

## **Media and Child Marriage** ***Assessing its Role in Creating Awareness to Stop Child*** ***Marriage in Bangladesh***

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**Abstract:** Clearly, marriage is a cultural custom that ties individuals in an uncommon act of shared reliance. It helps in establishing and keeping a family. It's sort of a social practice which went into through a public demonstration, strict or conventional function. Marriage appropriately mirrors the reasons, character and customs of the general public in which it is found. Kid marriage has broad monetary, social, wellbeing, and political charges for the young lady youngster and her local area too. It manages a young lady's youth, makes grave mental and actual wellbeing chances, and denies her of universally acknowledged basic freedoms. Countless Bangladeshi young ladies are getting hitched ahead of schedule after pubescence, part of the way to permit their folks from a monetary weight and incompletely to keep the young ladies' sexual virtue. Where a young lady's family is extremely poor or she has lost her folks, she might be in intimate life as a third or fourth life partner to a lot more established man, to satisfy the piece of sexual and homegrown worker. Some are constrained into marriage at an early age. Media has an essential part to build mindfulness and produce conduct and social alteration to end youngster marriage in Bangladesh. To support the counteraction and detailing of kid marriage by urging individuals and networks to make a social development to hurry its end, media is each compelling cost to speak loudly against youngster marriage. The Government of Bangladesh has been exemplary with its respectable assurance to embrace innovative approaches to flood mindfulness and make a strong air for kids, their folks and social orders to make a move.

**Keywords:** Early Marriage; Media; Social Awareness; Government of Bangladesh

### **Introduction**

Honorable Prime Minister of Peoples Republic of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina repeatedly remarks that 'if you educate one man, you educate an individual, and if you educate a female, you educate a family and a society'. There is no miracle, girl's education has been turned free up to the level of higher secondary. Enrollment of girls in educational institutions, mainly in schools has been amplified after giving them stipend. This stipend has some specific conditions, and among them, one is that she cannot get married before she becomes the age of Eighteen (18). At present a total number of 3.9 million students are encircled by the special stipend programs (Amin, Ahmed, Hossain, and Haque; 2016).

Marriage is a societal tradition that ties people in a special practice of mutual dependence for the reason of making and retaining a family. As a societal exercise arrived into through a public act, spiritual or conventional program, it reveals the character, purposes and customs of the community in which it is made. Many communities have separate rules that bound the age of young girls to get married, but in some other cases the age boundary doesn't take into action their physiological preparedness for taking child. Marriage sometime takes place at ages too earlier than the lawfully ratified minimum age. Early marriage is the wedding of kids and adolescents below the age of eighteen years (National Children Policy; 2011). Marriages in which a child below the age of 18 (eighteen) years is seen occur globally, but are mainly involved in South Asia, Latin America and Africa.

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A large number of Bangladeshi girls are started conjugal life very soon after puberty, partly to allow their parents from financial burden and partly to keeping the girls' sexual purity. Where a girl's household is so much poor or she has lost her father and mother, she may be married as a third or fourth wife to a much older man, to satisfy the part of domestic servant and sexual. Some are forced into marriage at a very growing age. Others are in general too young to take an informed decision about their marriage partner or regarding the allegations of wedding itself. They may have assumed what passes for 'consent' in the view of convention or the law, but in realism, consensus to their binding union has been made by others on their behalf. Pregnancies that happen 'too early' – when a woman's physical condition is not fully mature – create a major threat to the endurance and future health of both child and mother. Parents and family heads make marital selections for daughters and sons with slight regard for the self-suggestions. Rather, they look upon wedding as a family-building approach, a financial arrangement or a mode to guard girls from unwanted sexual advances.

Poverty is one of the main issues behind child marriage. Where poverty is acute, a young girl may be seen as an financial or monetary problem and her marriage to a too older – and sometimes even ageing – man, an exercise common in South Asian communities, is a family persistence approach, and may even be observed as in her benefits. In convention a communities in Bangladesh, the bride's family may accept cattle from the groom, or the family of groom, as the bride value for their daughter. In Bangladesh, poverty-stricken parents are convinced to part with daughters through promises of marriage, or by deceitful marriages, which are used to trap the girls into prostitution abroad.

