

# Effect of Marriage on Education and Health of Yemeni Women from Al-Bayda and Al-Jawf

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## **Abstract:**

Women education rate in Yemen is the lowest in the Middle East, and there is a huge disparity between boys and girls and between urban and rural areas. The low participation of girls in education is due to several socio-cultural factors. (Unicef 2007)The early marriage of girls in rural areas hinders women education and leads to high drop-out rate.

**Aim:** The basic aim of the study is to explore and describe the effect of early marriage on education and health of women.

**Methodology:** Exploratory and descriptive research design has been used. Study was conducted on 100 women from Al-Bayda and Al-Jawf and sample was selected through non probability with purposive sampling. Qualitative and quantitative data has been collected by using interview schedule and focus group discussion method. Data was analysed in SPSS.

**Results:** Findings suggest that more women married before 15 years of age and had number of children from 2 to 7. Significant association was found among level of education on employment, awareness about legal age and perception of marriage. Feelings about marriage were depending upon type of marriage. Impact on education and health is significantly associated with tradition perception of marriage.

**Key words:** marriage, education, gender, health, tradition

## **Introduction:**

Gender discrimination not only restricts girl's abilities to accumulate human social and productive assets, limiting their future educational and employment opportunities, but also hinders their well being and diminishes their self confidence. (UNICEF 2020)

Yemen, the poorest country in the Middle East, is beset by high unemployment, widespread corruption and rampant human rights abuse. Among these abuses child marriages are most prevalent (Human Rights Watch 2011). After Yemen's independence from the British, India was one of the first country to recognize Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) in 1962 and People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) in 1967. In 1990, YAR and PDRY merged to become Republic of Yemen. (Foreign Relation Yemen Portal 2016)

Child marriage is one of the biggest threats to young girls in Yemen. It often prevents them from getting education and following their dreams (Aragon and Miller 2012). In Yemen women education rate after elementary school is minimal. There is huge disparity between boys and girls as well as between rural and urban area. In rural area, early marriage is major cause of significant dropout rate (Al-Kamel 2018). seducation and find marriage as easy solution.

### **Rationale:**

The greatest problem faced by Yemeni women today is child marriage. 32% of the girls in Yemen are married before their 18th birthday and 9% are married before the age of 15. Child marriage is the most common in Al-Jawf and Al-Bayda Governorates.

Human Rights Watch calls on the Yemeni government to support women's and girls' rights to non-discrimination to end child marriage (**Human Rights Watch 2011**).

### **Review:**

ALAmodi (2013) highlighted that in 2009, the law set a minimum age for marriage at 17 years. However, the conservative parliament and clerics objected to this law, deemed it un-Islamic to set minimum age of marriage, the law was not implemented. As a result prohibiting a law to come into effect is severely affecting not only the education, health status, emotional and physical aspects of a child, but also the future generations born from such marriages.

The intervention called 'Safe Age of Marriage' in Al-Sawd and Al-Soodah district in Yemen's Amran Governorate has aimed to foster change in social norms and community's attitude to early marriage, to promote girl's education and to emphasize the rights of girl child. It resulted that community members began mobilizing to build a girls' school and hire female teachers, successfully nominated a female community educator to become a school principle (Bureau for Global Health 2010).

### **Objective of the Study**

- To know the effect of the level of education on employment, the awareness about legal age and the perception of marriage.
- To explore the feelings, perspectives of women about the cultural practices related to marriage.
- To analyse the effect of an early marriage on education and reproductive health of women.
- To suggest measures to prevent an early marriage.

### Methodological Consideration:

Exploratory and Descriptive research design is used to conduct the investigation. Feelings and dreams of women about their married life and its effect on their reproductive health has been studied and explored (Laldas2011).

In all hundred samples covered through non probability with purposive sampling method from Al-Jawf and Al-Bayda. Interview schedule was used to collect the data in detail and observation and Focus Group Discussion was used to understand their feelings and expressions about their situation. Data was analysed in Statistical Package for Social Sciences and applied chi square, multivariate analysis.

