# The Impact of Single Parenting on Childrenand the Role of Social Work in Supporting Them 

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#### Abstract

The paper explores the impacts of single parenting on children and the role of social work in supporting them. The study aims to understand life challengers among children in single parent families and their vulnerability to psycho-social issues affecting wellbeing of them. It can be helpful to social work professionals to understand the role of social work in supporting children in single parent families. Thestudy setting was Semi urban area, located in Gampaha district which is reported high rates of single parent families. The study applied qualitative approach Using case studies produced more in-depth and

Comprehensive information for the study. Semi structured interviews; and observation were mainly used for the data collection. The data were categorized in to five themes and finding revealed that several factors contribute to the vulnerability of children in single parent household including inadequate income, multiple caring responsibilities, and lack of parental emotional support negatively impact the development process and the wellbeing of children. The study suggests some methods for best social work practice when working with single parent families and their children.


Key words: single parent family, social work support, wellbeing of children, vulnerability

## Introduction

As a societal and global issue children at risk in single -parent families has received broad attention with numerous studies carried out on the problem over last decade (Popenoe, 1988, 1996; Wh 1993; Blankenhorn, 1995; Krein, 1986). The United Nations has reported that there has been a shift from extended to nuclear families, as well as a raise in single parent households in the last fifty years (Eastwood,2001).Even though ,it is the ideal for children to live with both parents, single parent families are fast becoming the new reality that society is faced with.

Parenting could be identified as a parent's responsibility to make sure that their children are safe, emotionally secure, physically healthy, educated, mentally stable, and care for their over-all well-being (Pugh and Erica, 1984). Single parenting is a phenomenon where a single parent takes care of a child or children without the physical assistance of the other parent. According to encyclopedia of children's Health, "Single parent families are families with under age of 18 headed by a parent who is widowed or divorced and not remarried, or by a parent who has never married"(Encyclopedia of children's Health, 2005).Single parenting can be either done by the male parent involved or the female one involved.Single parenting can be either done by the male parent involved or the female one involved.

The public image of the Sri Lankan family has been remarkably transformed in recent years. Family issues such as divorce, separation, illegitimacy, marital unhappiness, conflict between children and parents are seen as exceptions to the usual state of family life. Divorce, cohabitation and remarriages are experienced by growing number of people. According to Child and Women's Bureau statistics, in Sri Lanka, one in marriages now end in divorce and over $60 \%$ of divorces involve children under sixteen (Child and Women's Bureau, 2007). One of the most obvious consequences is the increase in marital breakdowns and its effects on children. It has led to an increase in the family environments where the child does not get an opportunity to live without one of the natural parents. Recent statistics offer evidence of a crisis in the family. Out of 10 children in residential institutions 5 have single parents (Ministry of child development and child development and women empowerment, 2007). In Sri Lanka there were 209839 single parent families in 2001and in 2012 it was 501460 (Department of Census and Statistics 2012). Women are the head of $23 \%$ of households. $80 \%$ female heads are over 40-year-old, $64-3 \%$ are widowed or separated, $32 \%$ are listed as married (Department of Census and Statics, 2011). According to the Statistic in Sri Lanka, single parent families are taking a higher number.

These changes have created remarkable uncertainty in children's lives and have led to considerable assumption among policy makers and the public about the consequences of single parenthood.Some analysis argue that growing up with a single mother is primary cause of many of the country's most social problems, including povertyand economic insecurity, high school dropout, teen pregnancy, and delinquency (Popenoe, 1988, 1996; Whitehead, 1993; 1995).

Compared to children from intact families, children of single parent families are more likely to experience reduced psychological socio-emotional and cognitive well-being and poor physical health, problematic behaviors, substance use and juvenile delinquency, lower educational and occupational attainments (Allison and Furstenberg 1989) increased risk of early home-leaving, early unplanned pregnancy, teenage marriage, and divorce. (McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994.)

These factors are important in understanding the situation of the vulnerability of children in single parent families. It can benegativelyimpact on the wellbeing of childrenand primary cause for number of problems in single -parent families. It should call for the highest attention of public service and the need of external support since these children are deprived of natural parental care. Therefore, this is timely needed study. The problem that is investigated in the study is what kind of social work intervention strategies can be used to minimize problems faced by children in single parent families.

