



# Child Marriages In India: A Blend Of Socio-Economic Constraints With Traditions And Administrative Lacunas

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## ABSTRACT

The current study is based on societal perception theoretical framework, examined attitudes and behaviours associated with child marriages in India. Often perceived as an economic problem, child marriages are deeply entrenched into the culture. This article provides empirical evidence on society's perception over child marriages in Indian society. Employing opinion survey through a structured questionnaire the data was collected from a diverse class of people. Data was analysed separately for males and females. Results indicated that respondents' economic backwardness, socio-cultural affiliations, experience and knowledge of child marriage and lack on the part of laws and administration are strongly associated with higher cases of child marriages in India. All four factors remained significant when separated by gender and it was found that social and economic constraints have a similar role to play in child marriage victimisation. Considering these risk factors, this paper brings forth some prevention efforts to reduce child marriages in India.

**Keywords:** Child marriage, victimisation, gender equality, empowerment, economic backwardness

## INTRODUCTION

Child marriage is a serious social and public health issue affecting adolescents across India. It is defined as the marriage in which either of the contracting parties (boy and girl) or both are minor, that is below 18 years of age (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2022). India is home to approximately 24 million child brides, that makes 20 per cent of the child marriages happening in the world (Mishra, 2021). As per the 5<sup>th</sup> National Family Health Survey, almost 23.3 per cent women got married before the legal age of marriage (India, NFHS 5, 2022). Child marriage expose the children to multiple risks pertaining to their physical, mental, and social health (Pandya & Bhandari, 2015). Governments across the world have endeavoured to reduce lower the cases of child marriages. International Center for Research on woman (ICRW) in 2007 found that 66 child marriage prevention programs are operational in 30 countries, in which India has 58 programs and policy efforts against child marriage (Malhotra, Warner, McGonagle, & Rife, 2011). Despite several plans of action, there is limited progress on ground. researchers need to explore the high-risk factors for thorough understanding.

The current study aims to understand the factors associated with high numbers of child marriages in the country, as identified by extant literature and to suggest some prevention efforts which are different for males and females. Research indicates gender differences in the factors forcing them into child marriage, although they are not always consistent. Girls are disproportionately affected by this practice as it steals their childhood and threatens their life and health (Efevbera & Bhabha, 2020). Girls have to bear the brunt of this misdemeanour. Child marriage is a menace in every society. There has been plenty of research on the factors contributing to child marriage (Jain & Kurz, 2007). The review of literature highlights the dominance of social and cultural norms, including those related to tradition, faith, general understanding of the society about marriage, influence the age at which a girl is expected to marry. A variety of interrelated economic, socio-cultural and gender unequal attitude of the society underlie the persistence of early marriage. The most perceived factor contributing child marriage is the burden of marriage related expenses and poverty. Most of

the respondents in the study conducted by Population Council reported that marriage at an early age cost less dowry. Many of them married all their daughters collectively in one ceremony, to reduce marriage expenditure. This occurred even if the youngest girl was still a child. Other than economic constraints, social contributors have a dominant share in promoting this menace. Concerns about finding a suitable groom, it is felt that the longer the family waits, the harder it is to find a 'suitable boy.' Study shows that societal pressure and justification of child marriage by the society is a major reason for persistence of child marriage. Society and family members exert pressure on parents to get their daughters married early. Also, girls' sexual safety (if she is harassed) and anxiety about premarital sex or their daughter eloping with the boy of different caste are dominant reasons. Girls' puberty is seen as a signal to promptly place a girl under safety of the label 'married' (K.G.Santhya, Haberland, & Singh, 2006). Difference in conception of these factors differs a lot which is a major roadblock in effective policy formulation.

