Child Marriage and Early Childbearing in India

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• Young Lives study

• Child marriage and early childbearing in India

• Findings - which, when, who and why?

• Conclusions/ areas for further research

• Qual sub-study
Young Lives longitudinal data collected in 4 countries:
Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh and Telangana), Peru, Vietnam

Older cohort:
Age: 8, 12, 15, 19, 22
Following 1,000 children

Younger cohort:
Age: 1, 5, 8, 12, 15
Children at same age at different time points
Following 2,000 children

Household and child survey:
- Round 1: 2002
- Round 2: 2006
- Round 3: 2009
- Round 4: 2013
- Round 5: 2016

Qualitative data collection:
- Qual 1: 2007
- Qual 2: 2008
- Qual 3: 2011
- Qual 4: 2014

Plus thematic sub-studies and school surveys
Suitability of the Dataset

1. Reveal links between earlier circumstances and later outcomes

2. Allow us to analyse how patterns change or persist over time

3. Each cohort surveyed at the same age but at different points in time, so possible to compare experiences

4. Able to ascertain the age at marriage and at the birth of the first child with more accuracy

5. Information about both the natal and spousal homes

6. Only cohort study in India covering the relevant life-course period
Background

• Child marriage 9% fall between 1993 - 2006 (NFHS - UNICEF 2011)
• Under 18 pregnancy rate 21% fall between 1998 - 2006 (DHS - Edilberto & Mengjia 2013)

But:

• 1/3 all child marriages (UNICEF 2014)
• 2010 - almost 12 million girls given birth under 18 (Edilberto & Mengjia 2013)

• Absolute number rising

Young Lives sample:
• 28% of OC girls 1% boys married by 18
• At 19, 59% of married had given birth
### Which girls are most at risk?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Not married</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
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<td>Urban</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Caregivers education</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>0-4y</td>
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<td>5-9y</td>
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<td>10-12y</td>
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<td>&gt;12y</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Caste</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scheduled Castes</td>
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<td>Scheduled Tribes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Backward Classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Castes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wealth</strong></td>
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<td>Poorest third</td>
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<td>Least poor third</td>
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<td><strong>Has an older sister</strong></td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td><strong>Enrolled at age 15</strong></td>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parental aspirations - 12yrs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Up to grade 10</td>
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<td>Up to grade 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Child aspirations - 12yrs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Up to grade 10</td>
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<td>Up to grade 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Caregiver expect marry after 19y</strong></td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Child has had menarche by 12yrs</strong></td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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</table>

### Percentage of girls married before age 18

- The highest percentage of girls married before age 18 is found in rural areas and among caregivers with no education.
- Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have a higher percentage of girls married before age 18 compared to other castes.
- The poorest third of the population has a higher percentage of girls married before age 18.
- Girls who have an older sister are at a higher risk.
- Enrolled at age 15 increases the risk of early marriage.
- Parental aspirations up to grade 10 and post-secondary increase the risk.
- Child aspirations up to grade 10 and post-secondary increase the risk.
- If caregivers expect to marry after 19 years, the risk is lower.
- If girls have had menarche by 12 years, the risk is lower.

The most at-risk girls are those in rural areas, with no education, from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, in the poorest third of the population, with an older sister, not enrolled at age 15, with parental aspirations up to grade 10 or post-secondary, with child aspirations up to grade 10 or post-secondary, and if caregivers expect to marry after 19 years.
When are they getting married?

Source: Young Lives survey data.
Who are they marrying?

How long did you know your spouse?
- Met them on wedding day
- Less than a year
- More than one year
- Since childhood

Who chose your spouse (partner)?
- Child himself/herself
- Child together with parents
- Child together with other relatives
- Parents and/or other relatives
- Other

Age of spouse
- 20–24
- 25–29
- 30–40
- Other
Why are some more at risk than others?
Girls who left school by age 15 were four times more likely to experience child marriage than their still enrolled peers.