## Methodology

The aim of the research is to identify social work intervention strategies that can be used to work with children in single parent families in Sri Lanka. Since the qualitative research is all about exploring issues, understand phenomena and answering questions, this research applies the qualitative approach to study the setting.It emphasizes the importance of looking at variables in the natural setting in which they are found.Since the study aims to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior for the intervention,qualitative research approach employed for the study.Case studies (CS) were used as the main research method to get individuals' data for further discussion. Researcher used Semi- structured interviews (SI), Focus group discussions (FG) and observation (OB) to collect data for case studies. Further 05 interviews were carried out with single mothers to collect more data to enrich the understanding of the phenomena. The 06 case studies were used for the study.

## Theoretical perspective

The ecological theory emphasizes environmental factors as playing the major role to child's development. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005) developed the ecological systems theory. In his theory of human development, he analyzed three types of systems that aid in human development, and also explain how everything in a child and the child's environment affects, how a child grows and develops.

Figure- 1

## Ecological theory of human development by Bronfenbrenner



Santrock, John W. (2007).

## The microsystem:

Micro system includes the family, peer group, neighborhood and school life. These systems help to shape a person's development. A person has direct contact with them. Children's microsystems will include any immediate relationships or organizations they interact with, such as their immediate family or caregivers and their school or daycare. The micro system is the small, immediate environment the child lives in.

## The mesosystem:

The mesossystem consists oftwo Microsystems, the interaction of two microsystems environments, such as the connection between a child's home and school. It describes how the different parts of a child's microsystem work together for the sake of the child.For example, if a child's caregivers take an active role in a child's school, such as going to parent-teacher meetings and watching their performances this will help ensure the child's overall growth. In compare, if the child's two positions of caretakers, mother with stepfather and father with stepmother, disagree how to best increase the child and give the child contradictory lessons when they see him, this will delay the child's growth.

## The exosystem.

This system consists of the environment in which an individual is not directly involved, which is external to his or her experience, but on the other hand affects him or her. Such as parents' workplaces, the neighborhood. For exampleexosystem is the parent's workplaceif the parent has a bad day at work, these events impact the family and the child. The exosystem level includes the other people and places that the child him/herself may not interact with regularly, but that still have a large affect on her.

## The macrosystem

Bronfenbrenner's final level is the macrosystem, the larger cultural context, including issues of cultural values and expectations, which is the largest and most distant set of people and things to a child but which still has a great pressure over the child. The macrosystem includes things such as the relative freedoms acceptable by the national government, cultural values, the economy, wars, etc. These things can also affect a child either positively or negatively.

## The chronosystem

The chronosystem includes actions occurring in the context of the past. These events may have impact on particular birth group.Each of these systems is characterized by roles, norms (expected behavior) and relationships. For example, an individual usually acts in a different way within his or her own family than with in a class room.

The ecological theory of human development can be used to describe the quality as well as the context of the developmental environment that extends from childhood to adulthood and to later life. The theory emphasized the interaction between the individual and the environment and the complexity of this interaction in the developmental process. Many of the above stages can be relate to the different dimensions of an individual's development.

This model recognized that humans don't develop in isolation, but in relation to their family and home, school, community and society. Each of these multilevel environments as well as interactions among these environments is the key to individual development. Furthermore, how a child acts or reacts to these people in the microsystem will affect how they treat his /her in return.

## The nature of single parenting and children

It is important to state that every single parent family is different. Children who are living with a widowed mother have a home life that is different from children with divorce parents or those whose parents were never married. Single parents are generally classified according the mode of birth of the child or children involved.

## Main tips for raising children as a single parent.

- Single parenting due to death of spouse

A great number are widows who have lost their husbands due to the war. The loss of one member of the household, particularly the breadwinner has a marked impact on the family dynamics. Absence of members of the family due to death, injury or displacement created huge gaps in the functioning of the family unit.

- Single parenting due to divorce

Divorce is traumatic both for the parents and the children. Children are most affected as they are old between their parents. Children have to choose one parent over the other and this can be very traumatic as children are attached to both the parents.

- Single parenting through adoption

Adoption is an option for those who wish to bring child in their lives being single and for those who do not want to have biological children.
(http:// www.probationandchildcareservices.lk)

The nature of childhood is universal. But childhood experiences and other characteristics of children vary and it has been shaped by their family life and other social practices regarding children. It can impact negatively on the wellbeing of children in single -parent families.