### RESEARCH PROBLEM

India has various cash transfer schemes working on female empowerment. These schemes are conditioned on the certain factors like; girl should be enrolled in school, should have a minimum level of education, etc. But these schemes provide a very small amount of money which could barely be used in education and health of the girl child. These programs focus on the financial aspect of development and empowerment of girls. But there are various issues which are left unaddressed. There is no mechanism to ensure that the money is spent over the intended cause. The main intention of such schemes is that to make a behavioural change among parents and society towards women empowerment, which is rarely met. Aiming reduction in child marriages, increase in female birth registrations, reduction in female infanticide, abolishing of practices like dowry and bride price, governments are pumping huge amount of money. But the public apathy towards such schemes is a ground reality. No one says 'no' to money but the approach towards women empowerment is still orthodox. Young girls are sent to school, they are made beneficiaries of various conditional cash transfer schemes under the government, money is utilized in various activities, but when they reach the adolescent age, they are married or denied access to education. It is a huge problem in the society. These evils are deeply rooted in the culture and traditions of the society, mere financial support would not work rather it would require a thorough understanding of those social factors impeding change in society. Despite a global campaign to end child marriage and multiple cash transfer schemes for girl child, yet the local level attitude towards child marriage is disheartening. While most of the studies investigated child marriage through a feminist perspective (John, 2021), current study examined each factor within a social learning theoretical framework to emphasize the importance of social norms, administrative setup, economic status of family and government policies. The study is based on the Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura, which says that people's behaviour is affected by their environment and they imitate the behaviour they encounter during their life time (Bandura & McClelland, 1977). This theory helps us to understand the factors that create a particular behaviour along with its consequences. Application of this theory would help us to understand how society's approval of child marriage would shape the family's mindset towards child marriage. People follow what they have observed during their lifetime and later replicate those behaviours. In all the classes of society, there is a particular benchmark for a good life which is supposed to be followed by everyone. Those who go against those norms are not confirmed by the society. Administrative lacunas and laxity on the part of police administration in registering the cases against child marriage has just strengthened it. In worst cases, Police personnel being a part of that culture cannot afford to go against the society, due to which most of the cases go unreported. This has created a general mindset of cumulative disregard of law. Another pertinent issue is the gender unequal attitude in society in which a girl is supposed to be a homemaker and boy will earn a living are an important factor which pose hurdles in education and they are married early (J.Cerrato & Cifre, 2018). There are studies which indicate that gender inequality is associated with all types of victimisation faced by women in society (Kearns, D'Inverno, & Reidy, 2020). Therefore, parents who were married early approve this gender bias behaviour in the name of culture and tradition.

In the current study, important aspect contributing to child marriage was examined in accordance with the theory of Bandura. These predictors include: society's justification of child marriage; administrative and legal lacunas; experience and knowledge of child marriage during lifetime; gender unequal attitude and their association with Social and Economic contributors of child marriages.

### SOCIETAL JUSTIFICATION OF CHILD MARRIAGE

There is plenty of research showing a positive relationship between societal pressure and child marriages. Children are vulnerable to it because their psychological development is nurtured by the gender bias beliefs and attitudes. A survey was conducted in 2012 by Breakthrough (NGO) shows that more than half of the respondents said that the right time to marry is when family members think it appropriate. Only 8 per cent girls and 10 per cent boys thought that it should be decided at individual level, indicating that the new generation follows traditions established by society. In one of the study, majority of the respondents (88 per cent) agree that child marriage has negative consequences but they stick to the practice out of tradition and pressure (Jenkins, 2013). Society always wants to control girls' sexuality and maintain long standing

practices. The coercion is very subtle in the beginning. Parents afraid of displeasing and to avoid any criticism from their family members and society, use tactics to make their children morally responsible for their esteem in society (Canada, 2008). Even the affluent families consider it right to marry a girl at early age.

The available literature has distinguished between social expectations, related to what others believe and nonsocial expectations which are different from personal beliefs. If parents' preferences for child marriage are informed, in part, by the belief that child marriage will help protect their daughters but a child's decisions are largely driven by social expectations. (M.E. Greene & Stiefvater, 2019).