### Analysis:

**Table 1**

#### **DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY THEIR EDUCATION AND AGE OF MARRIAGE**

	Marriage age			Total
	12-14 years	15-16 years	17 years	
Illiterate	16	3	1	20
Level of Primary education	15	11	0	26
Secondary	10	30	3	43
Higher Secondary	0	8	3	11
Total	41	52	7	100

The above table shows that more number of women (52 percent) married between the age group of 15-16 years followed by (41 percent) women married in between the age group of 12-14 years and very few women were married in the age group of 17 years.

To know the association between the age of marriage and education of women, chi square test was applied and it shows significant ( $p=.000<0.05$ ) relationship between it.

**Table 2**

**DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS CROSS TABULATED BY TYPE OF MARRIAGE AND WORKING STATUS OF WOMEN**

Count

	Type of marriage	WORKING STATUS OF WOMEN			Total
		Part time job.	Unemployed and a house wife.	Running a small business from home.	
	Arranged	1(1.6%)	54(87%)	7(11.2%)	62
	love	1(50%)	1(50%)	0	2
	Arranged and love	3(20%)	11(73%)	1(7%)	15
	Forced	0	18 (86%)	3(14%)	21
	Total	5	84	11	100

Above table shows that working status of women depends on the type of marriage. Women who did arranged marriage (87 percent) and forced marriage (86 percent) were unemployed, and house wife, than women who had arranged and love marriage (73 percent) followed by love marriage (50 percent) than women who had women who had arranged and love marriage (73 percent) followed by love marriage (50 percent).

The difference is statistically significant ( $p=0.005 < 0.05$ ) and shows association between working status of women and type of marriage.

**Table 3**

**DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY THEIR EDUCATION AND AWARENESS ABOUT LEGAL AGE OF MARRIAGE**

	Awareness about the legal age for marriage		Total
	Yes	No	
education Illiterate	2(10%)	18(90%)	20

Primary	15(58%)	11(42%)	26
Secondary	28(65%)	15(35%)	43
Higher Secondary	10(91%)	1(9%)	11
Total	55	45	100

Above table shows that awareness about the legal age of marriage is more in women (43 percent) with secondary education, followed by Primary (26 percent), Illiterate (20 percent), and higher secondary (11 percent) education.

The difference was found to be statistically significant. More illiterate women (90 percent) were unaware about the legal age of marriage compared to women who had higher secondary education. Study shows that as the level of education increased level of awareness increased.

It concludes that education wise difference in level of awareness about legal age of marriage was found to be statistically significant.

**Table 4**

**DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS CROSS TABULATED BY TYPE OF MARRIAGE, IMPACT ON EDUCATION AND PERCEPTION ABOUT MARRIAGE.**

Perception about marriage.	Type of marriage	Impact on education			Total
		Not allowed to complete it.	No, on the contrary husband encouraged and supported me to complete my education.	Wasn't allowed to go to school or college after marriage but my husband made me learn English	
Dream has been fulfilled	Arranged	5	0	0	5
	love	1	1	0	2
	Arranged and love	7	2	1	10
	Forced	0	1	0	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>
Dream has been shattered	Arranged	57			57
	of Arranged and love	5			5
	Forced	20			20
	<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>			<b>82</b>
Total	Arranged	62	0	0	62
	of love	1	1	0	2
	Arranged and love	12	2	1	15