## Findings and discussion

## Economic background of single parent families.

It is apparent from the research findings that one parent household, who is typically headed by a divorced, separated, widowed, or never married mother, has significantly less financial recourses than an intact familyand less access to all the other advantages. When examining the monthly income and household consumption of the sample, they are living in poverty. And these poor conditions were mainly due to financial constrains as ten of the twelve indicated that there is not enough money to fulfill their basic needs. Ashen mentioned that having their grandmothers living with them was a great help as grandmothers supplemented their mothers' income and therefore, they are able to manage financially found that poverty (and economic status) had stronger effects on cognitive and educational out comes than on emotional and social adjustment" (McLanahan,2000. 42). Less money often led to more disruptions and created more problems in their education. Lack of school materials, meals and engaging in extra work for day to day earnings has seriously affected these children's school lives. Respondents who experienced economic difficulties during their early school years had lower rate of school completion than children and adolescence that experienced poverty during last two years. The economic situation of the family was measured in this analysis in a number of ways. According to the data cohabiting relationship also improved mother headed family's economic situations. Evidences from interviews indicated that men in cohabiting relationship contributed economically towards the house hold. "If our Mama did not live with us it can be hard for us with money."

The analysis suggests that economic recovery for women and children cohabitation had considerable economic benefit for these families. According to the available data there were two respondents living with another adults. These people facilitated single mothers to go for jobs by providing a voluntarily available source of child care, by allowing for the sharing of resources, particularly housing cost. Single parent families that live with others had some economic relief. According to the data analysis we can conclude income loss exercised as a powerful negative force on children's well-being.

## Housing

Housing cost, least flexible component of a household budget, is also an important factor in financial security of a single parent house hold. According to the data majority of children of the sample did not have access to suitable, adequate, and affordable housing. However, $13 \%$ of respondents of single parent households live in houses that are too small for the number of members in the household was in need of major repair. The following two explanations reflect the different housing arrangements.

> "Mama built a room for us in the backyard". (Anuradha) "We live in a windy house behind my aunty's house"

Given their income it is too costly for these families to find accommodation out of their community. With their current income some even find it difficult to find a suitable accommodation in their own community. Therefore, these single parent households were more likely to experience housing problems.

## Health

Health has an impact on so many aspects of an individual's life. It's hard to discuss the well- being without taking health in to consideration. Good health allows individuals to strengthen their development and it is central to a lively learning environment for children and youth. Therefore, Physical and mental health is important for families and individuals throughout the course of their lives. Through the analysis of data and the visibility of health condition of respondent children it can be concluded that the poor health conditions of these children have lead them to poor academic achievement. Lower earning of the parent or care giver has mostly affected their physical and mental health.
"Every time we go to bed with no food" (Chathuri)

As one of the school teachers said during an informal discussion, "lacking of nutritional food had led to malnutrition which had blocked their development and delayed their readiness for learningwhen they enter school.'

## Leisure /Free time

Leisure or free time can be used to earn important personal and social benefits. An involvement in leisure activities typically provide enjoyment and relaxation, reduce stress, and improve mental health and physical fitness. Research also suggests that leisure activities that are physically and mentally stimulating are important to healthy growth and development of children from single parent families.

When examining the ways, the research participants use their leisure time it focuses on two indicators. Leisure time focuses on the available hours per day and how they balance this time with day today work and caring for themselves. The findings reveal that nearly $60 \%$ of the children in the sample spend spent more than four hours per day for their leisure activities. One of the facts revealed leisure activities is that these children spent a greater amount of time on passive leisure activities such as watching television. Due to the economic insecurity and instability within father absence families, boy children had to earn money for their living. Therefore, they had to work two three hours after school time, which leads to missing their leisure time. According to the findings, four of these children spend one-hour ormore per day for leisure activities. However, in these single parenting houses, children do not get proper guidance on how to spend leisure or free time on hobbiesor activities such as reading which can stimulate their thinking.

## The environment

The environment influences a person's health state and overall well-being. In turn children's activities such as learning, recreation, leisure activities, and social relations subsequently affect the quality of the environment. The growth of population and increased level of urbanization, industrialization created stress on the natural environment of this community. Even though this community is located in Gampaha municipal area, children of this community do not have proper place for their recreation, and have no access to libraries and to cultural, religious, or social organizations. The research findings also show that the children from single parent families are marginalized from natural resources than children from intact families.