### **Administrative Inadequacy and Legal Lacuna**

August 2020 witnessed 88 per cent increase in child marriages as compared to 2019 which highlights the weak law enforcement agencies during COVID lockdown. According to UNICEF child marriage are a constant challenge and laxity on the part of law enforcement agencies has pushed parents to marry off girls early (UNICEF, 2022). School closures, economic stress, service disruptions, pregnancy, and parental deaths due to pandemic has exposed girls to increased risk of child marriage. Unafraid of enforcement agencies as lockdown induced weddings, families conducted mass marriages. Authorities have rarely adhered to principles of justice and fairness.

After independence, India made its own set of laws in the form of constitution but those laws have time and again come into conflict with each other (Rajkumar, 2019). Child marriage is illegal according to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006 (India, The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006). But lack of awareness among the public about the existing laws reduces reporting and conviction. There are various issues with the law itself. The burden to challenge the validity of marriage lies on the child (bride/groom) and if he/she is a minor, they require a guardian to file a report. Which is ideally not possible as it is very difficult to convince the family members. PCMA has no provision for dereliction of duty on the part of Child Marriage Prohibition Officer (CMPO). If the child manages to reach the CMPO, parents are required to sign an undertaking that they will not be forced into marriage but the family continues to force them.

Personal Laws hinder the implementation of laws. There are certain personal laws which allow child marriages, this conflict leads to significant legal complications (Goyal, 2019). Under reporting of child marriage is also affected by registration of marriages which has not been made compulsory under the PCMA (Commission). Supreme court in Smt. Seema Vs. Ashwani Kumar has observed that registration of marriage would be a step in right direction in curtailing child marriages (Smt. Seema vs Ashwani Kumar, 2007).

### **Experience of Child Marriage**

Both girl and boy are vulnerable and their experience of child marriage during adolescence should be considered risky in itself (Hunersen, et al., 2021). It is observed through extant surveys that knowledge about the prevalence of child marriage among peers during adolescence is correlated with higher levels of acceptance of child marriage among children (Islam, Khan, & Rahman, 2021). The data suggests that what participants observed as 'usual' age for marriage as the 'legal' one (Marphatia, Ambale, & Reid, 2017). In addition to consequences like boys' approval to marriage because his friend is also married who got a lot of dowries which could be used in his education or some business. Girls are disinterested in education because she wants to marry and perform wifely duties. There are various emotional consequences linked to experience of child marriage that affect vulnerability to child marriage. Altered self-esteem, emotional pressure of being a mother, wife, a home maker, and reduced ability to take decisions may explain the association of experience of child marriage and its approval. Many of these factors affect males and females differently.

### **Attitudes Supporting Gender Inequality**

Child marriage is not a norm in itself rather a reflection of other social norms (Greene & Stiefvater, 2019). Millions of girls around the world are barred from entering and completing their education due to social norms limiting their ability to make choices about life (Sills, Hanmer, Parsons, & Klugman, 2015). It is rooted in unequal gender behaviour of society and power relations which results in perpetual subjugation of females. Family adopts a rigid and suffocating control over girls in order to protect their chastity and family honour. Sometimes girls choose to marry to avoid violent family settings and parents may believe that early marriage will protect their daughters from sexual violence.

The traditional conception of the lowered status of women right from their birth has affected this practice to a greater extent. The cultural pattern has enabled men to play a greater role in decision making and supported the patriarchal societies built by and for men.

### **Current Study**

With the help of cross-sectional design, this study aims to identify whether the following predictors are associated with child marriages: (a) society's justification of child marriage, (b) attitudes supporting gender inequality, (c) experience and knowledge of child marriage, (d) administrative and legal lacunas. The study focusses on two important aspects: economic and social contributors, as the drivers of child marriages in

India. These are the most prevalent factors for child marriage. Additionally, economic factors have a close interplay with the social contributors as they are base for child marriage, indicating different levels of victimisation of girl child. The findings could be used by policy makers to better understand the behaviours which promote child marriage.

The hypothesis are as follows:

**H1:** Higher level of society's justification of child marriage more will be its impact on social and economic contributors of child marriage.

**H2:** Greater gender unequal attitudes will highly impact social and economic contributors of child marriages.

**H3:** Knowledge and experience of child marriages among children will be highly associated with social and economic contributors of child marriages.