- Not evidence of causal relationship
- Gaps in enrolment widen during adolescence along lines of gender, poverty and social disadvantage
- Some evidence of social norm change - education becoming more important for marriageability - e.g. Salmon
- Families weigh up competing social risks...

“It is not good for girls to go and come every day in the bus, and whatever education she had is enough.’ (Brother of Harika, 20 year-old from Telangana)

“Girls should study, madam. Because after a girl gets married, her husband may say that she doesn’t do household work nor is she educated and abuse her and beat her.” (Shanmuka Priya, a 13-year-old girl from a poor mandal in southern Telangana)
Girls from the poorest households were twice as likely to be married by age 18 as those from the least poor households.

- Limited HH resources force parents to make difficult decisions about how to invest in children
  
  - E.g. institutionalised gender bias in education where norms position daughters as the ‘assets’ of future in-laws
  
  - Poverty motivates parents to seek earlier opportunities to provide for daughters financially
Girls whose parents had the lowest educational aspirations for them were twice as likely to be married by age 18

- Girls’ and caregivers’ aspirations start off high, but diminish during adolescence
  - Challenges in obtaining a quality education; entering into work; and exposure to reputational risks

- Aspirations responsive/reflective of wider realities - efforts to influence best targeted at improving societal and HH circumstances
4. Childbirth follows closely after marriage

...the most powerful influence on early child-bearing is child marriage

- Some married girls are at greater risk of early child-bearing than others - caste was more significant predictor here
- Social norms compounded by limited access to sexual and reproductive health information and services

“if it is even a bit late then they [the community] will take you to task ... if we don’t have a child immediately then people look down upon that ... if the first child is born immediately after marriage then it is for our own good. If we don’t conceive immediately then they will comment on us and keep taunting us. They will say, ‘Look she has no children’ and in this way a finger will be pointed at us.” (Young mother, focus group, Telangana)
Conclusions

• Child marriage and early childbearing driven by entrenched patriarchal norms but structural factors are critical

• Development for society (more opportunities) and adolescent girls (capacity and resources to make use of them)

• Practices are not monolithic (Mann et al. 2015):
  • Diverse within and between states (as well as between countries)
  • Practices do change - e.g. importance of education, YPs involvement in decision-making - Who are they changing for?

• Neither are risks:
  • Different risks/ experiences at different age groups
  • Impacts of marriage are not necessarily uniformly detrimental - some young women report positive aspects of marriage - what are young people’s main sources of concern; needs; experiences in their transitions to adulthood, in particular with regards to marriage/parenthood
Sub-study

What supports married adolescent girls and young women in low-resource communities?

*Negotiating sexual and reproductive health and fertility decision-making in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, India*

- Married/unmarried adolescents, young mothers/young fathers
  - role in decision-making - marriage and fertility
  - hopes, expectations and realities of marriage and parenthood
  - needs, choices and experiences - sexual and reproductive health and parenthood


Gillian Mann, Padraig Quigley and Rosal Fischer (2015) *Qualitative study of child marriage in six districts of Zambia*, Hong Kong: Child Frontiers


The author thanks all the children, families and other community members who participate in Young Lives research.
Finding out more

www.younglives.org.uk

- methodology and research papers
- child profiles and photos
- e-newsletter
- datasets (UK Data Archive)
Policy implications

Development of society

- Investment in safe, accessible, girl-friendly and high quality secondary education
- Strong and comprehensive social protection systems and support for the poorest households
- Improve young women’s access to economic opportunities
- Effective interventions with communities and families (including boys and men) to address social norms and to reduce gendered risks
- Improve access to sexual and reproductive health services for adolescent married girls, couples and communities

Development for Adolescent Girls

- Encouraging female role models so that girls and their families can visualise positive alternatives to child marriage
- Challenging discriminatory norms and empowering girls with information and skills to help them take advantage of opportunities (where opportunities exist)