## Social participation

Social interaction and childhood improvement of the children was measured with identifying the children's participation in extracurricular activities (Deutsch, Blyth, Kelley, Tolan \&, Lerner, 2017). Evidence from interviews indicated that such
children were withdrawn from social activities. 2 girls and 4 boys from the sample reported having no close friends and no idea regarding social activities such as children's societies, youth clubs, and scouts, cultural orreligious organizations. Two children reported having some close friends. Among the respondents the two boys who are 17 and 16 years old belong to a gang in the area.

## Social and cultural influences on parenting practices

When examining the quality of parenting evidences from focus group interviews with mothers indicated that being a single parenting was a very tuff and challenging task and they often worries about the effects of single parenting, thing had to be done alone without having any body to share responsibilities with. Apart from this, in a male dominated world, they were generally paid less, irrespective of their knowledge. Lack of intelligence and lack of abilities have also become barriers for their daily living. One of the positive effects of single parenting is that when they are raised by one parent their bond and relationship with that parent is generally much stronger than it would have been otherwise.

> "My mother tries to do everything for me she also buys me whatever I want. She said that she is not going to make me suffer because of mv father".

When the cultural aspects of single parenting are taken in to account the issues are complex. Changes in family networks and situations affected these parenting practices. According to the existing data extended family pattern of the society contained another adult or grandmother or grandfather within the single house hold. Having other adult in the home, particularly, a grandmother or other relative could provide a child with extra emotional support and supervision. There were six single parent families living with grandparents. In addition to having other adults available to help with children could also benefit the single mothers coping abilities.

The skills that parent had in dealing with children had a deep influence on children's well-being. The evidence indicated that some parents reported weaken parenting practices immediately following divorce which contribute to some of the problems that children experience.

Another fact that had caused lower well-being among children is the conflict between parents prior to, during and after the divorce that contribute to. There was also evidence that children began to have difficulties, post divorced conflict had a
strong influence on children's adjustments. The studyshows that children in single parent households were under a lot more stress.

## The role of social worker

The finding shows that there is a great need for positive social and behavioral intervention for children and their families. The role of social work is to provide family centered services to help children to reach their full potentials. Families can identify stressors with the help of social worker and find different types of support and coping strategies to ensure physical and mental wellbeing of the children and their families. A social worker is a person to talk to someone who will listen therefore parents can talk about their feeling, challenges and life experiences. Single parent family can identify different kind of stressors and life challengers with the support of a social worker and identify coping strategies to reduce day today problems. The other important thing is social worker can link community resources such as medical assistance, housing. Social workers are the key professionals who can provide long term support to vulnerable children and their families such as to develop interventions to support the positive social and emotional growth and the development of parenting intervention.

## Conclusion

This study aims to develop understanding of the impact of single parenting on children and the role of social work to support them. It focuses on examine the gaps in multiple needs of children in single parents' families in Sri Lanka. The result suggests that these children have deprivations in nutrition, clothing, education, leisure and social life. Social workers have the professional knowledge and skills to identify the interventions (Stevens, 2014) that enhance success, wellbeing of these children and social workers use in their practice with children at risk. Appling the findings to practice the author recommended a number of ways to the development of children from single parent families. It can be mention five themes summarizing the interventions in social work. Through developing relationships such as making home visits to support the parents in providing positive parent -child interactions, providing families with information, skills and supports related to enhancing the skill development of the child.

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## Child Marriage in South Asian Countries

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#### Abstract

Marriage is an important incidencein any society since it helpsthe existence of society. Sociologically marriage is an important factor because it obviously makesmany relationships in society. Mature age is considered the most suitable age for marriage in the world but there is no exact age to enter marriage a girl in World, and it differs from country to country. When it is discussed early marriage, the attention always focuses on child girls because they absolutely become destitute with marriage. Having considered the issues related to child marriage, most countries have determined the marriage age to maintain the social security and protection of children. Mature age is highly considered for marriage because it is believed that he/she should be able to adapt the marriage life in both a biological and psychological manner. Especially one girl who become mature, will get an opportunity to enter marriage life thereby the girl should be able to take responsibility in marriage life otherwise the marriage life would be unpleasant,


therefore, it is highly considered that marriage should not happen at an early age because it makes many difficulties for child aged girl. The majority of all over the world believe that marriage should occur when a girl becomes mature. Whenever a young girl enters marriage she has to relinquish education and other child rights vested by universal. Child marriage which occurs everywhere in the world even today has become a tremendous issue in developing countries like South Asia. And it has also brought many issues to the girls who entered early marriages. Understanding the negative impact of child marriage many countries have decided to stop by introducing legal actions. Although child marriage is constrained by law in many countries, there are many child marriage cases are reported worldwide. It is vitally important to understand the situation of child marriage in the world and Asian countries to solve this issue. This article aimsto examine child marriage in South Asian countries and its nature.