**H4:** Greater legal and administrative lacunas will be highly associated with social and economic contributors of child marriages.

## METHODS

### Participants

The study includes 237 people who ever reported child marriages around them. Participants completed a survey of 53 questions regarding their general demographic details, social status, awareness about child marriage, predictors promoting child marriages. Of the 237 participants, 112 males and 125 females completed the survey. In the final sample, the ages ranged from 18 to 45 ( $M=22.64$ ;  $SD=6.50$ ).

### Measures

**Demographic Questionnaire:** The demographic questionnaire measured age (in years), gender (male/female), category (general/OBC/SC/ST), marital status (married/unmarried), area of living (rural/urban). Questions on general awareness; "do you know the legal age of marriage in India?" Do you know about the laws prohibiting child marriage in India?" with response option 0 (Yes), 1(No). Total 11 items were included.

**Other Subscales for the Measurement of the Study:** Participants were asked questions on following predictors; Economic and Social predictors promoting child marriage (14 items), Society's justification of child marriage (10 items), administrative inadequacy and legal lacunas (9 items), gender unequal attitude (8 items) with response option including 0 (strongly agree), 1 (agree), 2 (don't know), 3 (disagree), 4 (strongly disagree) on a 5- point Likert scale and experience of child marriage with response option; 0 (Yes) or 1 (No). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.76 for this study.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics for each independent and dependent variable were computed separately for males and females and for the overall sample.

This study is based on Several Path analysis models using the SEM R package Lavaan. For the study, two models were made. First set model was for Social and Economic factors promoting child marriage for the full sample and second was to find difference between the opinions of males and females on social and economic factors promoting child marriages. Both models included the predictors society's justification of child marriages, experience of child marriage, administrative inadequacy and legal lacunas, gender unequal attitude, gender (except for gender analysis). We have also conducted group (male/female) comparison using Hedge's  $g$ .

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the overall sample have been presented in Table 1. Independent sample t-tests suggest that girls find social factors promoting child marriages to be the main factor when compared to males. Males perceive economic factors to be a more important. According to both the genders, administrative lacunas play a crucial role in rising cases of child marriages. As expected, males showcased more gender unequal attitude when compared to females.

### Economic Contributors of Child Marriage

Table 2 presents the results of the model for economic contributors promoting child marriage for the overall sample. Society's justification of child marriages is positively associated with economic contributors (Est. = 0.06, SE= 0.01,  $p < 0.001$ ). That is, higher justification of child marriage by society was associated with a greater impact on economic contributors. Similarly, higher levels of experience and knowledge of child marriages (Est.= 0.07, SE= 0.02,  $p < 0.01$ ) was positively associated with economic contributors. Administrative inadequacy and legal lacunas (Est.= 0.09, SE= 0.02,  $p < 0.001$ ) and attitudes supporting gender unequal attitude (Est.= 0.04, SE= 0.01,  $p < 0.001$ ) were associated with higher impact on economic contributors, that is society's justification of child marriage, experience of child marriage, administrative and legal lacunas and gender unequal attitudes aggravate the overall economic contributors of child marriage.



### ***Social Contributors to Child Marriage***

Results of the model- social contributors to child marriage for the overall sample has been given in Table 2. It suggests that higher levels of society's justification of child marriage (Est.= 0.08, SE= 0.02,  $p < 0.001$ ), experience of child marriage (Est.= 0.15, SE= 0.03,  $p < 0.001$ ), administrative inadequacy and legal lacunas (Est.= 0.14, SE= 0.02,  $p < 0.001$ ) and gender unequal attitude (Est.= 0.09, SE= 0.02,  $p < 0.001$ ) are highly positively associated with social contributors of child marriage.

