parents mentioned the following reasons for their girl's early marriage.

- ✓ they are a poor family and they have a total of five children so they cannot bear their maintenance costs;
- ✓ they believe that if the daughter is older, the amount of dowry will be more;
- ✓ as their daughters grow up day by day, they may be engaged in love affairs, and that makes fall their prestige;
- ✓ a teenage girl has more value than a good groom and a wealthy family.

6.3. Case Study No.-3

Name of the girl – Anjali Saha and Anita Saha

Father's name – Mongla Saha

Mother's name – Laxmi Saha

Anjali was married at the age of 14 when she was read in class seven and Anita got married at the age of 11 when she was in class five. Anita gave birth to a female child at the age of 13 and when she was 16 years old, she gave birth to another male child. After that, she had fallen into an incurable disease and she died. The children's mother said that she has four children among them two are males and two are females. As their father is mentally sick, he cannot bear their family expenses and they give marriage to their daughters only for poverty.

6.4. Case Study No.-4

Name of the girl – Rozina Akter

Father's name – Mozammel Haque

Mother's name – Selina Begum

At the age of 13, Rozina had gotten married. She gave birth to a disabled male child after one year of her marriage. Then she divorced her husband, and now she stays in her father's house.

6.5. Case Study No.-5

Name of the girl – Sazida Khatun

Father's name – Sajjadul Islam

Mother's name – Parveen Begum

When the marriage occurred, the girl was 14 years old. The parents of Sazida said that they lead a restricted family life. Their family doesn't allow the girl to go outside their home for any reason. They give early marriage to save their family prestige. They raised the following reasons for early marriage:

- ✓ they felt social insecurity;
- ✓ strict social customs followed by them;
- ✓ wealthy and educated bridegroom family.

7. Findings

The prime objectives of this study are to find out the factors and reasons for child marriage that promote the rate of this issue in that area. We have found out following points and factors by analyzing the data that are highly affecting child marriage in that area:

- i without registration child marriage has been completed in rural areas and sometimes it has been completed in illegal ways;
- ii temptation of the dowry of male child parents and want of social security for female child;

- iii insufficient monitoring by local government administration and lack of administrative action and steps;
- iv most of the rural people believe their old local customs blindly;
- v though both primary and secondary schools are located in that area, due to the lack of awareness, the girls are being deprived of their education;
- vi gender inequality and influences of patriarchal exist in that society;
- vii political influences made by local government representatives and ineffectiveness of existing laws and temperate in birth registration index;
- viii late marriage registration system exists in our country and there is an absence of judicial punishment;
- ix most of the people are illiterate, poor, and lack knowledge about the consequences of child marriage.

8. Suggestions and Conclusion

- i. in cases of poverty, sufficient opportunities should be provided by governmental agencies to the concerned families to prevent child marriage;
- ii. governmental and non-governmental organizations should focus on keeping girls in educational institutions; steps should be taken against sexual harassment and to create awareness about reproductive health, information, and contraceptive supplies;
- iii. contemporary laws should be enacted by the legislature, and existing laws should be updated;
- iv. governmental and non-governmental bodies should collaborate to promote awareness about the consequences of child marriage, and efforts should be made to reach the most vulnerable and rural communities in Bangladesh;
- v. monitoring should ensure effective birth registration and reporting systems should be established for child marriage;
- vi. empowerment of girls must be ensured to allow them to express their opinions on what they want to be in life;
- vii. provisions should be made for the mandatory registration of Hindu marriages;
- viii. opportunities for girls' participation in all fields should be created, alongside males.

■ **Some Suggestions only for reforming the new law–The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017 –**

- i remove the ‘Special Circumstances’ clause under section 19 of this Act;
- ii support the principle of ‘Right to Consent’;
- iii improve the principle of assuring the ‘Best Interest of the Child’;
- iv revise the provision punishing any underage person who marries;
- v inserts new provisions against breaching a court injunction to declare marriages void;
- vi allocate resources for the implementation of existing laws.

Early marriage does not benefit society; rather, it brings harmful consequences to the couple’s lives. In some cases, early marriage occurs for a girl who does not even understand what marriage is. Before reaching maturity, boys and girls fall into the calamity of early marriage. In particular, girls become victims of this phenomenon. Most guardians of these children are uneducated and lack awareness of the effects of child marriage. Therefore, it can be said that early marriage continues to be a multifaceted and entrenched problem in Singra Upazila, showcasing the interplay of legal shortcomings, cultural customs, and socioeconomic factors. Tackling this issue necessitates a comprehensive strategy that brings together legal changes, community engagement, and educational programs. Only with persistent and inclusive actions can we aspire to eliminate early marriage and guarantee the safety, dignity, and empowerment of children, particularly girls in the area.