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## Introduction

It is important to understand the child through the definitionAccording to Oxford Dictionary Thesaurus \& Word Power Guide (2007) defines a child as "1. A young human being below the age of full physical development, 2. A son or daughter of any age, 3 . Derogatory and immature or irresponsible person". A young person who has not yet reached puberty or reached the legal age of majority (lexico, 2021). The Free Dictionary defines a child as: "a person's natural offspring; a person 14 years and under. A "child" should be distinguished from a "minor" who is anyone under 18 in almost all states" (thefreedictionary.com, 2021).TheConvention on Rights of the Childdefines a child as "child is any person under the age of 18 "

Many definitions for introducing a child can be found using the above term. Some countries have occasionally utilized different ages to initiate a kid into the country's legal system. As an illustration, a child is considered to be under the age of 18 years old in Sri Lankan law.Many definitions for introducing a child can be found using the above term. Some countries have occasionally utilized different ages to initiate a kid into the country's legal system. As an illustration, a child is considered to be under the age of 18 years old in Sri Lankan law. Nevertheless, other frameworks of law in Sri Lanka have used different ages to define a child to protect their child rights for example; The Sri Lankan Children and Young Persons Ordinance (1939) defines a "child" as someone under the age of 14 and a "young person" as someone between the ages of 14 and 16(Unicef-irc.org, (n.d).Any age that has legal importance is referred to as a "legally permitted age." In order to preserve children's rights, Sri Lankan legislation has defined multiple legally permitted ages under various statutes. The minimum age of culpability ( 8 years), minimum age of work (14 years), minimum age of consent for sexual intercourse (16 years), maximum age of seeking maintenance (18 years), and maximum age of kidnapping from legitimate supervision (18 years) are all considered in this study (males 14 years and females 16 years) (Vidanapathirana,2016).

## What Does Mean Child Marriage?

It is essential to clearly understand what does mean child marriage because marriage age is a crucial point for a human. Here, when it considers child marriage it is significantly important to focus on the early marriage of a girl who forces to marry early age would bring many difficulties for them. Therefore, it is needed to define and examine the current status of child marriage in the world. Child marriage is a phenomenon that has varied effects on girls and boys. In general, the number of boys in child marriages is significantly lower than that of girls over the world. In unequal partnerships, girl child spouses are also prone to domestic violence and
sexual abuse. If they become pregnant, their bodies are not prepared for childbearing, thus difficulties during pregnancy and childbirth are common. Both males and girls are frequently forced to leave education after marrying in order to enter the workforce and/or take on household responsibilities at home(unfpa.org, 2012). Child marriage is described as a girl or boy marrying before the age of eighteen and includes both legal and informal unions in which minors under the age of eighteen live with a spouse as if they are married (unicef.org,2017).Accordingly, it is clearly pointed out that generally, less than 18-year-old a girl or a boy get into marriage is considered a child marriage.

## Methodology

This study was expected to understand child marriage in south Asian countries thereby, collecting information from all the South Asian countries is not an easy task, and therefore, the method to collect information relevant to this topic is secondary data. This study was done by using secondary data which were collected from different articles and research studies done in relevance to child marriage in South Asia.

## World scenario of the Child marriage

Getting a clear picture of the world figures of child marriage is essential to understanding the reality of child marriage worldwide. Therefore, this section is focused to examine the world scenario of child marriage. Nearly half of young girls in South Asia and more than a third of young girls in Sub-Saharan Africa are married by the age of 18 . The 10 nations with the highest rates of child marriage are Niger, 75 percent; Chad and the Central African Republic, 68 percent; Bangladesh, 66 percent; Guinea, 63 percent; Mozambique, 56 percent; Mali, 55 percent; Burkina Faso and South Sudan, 52 percent; and Malawi, 50 percent. Between 2011 and 2020, more than 140 million girls were expected to marry, based on existing trends. In addition, 50 million of the 140 million females who wouldmarry before they become 18 would be under the age of 15 . Child marriage is most common in SubSaharan Africa, where $35 \%$ of young women marry before the age of 18 , followed by South Asia, where nearly $30 \%$ marry before the age of 18 . Latin America and the Caribbean ( 24 percent, data not provided), the Middle East and North Africa (17 percent), and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (17 percent) all have lower rates of child marriage (12 percent) (EpidemiologyUnit, Ministry of Heath, 2013)