### ***Gender Perspective on Economic Contributors***

The results for gender (male and female) perspective on economic contributors is given in the Table 3. Female's perspective on society's justification of child marriage (Est.= 0.04, SE= 0.03,  $p < 0.01$ ), experience of child marriage (Est.= 0.09, SE= 0.02,  $p < 0.01$ ), administrative inadequacy and legal lacunas (Est.= 0.12, SE= 0.03,  $p < 0.001$ ) are highly positively associated with economic contributors of child marriage. Similarly, male's perspective on society's justification of child marriage (Est.= 0.05, SE= 0.03,  $p < 0.05$ ), administrative inadequacy and legal lacunas (Est.= 0.07, SE= 0.02,  $p < 0.01$ ) and gender unequal attitude (Est.= 0.07, SE= 0.02,  $p < 0.01$ ) are highly positively associated with economic contributors of child marriage.

### ***Gender Perspective on Social Contributors***

Gender (male and female) perspective on Social Contributors has been presented in Table 4. Female's perspective on society's justification of child marriage (Est.= 0.11, SE= 0.01,  $p < 0.001$ ), experience of child marriage (Est.= 0.19, SE= 0.03,  $p < 0.001$ ), administrative inadequacy and legal lacunas (Est.= 0.17, SE= 0.03,  $p < 0.001$ ) and gender unequal attitude (Est.= 0.08, SE= 0.03,  $p < 0.01$ ) are highly positively associated with economic contributors of child marriage. Similarly, male's perspective on society's justification of child marriage (Est.= 0.05, SE= 0.02,  $p < 0.05$ ), experience and knowledge of child marriage (Est.= 0.15, SE= 0.03,  $p < 0.001$ ), administrative inadequacy and legal lacunas (Est.= 0.14, SE= 0.03,  $p < 0.001$ ) and gender unequal attitude (Est.= 0.14, SE= 0.03,  $p < 0.001$ ) are highly positively associated with economic contributors of child marriage.

### ***Group comparison***

In the current study, the difference in opinion between males and females over predictors was calculated through Hedge's  $g$ . The calculated effect size of 0.2 (Table 1) or less shows a small effect size which means that the actual difference of opinion between the groups is trivial.

## **DISCUSSION**

The aim was to study the contributors of child marriages through a different perspective from the those adopted earlier. Through literature it was found that economic factors such as dowry, expenditure on girls' education, burden of wedding expenditure are the main contributors of child marriage in India (BER, 2018). There is much stress on the economic side of this menace, so the government has also worked in that direction by introducing various cash incentive schemes to reduce child marriages. There are various cash incentive schemes which promote girls' education and reduce child marriages. Despite such acclaimed schemes, child marriages are prevalent in the country. The association found between household socio-economic status and the age at marriage was studied with the help of cross-sectional data, the approach of the study was to establish that how certain predictors affect the social and economic contributors of child marriage. These predictors were; society's justification of child marriage, experience of child marriage, administrative inadequacy and legal lacunas and gender unequal attitudes. In order to understand the differences between male and female perspective, separate analysis was carried out. The data is found to be consistent with the hypothesis, proving that the predictors have a direct relation with economic and social contributors promoting child marriages. But group comparison (male and female) has not shown any significant difference.

Persistence of child marriage is found to rest upon poverty. In rural areas, big family sizes and less earning members in the family make a healthy living very difficult. For families with less financial support, child marriage is a way to escape poverty and reduce the daily cost of living. On the other hand, the practice of child marriage is linked to social norms also. Evidently, social acceptance and prevalence of social norms has a role to play due to which a smaller number of child marriages are reported and such kind of norms carry on for decades. Bicchieri defines a social norm as, 'a collective practice sustained by empirical and normative expectations and by preferences conditional on both these expectations' (Bicchieri, 2006). It has been established through various studies that socialization has a very critical role in shaping person's behaviour (watching other girls not going to school or marrying early, etc.). Both, the child, and his/her family members face this dilemma of getting approved by the society (Gosh, 2011). This has been studied in the current research through Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura, where most of the behaviours are just an imitation of what others are doing. It has been found that economic contributors do not function in isolation rather they function in tandem social contributors. The economic aspect has been addressed with a serious disposition through cash transfer schemes. But that must be complemented with education and financial

empowerment of girl child. Well-structured education system which satisfies the job demand along with some vocational training is must.