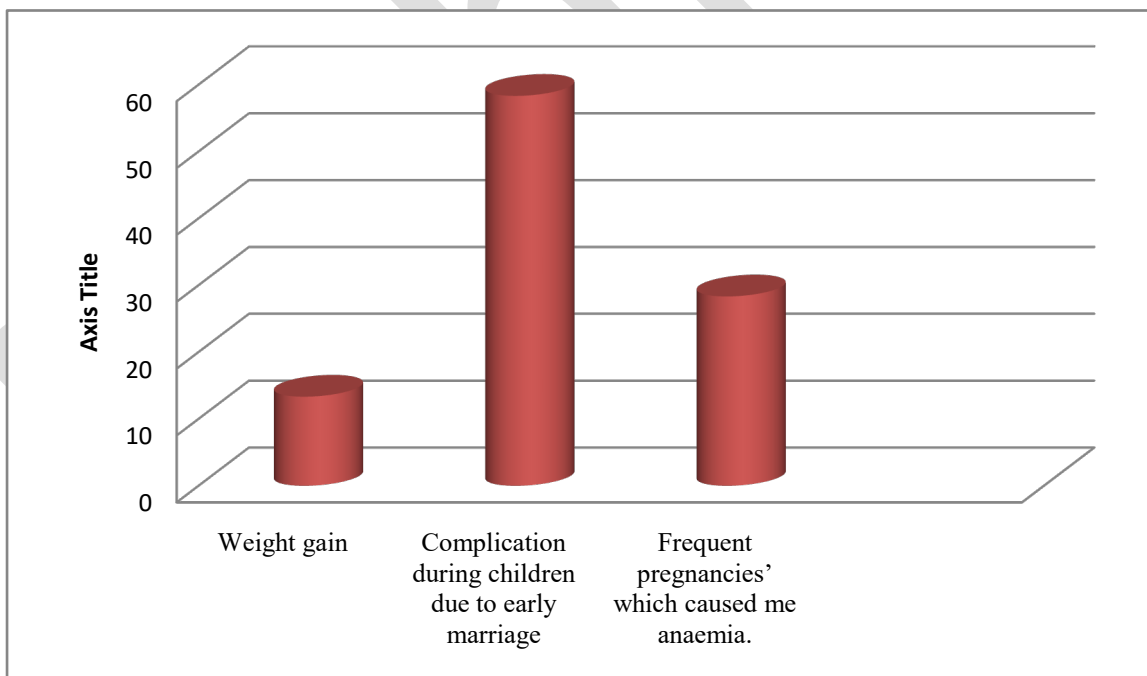
	Forced	20	1	0	21
Total		95	4	1	100

Data presented in table shows that, comparatively, more number of women (82 percent) felt that their dream had been shattered and very few percent of women (18 percent) felt that dream had been fulfilled. The table also shows that (77 percent) women with arranged and forced marriage were not allowed to complete their education. Among all respondents only (4 percent) women were allowed to complete education.

To examine if the association between type of marriage and an impact on education by controlling the effect of perception about marriage, association is statistically significant Chi-square test was applied. The results of the test show that the associations between the three variables are statistically significant ( $p = .001 < 0.05$ ). Hence it is concluded that type of marriage and an impact on education are associated through perception about marriage.

**Graph 1**

**DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY HEALTH PROBLEMS FACED BY THEM AFTER CHILD BIRTH**



From the above graph it is clear that that after marriage 58.33 percent of the respondents talk about complication during child birth due to early marriage and 28.33 percent reply that frequent pregnancies' caused anaemia and 13.33 percent respondents' gain weight due to an early marriage.

Hence it concludes that due to an early marriage higher numbers of women have to face complications during child birth.

**Table 5**

**DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS CROSS TABULATED BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN, PLAN OF FAMILY PLANNING AND EDUCATION OF WOMEN**

Education of Women			Plan of family planning.		Total
			Yes	No	
Illiterate	Number of Children	0-2		6	6
		3-6		14	14
	Total			20	20
Primary	Number of Children	0-2	1	2	3
		3-6	0	19	19
		7-11	0	4	4
	Total		1	25	26
Secondary	Number of Children	0-2	9	7	16
		3-6	7	19	26
		7-11	0	1	1
	Total		16	27	43
Higher Secondary	Number of Children	0-2	4	2	6
		3-6	3	2	5
	Total		7	4	11
Total	Number of Children	0-2	14	11	25
		3-6	10	46	56
		7-11	0	19	19
	Total		24	76	100



Data presented in Table shows that, most of the respondents (76 percent) did not have any kind of family planning. However illiterate women did not have family planning at all. It shows that women with higher secondary level of education (64 percent) had family planning and less number of children.

To examine if the association between number of children and plan of family planning by controlling the education variable, Chi-square test was applied. The results of the test show that the associations between the three variables are statistically significant ( $p = .000 < 0.05$ ).