According to UNICEF's first-ever in-depth survey of child grooms, an estimated 115 million boys and men around the world were married as minors. One in every five children, or 23 million, married before the age of fifteen. According to the data,
the Central African Republic (28\%) has the greatest rate of child marriage among men, followed by Nicaragua (19\%) and Madagascar (13 \%) (unicef.org, 2019).

The following table shows the ten countries with the highest child marriage rate before 18 years in the world and ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage before 15 years old.

The top ten countries in the world with the highest number of child marriage

| No | 10 countries with the highest rate of marriage before 18 years | \% | 10 countries with the highest rate of marriage before 15 years | \% |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 01 | Niger | 75 | Niger | 36 |
| 02 | The centralAfrican Republic | 68 | Bangladesh | 29 |
| 03 | Chad | 68 | The central African Republic | 29 |
| 04 | Bangladesh | 65 | Chad | 29 |
| 05 | Mali | 55 | Eritrea | 20 |
| 06 | Burkina Faso | 52 | Guinea | 20 |
| 07 | South Sudan | 52 | Nigeria | 20 |
| 08 | Malawi | 50 | India | 18 |
| 09 | Madagascar | 48 | Sierra Leone | 18 |
| 10 | Guinea | 63 | Ethiopia | 16 |

Sources: UNICEF, State of the World's Children: In Numbers: Every Child Counts, 2014

The above data discuss the how extent to which child marriage has prevailed in the world. Most African countries and South Asian countries have become the most conducive home to practice early marriage in the world. The prevailing nature of child marriages does not make good sense among developed nations and educated societies. Because there can be seen many obnoxious results raise due to early child marriage. It is shocked that the factor is that $36 \%$ of child marriage has been taken before 15 years old in Niger. When it considering such kind of situation in South Asian countries, Bangladesh and India show the worst figures.In West and Central Africa, child marriage is a widespread violation of human rights that
disproportionately affects females. Young brides are more likely to drop out of school and encounter physical dangers, particularly during pregnancy. Child marriage is a serious roadblock to sustainable development because of its social, health, and economic consequences. West and Central Africa is home to six of the top ten countries with the highest rates of child marriage. In the region, the average prevalence is still high: $41 \%$ of females marry before they turn 18 years old.( unicef.org, n.d)

## Discussion

## Child Marriage in South Asian Countries

Concerning child marriage in the world context, it seems that a huge number of child marriages occur in African countries also other countries. The factors revealed that most child marriages happen in developing countries due to the lack of education, poor family background, and also there may be cultural factors. It is needed to examine the factors to perceive the reality of child marriage in South Asian countries. There are eight countriesbelonging to South Asia including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and the Maldives. South Asia has the world's highest rate of child marriage. Almost half of all women aged 20-24 years (45\%) said they were married before they turned 18. Almost one-fifth of all females (17\%) marry before they reach the age of 15 . Child marriage is a violation of children's rights that exposes them to violence, exploitation, and abuse. India has the most brides in the world, accounting for onethird of the total. Bangladesh has Asia's highest child marriage rate (the fourthhighest rate in the world). Nepal also boasts one of Asia's highest rates of both boy and girl child marriage. (https://www.unicef.org/rosa/what-we-do/child-protection/child-marriage)

According to estimates, at least 1.5 million girls under the age of 18 marry each year in India, making it the country with the most child brides in the world, accounting for a third of the global total. Currently, over $16 \%$ of adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 are married. While the percentage of girls marrying before the age of 18 has decreased from $47 \%$ to $27 \%$ between 2005-2006 and 2015-2016, it is still too high (https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/end-child-marriage). In Bhutan, Child marriage is still prevalent, according to UNICEF's most recent data, with 6.2 percent of the population married by the age of 15 and 25.8 percent married by the age of 18.5 years old (www.unicef.org/infobycountry/bhutan_statistics). Bangladesh is a Muslim-majority country with a population of over 163 million. The majority of Bangladeshis adhere to Islamic principles and beliefs, which can be seen in a variety of socio-culturalbehaviours. In light of such ideals, Bangladesh's
tradition of legalizing child marriage is an issue that requires a comprehensive yet rigorous solution. Bangladesh currently ranks fourth in the world and first in Asia in terms of child marriage (Arnab, 2020) According to UNICEF, 29\% of Bangladeshi girls marry before the age of 15 , and $65 \%$ marry before the age of 18(https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/06/09/child-marriage-bangladesh)