In the study (Sanemyr, Mouli, Raj, Travers, & Sundaram, 2015), it was found that gender unequal attitudes and norms rooted in patriarchal values are a major reason for this humanitarian crisis. It has been highlighted through several studies that different issues require deeper examination in the light of evolving social, economic, political, and environmental factors. Evolving behaviour has a deep impact of what has been done through ages, rationality has a very little part to play in shaping social behaviours. All the predictors taken into consideration are important factors in the persistence of various social evils. The findings are consistent with the previous literature. Study supports that experience of child marriage is highly associated with the practice of child marriage. This is aligned with the previous literature which suggests that these attitudes increase female's interest towards marriage and less towards education. This could be potentially explained by the knowledge that parents of child marriage couple are most often victims of child marriage themselves. A study conducted in Ghana found that patriarchal setup and the attitude of society towards genders were positively associated with social and economic factors contributing to child marriage. It is possible that the number of child marriages increase in society where people hold gender biased attitudes. Gender equality could only be achieved by holding each gender to the same standard. The purpose of government affirmative action is to increase female representation in every field. Equal rights are not enough. Inequality exists in minds in societal biases and prejudices, removal of such biases is required through awareness building.

In this study, other factors such as administrative lacuna and inability of law to curtail the menace were also associated with social and economic contributors for overall sample and later a separate analysis showed that boys find it more crucial as compared to girls. This finding is consistent with previous literature which suggests that higher laxity on the part of administration is highly correlated with social and economic factors contributing to child marriages. To understand this impact, our sample included participants from a vast range of age group (18-45), majority of the people were in the age group (28-35). Thus, for an effective prevention and intervention strategies, we cannot miss these relevant aspects in order to provide a healthy environment for development. This requires government to engage not merely in legal analysis but also in theological study- something an education in law scarcely equips one to perform. Every time there is an argument opposing child marriages in India, it invariably mires itself in the society drafted doctrine of essential practices. These issues emanating out of social and traditional submissions ought to be capable of easy resolution through the application of ordinary laws, thus there should be strict penal provisions against defiant officers.

The study has its own limitations also. First, this study was cross sectional so the social behaviour and its impact on decision of child marriage over a long period of time was not analysed. There could be other predictors also which have not been analysed; availability of school infrastructure, security, and safety of girls in the region, provision for child welfare schemes in the region etc. Only 13% (N= 32 out of 237 participants) were from ST category, this measure of predictors was not perfect to analyse their perspective. ST communities are more liberal and status of females is not degraded as compared to other communities. Most of the tribes in India are matrilineal or matrilocal. Another limitation is that the study was based on a particular geographical area which limits generalizability of the findings to other geographical areas. Future studies must take these aspects into consideration to get a proper understanding for more concrete prevention strategies.

## CONCLUSION

While discussing the menace of child marriage in Indian context, both social and economic aspects are to be considered. This will enhance the effectiveness of conditional cash transfer schemes meant to curtail child marriages. Through the study it is evident that a multidimensional approach is needed whenever a scheme is launched. Monetary benefits alone would not increase female attendance in educational institutions rather a societal acceptance along with financial support would do. Mere cash transfers have generated a particular behaviour (e.g.-female education) but that behaviour fades out immediately after the financial support is removed (during covid-19). An engagement among every aspect would add value to gender analysis. This could be addressed if all the ministries function in tandem rather than giving sole responsibility to the Ministry of Women and Child Development. If approached in a right way the government can produce more fruitful results with minimum resources.