Wedding forms – together with other aspects of family establishment – are subject to severe 'development' forces such as decreasing profits from the land, rapid suburbanization, population movement, and the instability of global marketplaces, all of which are presently triggering profound societal disturbance and financial relegation. The product for families is cumulative destruction and the destruction of their prolonged arrangement. Families in the procedure of evolution may, therefore, be gathered between conventional and contemporary ethics. Men in search of work may join the eccentric world in town; while the women they wedded in their teens, and their children, remain their conventional lives in the rural areas.

Media has a vigorous role to increase consciousness and activate behavioral and societal alteration to end early marriage in Bangladesh. In order to encourage the anticipation and reporting of early marriage by boosting individuals and societies to create a social movement to hasten its end, media is every effective toll to raise their voices against child marriage. The Government of Bangladesh has been commendable with its noble struggle to accept pioneering ways to raise awareness and generate a helpful environment for children, their parents and societies taking action. This research endeavor will attempt to look at media's role in eliminating early marriage interacting with people.

### **Trend of Early Marriage in Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh, child or early marriage is considered as one method to ensure that a spouse is 'protected', or involved firmly under male dominance; that she is loyal to her husband and serve dedicatedly for her in-laws' family; that the children she bears are 'legitimate'; and that connections of love between pairs do not demoralize the family

entity. In many states like Bangladesh, child marriage falls into what volumes to a permissions limbo. It may be forbidden in the current civil or shared law, but be extensively overlooked by usual and religious laws and exercise. This is common where weddings naturally take place according to normal rites and remains not registered.

Early marriage, which has occurred for periods, is a multifaceted matter, rooted extremely in gender inequality, convention and poverty. The repetition is most public in rural and impoverished zones, where views for girls can be limited. In many cases, parents organize these weddings and young girls have no choice. Poor families marry off young daughters to decrease the number of children they need to feed, educate and clothe. In some philosophies, a major enticement is the price potential husbands will pay for young spouses. Societal burdens within a society can lead families to wed young children. For instance, some values believe wedding girls before they reach puberty will bring sanctifications on families. Some cultures believe that child marriage will keep young girls from sexual occurrences and fierceness and see it as a way to assure that their daughter will not become pregnant out of marriage and bring disgrace to the family. Too many families wed their daughters just because child marriage is the only option they know.

Bangladesh has one of the uppermost rates of early marriage throughout the world and the maximum rate of wedding connecting girls under 15. 52% of girls are married by their eighteenth (18<sup>th</sup>) birthday and 18% by the age of 15. As well as intensely entrenched social and spiritual principles, drivers of early marriage include parents' aspiration to secure financial and societal security for their girls, poverty and the perceived need to ensure safety of girls from impairment, including sexual irritation. Dowry is also a pouring issue with prices often aggregate the older a girl grows. This economic burden often means that girls from poorer families are extra likely to be early brides (National Institute of Population Research and Training, 2011). Currently, legally the minimum age for marriage is eighteen for women and twenty one for men – according to the early/child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 (Government of Bangladesh; 2006).

In September 2014, actions were planned to lower the minimum marriage age for girls from 18 years to 16 years. On 24<sup>th</sup> November 2014, the cabinet division endorsed a draft of the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2016, headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office. According to the planned law, anyone under the age of 18 years, in general will be treated as a child. However, in terms of marriage, any male under the age of 21 years and female under the age of 18 years will be seen as minors. The new draft legislation also consists a rule of allowing child or early marriage in special circumstances, such as if a girl becomes pregnant illegally or accidentally, where a marriage will be allowed to protect her "honour" (Government of Bangladesh; 2017). Besides, on the hypothesis that economic limitations are the foremost motive for parents keeping their daughters out of school or colleges, a secondary school allowance programme for girls has presented in Bangladesh in the beginning of the 1990s. Fees and free books are delivered for the students, and their parents are provided some recompense for the damage of their daughters' farming and domestic work. One of the utmost conspicuous results is an unexpected rise in marriage rescheduling, as parents are requisite to sign a promise that their daughters would not wed before age 18. Parents replied to the inducements, partly because they saw that daughters with an enhanced education would marry men who are better benefactors.