Hence it is concluded that number of children and plan of family planning are associated through education

**Table 6**

### DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY THEIR PERCEPTION ABOUT MARRIAGE AND IMPACT ON HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Count

Perception about marriage	Have any impact on your education or schooling			Total	
	Not allowed to complete education	Husband encouraged and supported to complete education.	Not allowed to go to school or college after marriage but husband encouraged to learn English		
Force relation on the basis of tradition	Health problems after marriage. Yes	62	0	1	63
	Health problems after marriage. No	15	3	0	18
	Total	77	3	1	81
Poverty drives families to marry their daughters.	Health problems after marriage. Yes	14	0	1	15
	Health problems after marriage. No	4	1	0	5
	Total	18	1	1	20
Total	Health problems Yes	76	0	1	77

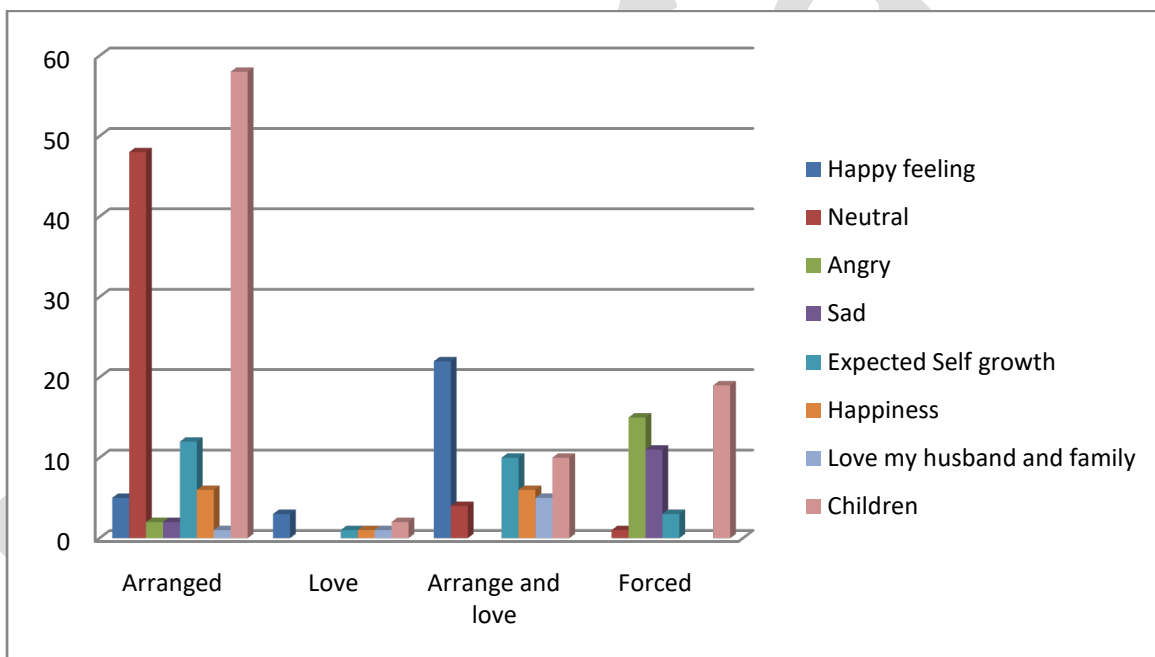
after marriage.	No	19	4	0	23
Total		95	4	1	100

Data presented in Table shows that, higher number of respondents (81 percent) had perception that marriage was forced on the basis of tradition and less number of respondents (20 percent) felt that due to poverty families married their daughters at an early age. More number of women (76 percent) had health problems and (95 percent) women were not allowed to complete their education.

To examine if the association between perception of marriage and impact on education and health of women, Chi-square test was applied. The result of the test shows that the associations between the three variables are statistically significant (**p value = .001<0.05**).

### Graph 2

#### DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY THEIR TYPE OF MARRIAGE AND THEIR FEELING AND EXPECTATIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE



Above graph depict multiple choice answers. It shows that more number of women had arranged marriage. These respondents have neutral feeling about the marriage and are expecting children from marriage. Followed by women with arranged and love marriage have happy feeling about marriage as well as expectation of self growth. Further woman with forced marriage have angry and sad feeling about marriage. Very few women had love marriage and they had happy feeling about marriage.

Hence it concludes that feeling and expectations about the marriage depends on type of marriage.