As children are the future of this country, it is important to protect this asset from social malpractices. Government needs to amend the laws and create policy frameworks which address every aspect of the problem. Education friendly environment along with necessary financial support is imperative. In order to relieve women of household drudgery, the societal shackles must be broken. Society is equally responsible to work in the direction of doing away with old patriarchal traditions and upholding freedom and independence of women.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics

		<b>Overall Sample (N=237)</b>		<b>Male (N=112)</b>		<b>Female (N=125)</b>		<b>Group Comparison</b>
	<b>Range</b>	M/N	SD/(%) <sup>a</sup>	M/N	SD/(%) <sup>a</sup>	M/N	SD/(%) <sup>a</sup>	Hedge's g
<b>Demographics</b>								
<b>Age (in years)</b>	<b>18-45</b>	1.53	0.50	1.56	0.61	1.49	0.54	-0.12
18-22		43	(18%)	21	(18%)	22	(17%)	
23-27		56	(23%)	19	(16%)	37	(29%)	
28-35		72	(30%)	49	(43%)	23	(18%)	
35-45		66	(28%)	23	(20%)	43	(34%)	
<b>Category</b>								
General		94	(39%)	57	(50%)	37	(29%)	
OBC		35	(14%)	14	(12%)	21	(16%)	
SC		76	(32%)	32	(28%)	44	(35%)	
ST		32	(13%)	9	(8%)	23	(18%)	
<b>Predictors</b>								
Administrative inadequacy and legal lacunas	0-4	0.17	0.38	0.17	0.35	0.18	0.39	0.02
Gender unequal attitudes	0-4	1.45	0.64	1.63 <sup>b</sup>	0.65	1.41	0.53	-0.20
Society's justification of child marriage	0-4	1.23	0.42	1.23	0.44	1.22	0.45	-0.03
Experience and knowledge of child marriage (0=Yes)	0-1	189	(79%)	91	(48%)	108	(57%)	-
Economic factors promoting child marriages	0-4	1.45	0.59	1.62 <sup>b</sup>	0.64	1.42	0.53	-0.25
Social factors promoting child marriage	0-4	0.43	0.54	0.35	0.48	0.51	0.56 <sup>c</sup>	0.27
Note, M= mean, SD= standard deviation								
<sup>a</sup> Per centages may not add to 100% due to rounding								
<sup>b</sup> Higher average than females, independent sample t-tests, $p < 0.05$ .								
<sup>c</sup> Higher average than males, independent sample t-tests, $p < 0.05$ .								

**Table 2:** Economic and Social Contributors of child marriage for the entire sample

	Economic Contributors		Social Contributors	
	Est.	SE	Est.	SE
Administrative inadequacy and legal lacunas	<b>0.09***</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.14***</b>	<b>0.02</b>
Gender unequal attitudes	<b>0.04***</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>0.09***</b>	<b>0.02</b>
Society's justification of child marriage	<b>0.06***</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>0.08***</b>	<b>0.02</b>
Experience and knowledge of child marriage	<b>0.07**</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.15***</b>	<b>0.03</b>
Girls	0.01	0.01	<b>0.16***</b>	<b>0.02</b>
Note, * $p < 0.05$ ; ** $p < 0.01$ ; *** $p < 0.001$ . SE= Standard error.				
Males was the reference category for gender.				

**Table 3:** Economic Contributors of Child Marriage (gender perspective)

	Females		Males	
	Economic Contributors		Economic Contributors	
	Est.	SE	Est.	SE
Administrative inadequacy and legal lacunas	<b>0.12***</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.07**</b>	<b>0.02</b>
Gender unequal attitudes	0.02	0.02	<b>0.07**</b>	<b>0.02</b>
Society's justification of child marriage	<b>0.04**</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.05*</b>	<b>0.03</b>
Experience and knowledge of child marriage	<b>0.09**</b>	<b>0.02</b>	0.01	0.02
Note, * $p < 0.05$ ; ** $p < 0.01$ ; *** $p < 0.001$ . SE= Standard error				

**Table 4:** Social Contributors of Child Marriage (gender perspective)

	Females		Males	
	Social Contributors		Social Contributors	
	Est.	SE	Est.	SE
Administrative inadequacy and legal lacunas	<b>0.17***</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.14***</b>	<b>0.03</b>
Gender unequal attitudes	<b>0.08**</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.14***</b>	<b>0.03</b>
Society's justification of child marriage	<b>0.11***</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.05*</b>	<b>0.02</b>
Experience and knowledge of child marriage	<b>0.19***</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.15***</b>	<b>0.03</b>
Note, *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001. SE= Standard error				

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