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REDISCOVERING THE ISSUE OF CHILD MARRIAGE AND THE SCHOOL DROP-OUT
PROBLEM AGAINST THE INTERPLAY OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC
FACTORS IN THE RURAL CORNERS OF WEST BENGAL :
A VILLAGE LEVEL STUDY OF EAST MEDINIPUR

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ABSTRACT

Prevalence of child marriage in the rural corners is a great concern for policy makers and researchers in the state of West Bengal. The census, 2011 confirms that above 30% of the early marriages happen in eight districts of West Bengal. East Medinipur is a district, where early marriage among girls highly persists and results in powerlessness and health hazards. The present study gauges the intensity between problems of child marriage and school drop-out among girls. The study estimates the detrimental role of the socio-economic factors in stopping girls' education and intensifying child marriage at the village level.

Keywords : Child marriage, dropout, teens, dowry, social, religious

Background : India is the largest place for the child brides. It affects the whole society as the problem, handicaps almost 27% of the girls' development process. This loss has a dampening effect on the whole economy in the long-term. Child marriage not only violates the child right, it results in exploitation of girls, and hampers physical and psychological development. Child marriage results in isolation of girls from the educational system, hindering mental development of the girls. To break this vicious circle of disempowerment, spread of education and awareness is certainly necessary. According to World Bank, if gender empowerment does not happen, it will hinder the whole process of development (Klugman et.al, 2014). In India, as per Census, 2011 female literacy is 65.46 % against 82.14% for male population. Female literacy rate in rural sector is 61 % compared to male literacy rate 80%. Enrolment ratio of girls per 100 boys falls from 95 between classes VI-VIII to 90 between classes IX-X respectively in 2014 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2014). Here arises the puzzle of child marriage. Girls between

15-18 years are highly prone to get married, impacting low enrolment in this age span. Girls married below the age of 15 have come down to 7% but it is 16 % among girls between 15-18 years of age. On an average 27 % of the girls get married before their 18th birthday as per the 2015-16 data, which is still abnormally high. According to 71st Round NSSO, 124 out of 1000 girls drop out from schools because of marriage. Social taboos, religious norms, cost of marriage, dowry etc. are the causes behind early marriage of girls. Getting a groom for girls after teens becomes difficult and the associated dowry increases largely with age. Parents do not consider the economic condition and education background of the groom, only the cost analysis of marriage is done. As unemployment rate in India stroke at 9% in December, 2020 and labour participation dipped to 9.3%, as per CMIE, economic vulnerability of lower class has worsened. Female population is over burdened with domestic work and domestic violence against women recorded ten years high. Distress among the families has increased the chances of child marriages blatantly.

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