Despite significant progress in improving gender equality and declining poverty in recent years, Bangladesh has one of the uppermost ratio of early marriage among girls among the whole world: two-thirds of women marry before the age of 18. The current law forbidding the marriage of minors is frequently ignored and rarely enforced. The Government of Bangladesh discusses that denying parents the lawful mandate to marry off their daughters can, inconsistently, lead to a higher occurrence of child marriage and make further social difficulties.

Literature review suggests that, in many cases lack of enforcement renders laws against child marriage ineffective in Bangladesh. Child marriage of girls and boys damages the comprehension and pleasure of nearly every one of their privileges. The nuisance of a marriage companion on children or adolescents who are in no way prepared for conjugal life, and whose wedding will divest them of liberty, prospect for individual growth, and other privileges including education, health and well-being and involvement in civic life, invalidates the meaning of the CRC's core defenses for those concerned. Unless actions are taken to address child marriage, it will endure to be a key stumbling block to the success of human rights. At present, there is a severe lack of data on all parts of child marriage. As this present undertaking has emphasized, the bases of evidences that do exist have inspected child marriage in terms of demographic tendencies, fertility, and enlightening attainment. There are as yet very few learningsthat have observed the exercise from a human rights viewpoint, in terms of movements or its effect on families, wives, husbands, or the wider society (Government of Bangladesh; 2016). These gaps must be filled immediately, since data must notify policies and programmes and deliver a basis for actual promotion.

### **Trend of Early Marriage: Global Perspective**

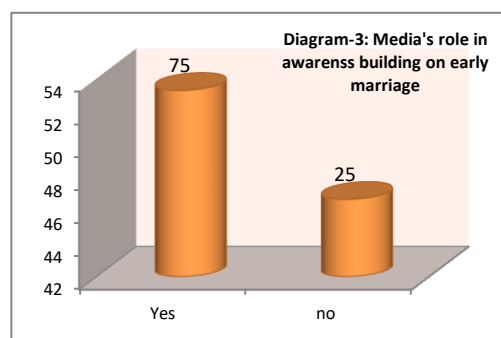
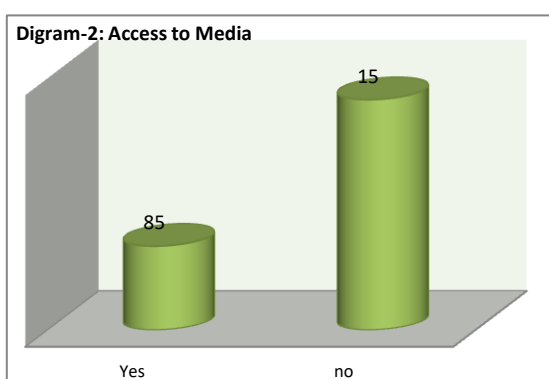
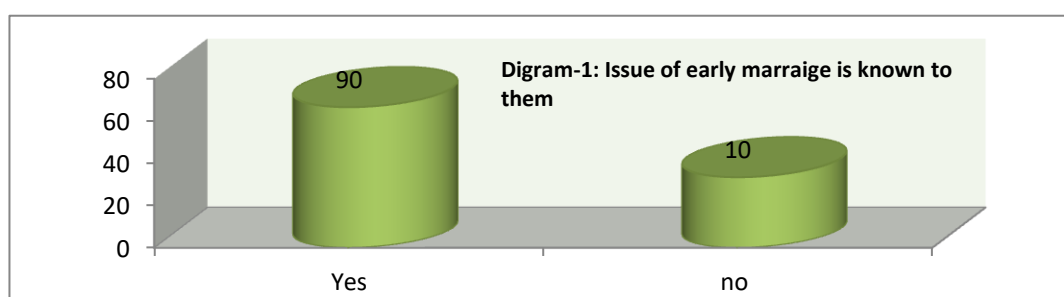
In the year of 2000, 08Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)sketched a vision that committed the member states to mitigate extreme poverty and reduce hunger, educate all children with quality education through primary school, foster women empowerment, reduce childhood death rate, improve maternal health, combat with HIV/AIDS and malaria, ensure sustainable environment, and createa strong global partnership for development by the year of 2015. Early marriage is vague and does not necessarily refer to children (Rutterford, Copas, and Eldridge; 2015). Furthermore, what is early for one person may be late for another. Child bride appears to elevate the process, suggesting a festivity and a bride who is pleased to start a loving combination with her spouse. But for the most of the time, girl brides don't know—and may have never met—their groom. Since 1948, the United Nations (UN) and other leading international organization shave tried to stop child/early marriage.