**Table 7**

**DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY THEIR SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE THIS SITUATION**

Improvement Option	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Make Education Compulsory for male and female	87	52.4%	87.9%
Make laws stronger regarding age of marriage for both sex	12	7.2%	12.1%
Spread awareness of the serious side effects of an early marriage and pregnancy	21	12.7%	21.2%
Have a counselling centre to guide and help to resolve marital problems	46	27.7%	46.5%
Total	166	100.0%	167.7%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

The table shows multiple choice answers. It shows that more number of respondents (52 percent) suggest that education should be compulsory, followed by (27.7 percent) respondents express the need of counselling centre to guide and help to resolve marital problems. Further (12.7 percent) respondents focus on the need to spread awareness of the serious side effects of an early marriage and pregnancy, and (7.2 percent) respondents feel that laws should be stronger regarding age of marriage for both sex.

**Discussion:**

All the women in present study were married before the age of 18 years. At the time of marriage age group of the girls was 12 to 17 years in which most of the respondents were 15-16 years old. Similar results were noted in Human Rights watch 2011.

Majority of the respondents had secondary level of education and very few respondents had higher secondary level of education. It reveals that 80 percent of the women who married at the age 12-14 years were illiterate. It also shows that higher the level of education higher the level of awareness about legal age of marriage.

According to marriage profile higher number of women had arranged marriage followed by forced marriage. This is because of tradition and poverty of family. On the basis of this study reveals that higher numbers of women were unemployed and a house wife had arranged and forced marriage.

82 percent of the women had perception that their dream had shattered due to this type of marriage and had impacted on their schooling.

Due to an early age marriage most of the women had complications during pregnancy and anemia. 56 percent of the women had 3 to 6 children. A few women had 11 children. It implies that 76 percent of the women did not have family planning. It observed that there is statistical significant relationship between level of education and use of family planning methods.

Study findings highlight when there is forced relation based on tradition then there is an impact on both education and health both. 77 percent of the women had health problems after marriage and 95 percent of the women were not allowed to complete their education. Hence the perception of marriage is significantly associated with the impact on health and education.

Most of the women who had arranged marriage had neutral feeling and expected children from marriage. Followed by women who had arranged- love marriage felt happy and expected self growth from marriage. Moreover it focuses that women felt angry and sad because of forced marriage.

Most of the women suggested that education should be compulsory for male and female counselling centre to guide and help to resolve marital problems. Women need to spread awareness of the serious side effects of an early marriage and pregnancy and to make laws stronger regarding the age of marriage for both, male and female.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

There are a few states where the prevalence of early marriage is reported high due to high preference of cultural and social values to marry off daughters before attaining puberty.

Thus, early marriage creates numerous challenges to the families and communities. The ardent desire to preserve the purity of a girl for upholding the honour of the family is the key factor to an early marriage. Premature childbirth can lead to a variety of health problems for mothers, including vaginal tears, fistula and deterioration in general health. Child brides are often pulled out of school and denied further education. Their children are also more likely to be illiterate.

## Scope for Social Work Intervention given below:

### Social Case Work Method:

- Counselling centre for families to resolve marital disputes. Individual guidance and assistance can be rendered by using case work method.
- Women with health issues due to traditional practice can be counselled, supported and referred as per need.

### Social Group Work Method:

- Group work on 'Gender Sensitization' can be conducted with boys in schools. Pre marital Workshops in small groups with young adult or college going students can be conducted. This will help to at least sensitize the future generation to think about married life.

### Policy Level Intervention and Advocacy:

- Inclusion of specific subjects in formal educational curricula, contents concerned with making girls and boys aware about gender equality, human rights and empowerment.
- There should be legislation to organize marriage and to state the right age for marriage for girls as well as compulsory education for girls especially in the rural areas.
- Early Marriage Prevention Officers should be appointed by governments and assigned to the implementation of official policies in this field.
- Governments should require the registrations of all types of marriages whether contracted according to the official law of the State or according to religious law or customary law.
- Communities and families, especially in rural areas, should be properly informed and aware through national media that early marriages or any child informal unions, performed in breach of the law, have no effect with respect to the law through various forms of medium.

Though the respective Governments and society is doing much to abolish early or child marriage through campaigns, laws, policies and individual support of people, it is still a far reaching dream for young girls who are still repeatedly forced into such liaisons.

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