According to data from the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) 2017-18, 3.3 percent of girls under the age of 15 are married off, while 18.3 percent of females under the age of 18 are married off, according to Qamar Naseem, a rights activist from Peshawar. Across the country, about 4.7 percent of boys under the age of 18 are married off, he added. According to Naseem, child marriage is significantly higher in Pakistan's newly combined tribal areas, where roughly 35 percent of all child marriages occur (https://www.dw.com/en/pakistan-how-poverty-and-exploitation-drive-child-marriages).

UNICEF estimates that $21 \%$ of Pakistani girls are married by the age of 18 , and $3 \%$ before the age of 15 . Child marriage is most common in the country's poorest and most disadvantaged groups, and it has disastrous consequences: Girls who marry are more likely than other girls to drop out of school, they have larger pregnancyrelated health risks than women, and their children are more likely to have health problems. Domestic abuse is more common among married women than it is among unmarried women. Furthermore, child marriage further impoverisheshouseholds(https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/11/09/time-end-childmariage).According to available data on child marriage in Afghanistan, between 30 and 40 percent of women get married before they reach the age of 18( National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (2011- 2012.).Afghanistan ranks 170th out of 189 nations on the UN's Gender Inequality Index, making it one of the most difficult locations in the world for women and girls to live. More than a third of Afghan girls marry before they become 18, and nearly a tenth marry before they turn fifteen(www.worldvision.ca/stories/gender-equality/choose-to-challenge-child-marriage-Afghanistan).

In Nepal, $41 \%$ of women aged 20 to 24 marry before they reach the age of 18 . In South Asia, the country has the third-highest rate of child marriage (https://nepal.unfpa.org/en/node).Nepal has a high rate of child marriage. The percentage of women between the ages of 18 and 22 who married as children is 38.5 percent, however, it has been steadily declining over time. The proportion of girls marrying before the age of 15 has similarly decreased. Child marriage is linked to a lower level of wealth, education, and labour force involvement. However, they are merely correlations, not causative effects. Information on the trend in child marriage over time, where it is most widespread in a country, and what the features
of girls marrying young are essential to building programs and policies to minimize child marriage (chata,2016).

According to census data of Maldives, $95 \%$ of the children have never been married. Child marriage occurs in the country, albeit in small numbers, with only 0.60 percent of minors ( 106 children aged 15-17) married at the time of the Census. This equates to 106 children aged 15 to 17 -year-old who was married at the time of the census. The indicator "percentage of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before the age of 15 and before the age of 18 " revealed that child marriage is slightly less prevalent among the 20-24-year-old population than among the present child population (15-17 years). 0.35 percent of women between the ages of 20 and 24 were married before they turned 18 (National Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Finance \& Treasury, 2014). Under Sri Lankan common law, underage marriages are prohibited, and the legal age for marriage is 18. The Department of Census and Statistics in Sri Lanka reported the following (on the proportion of the married population) in 2012. There are 104,176 married citizens between the ages of 15 and 19 , with 85,392 females ( 82 per cent) and 18,784 males ( 18 per cent). A total of 3530 married females under the age of 15 have been reported, while no men have been reported( https://www.ecpat.lk/childmarriage).By the age of 15 , child marriage rates in Sri Lanka are at $2 \%$, and by the age of 18 , they are at $12 \%$ (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-). Under the common law of Sri Lanka, underage marriages are prohibited. The legal age is 18 years old. However, the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act (MMDA), which has been in effect for decades, permits Muslim community leaders, who are predominately male, to decide on the marriage age (https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia).

Even though most countries have laws requiring girls to marry at the age of 18, child marriage is nevertheless common in South Asia. The majority of marriages are planned by parents and local leaders, either with or without the girl's agreement. Child marriage is perpetuated by several causes, including a high value put on girls' sexuality, gender discrimination, gaps in national laws, inadequate implementation of child marriage prevention laws, illiteracy, low access to school, poverty, and conflict and natural disasters. These systemic factors that influence child marriage are described further down (Tina, Ravi \&Ellen, 2013).

## Child Marriage and its social impact on society

It is important to attain child marriage and its social impact on society with a view to ascertain the reality behind child marriages. The majority of child marriage cases are reported in South Asian countries which is an awkward situation and has created a black spot in these countries. child marriage poses a serious health threat. Psychologically, women who were married as youngsters are more prone to experiencePosttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)and depression symptoms (https://www.equalitynow.org/long_term_impacts_child_marriage).Child marriage, a kind of early and forced union, is rooted in damaging traditional norms (and practices that have been passed down through centuries, wreaking havoc on the lives of girls, their families, and society as a whole. It is a dangerous practice that seriously jeopardizes the girl child's best interests. Child marriage is more common in impoverished households and those with lower levels of education, as well as in fragile states affected by natural disasters and conflict (World Vision, UK, 2013.).In South Asia, child brides frequently marry considerably older males, who are more likely to be HIV positive than younger men because they have had unprotected intercourse with several or high-risk partners( International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), 2012).Young girls who married before the age of 18 were twice as likely to report being beaten, slapped, or intimidated by their spouses, according to an Indian study. They were also three times more likely to say they had been forced to have sex against their will in the past six months( International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), 2007.). According to recent research in Bangladesh, girls are frequently subjected to domestic abuse if they fail to match the needs and expectations of their husbands and family members in the areas of housework and sexuality. This includes dowry disputes, which are a common source of severe acts of violence against girls, such as mental torture and physical abuse. Young men in Bangladesh have spoken up against the pressures of early marriage, blaming their aggressive behaviour toward their spouses on their lack of preparation for marriage and family life( World Vision, UK, 2013.). Girls' poor worth is intimately linked to the lack of investment in their future. Girls are removed from school once their marriage is finalized, and they are less likely to be educated than boys. In Pakistan, studies have found a link between education and marriage age. Many studies have also shown that teenage married girls' access to formal and informal education is severely constrained due to household and child-rearing duties, as well as discriminatory gender norms that do not value girls' education (International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), 2005).

Child marriages frequently result in an early pregnancy, which can lead to a variety of health issues. She will be unable to cope with changes in her body and sexual behaviours that occur during puberty if she does not have adequate awareness of
these topics. Even elderly women are no longer capable of adequately guiding her. During pregnancy, delivery, and the post-delivery period, older women used to keep a close eye on the situation. However, today's elderly ladies lack the information and positive attitude that women did in the past to seek qualified medical personnel ( https://blog.ipleaders.in/child-marriage-impacts-consequences-effects-girl-child).

## Conclusion

It is evidently visible that early marriages have become a tremendous issue in South Asian countries due to economic problems, lack of awareness, and other social factors. When it is considered the factors that impact child marriages, unawareness and poor economic condition of the family have been toughly caused to promote of child marriages. Even though all the South Asian countries have imposed the minimum age for marriage in terms of control of early marriage, a considerable number of child marriages occur in South Asia. Concerning this calamitous situation, there should be a practical mechanism to avoid child marriage not only in South Asian countries but also in other countries in the world. Most probably this teaser has created many arduous problems among married children. Althoughmany International Non-Governmental Organizations and other government institutions work towardminimizing the amount of early marriage, it seems that some religious activist has been a problematic hurdle to controlling this circumstance. Children are the most important future investment in any society therefore, there should be a conducive environment to well grow in society without any troubles for children all over the world. But, children in developing countries, are always facing many troubles make by people in society. It is a timely need to block all access to work against children in these countries. Child marriage does not occur consent of children, it leads by elders of the family. Indeed, this kind of environment smashed whole the child world.Therefore, all authorities should come to one platform to make a concrete solution to minimize early marriages.

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| 2015 | 4.7 | 3.0 | 7.6 |
| 2016 | 4.4 | 2.9 | 7.0 |
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| 2013 | 19.1 | 7.5 | 2.7 | 1.0 |
| 2014 | 20.3 | 8.3 | 2.7 | 0.9 |
| 2015 | 20.8 | 9.4 | 3.1 | 1.0 |
| 2016 | 21.6 | 9.2 | 2.4 | 0.8 |
| 2017 | 18.5 | 9.5 | 2.7 | 0.9 |
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[^0]:    Key Words: Child, Child Marriage, Child marriage in South Asia, Child Marriage and its impact