### **Media's Role in discouraging Early Marriage through Awareness Building: Study Findings**

Understanding people's perceptions is crucial in order to promote communication with the blessings of media that motivates people to take action to improve their lives in Bangladesh. Perceptions are shaped by a range of factors including exposure to media, communication with peers, personal beliefs and values and education levels. People in Bangladesh are more or less aware of the adverse impact of early marriage and are

already starting to act, yet this action needs to be encouraged and built upon. There is a need for communication that encourages people to join hands to stop early marriage from the society. People also want more information on how to take action and develop new skills.

In order to capture the role of media in building awareness against the wave of early marriage, a short-lived study was undertaken in the entire month of January 2018 targeting 60 individual on random basis living in the Kalampur village of Dhamrai Upazila in Dhaka District. Only three questions were asked to substantiate the research intents and findings are presented in diagrams as follows:



Girls who marry at a young age are under countless force to show their fertility by bearing children immediately at a very early age. Girls who marry between the ages of 10 years and 14 years face the risk of maternal mortality five times during pregnancy or childbirth in comparison to mothers in their early 20s. Child/early marriage also force to isolation and can reason of depression. Some respondents also told that this types of females have very poor relations with their families. The problem of being hectic with household responsibilities was also mentioned. All these factors perpetuate the cycle of poverty and gender gap in terms of access to education and professional opportunities. Marginal level of education among parents and lower access to schools, especially in rural areas obstruct girls' education and increase the likelihood of early/ child marriage. In consideration of the above findings, it could be underscored that, communication with the support of media encourages discussion to raise awareness of the underlying risk and

challenges associated with early marriage. It could easily contribute to make the community more aware by the way of sharing relevant knowledge and adverse impact of early marriage.

### **How Media Complements the Government and other Actors in creating awareness? Some Encouraging Examples**

Apart from my field based findings I have mentioned above, this section has exemplified how does media work closely with the relevant stakeholder's in accelerating the national drive against child marriage.

#### **How UNICEF using Media to create awareness**

UNICEF has the infrastructure where they said everyone has a role to play and something they can do.

**Research:** Acquire more about the influences and effects of early marriage

**Refrain:** Abstain from taking part in or presence early marriages within your family, neighborhoods and bigger communities.

**Resist:** Resist any tries that involve you in organizing or enabling nearly marriage.

**Raise:** Increase your voice against any early marriage that is being planned or taking place within your family, neighborhood or larger society.

**Rally:** Mobilize and linking with your friends, family, larger community, neighbors and local authorities to take action against early marriage.

**Report:** Reaching out to and notify your particular local authorities and administrations about any planned or happening early marriages within your family. neighborhoods or larger society. (UNICEF, 2011).



This promotion has been prepared under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and 'Enabling Environment for Child Rights' Programme of UNICEF.



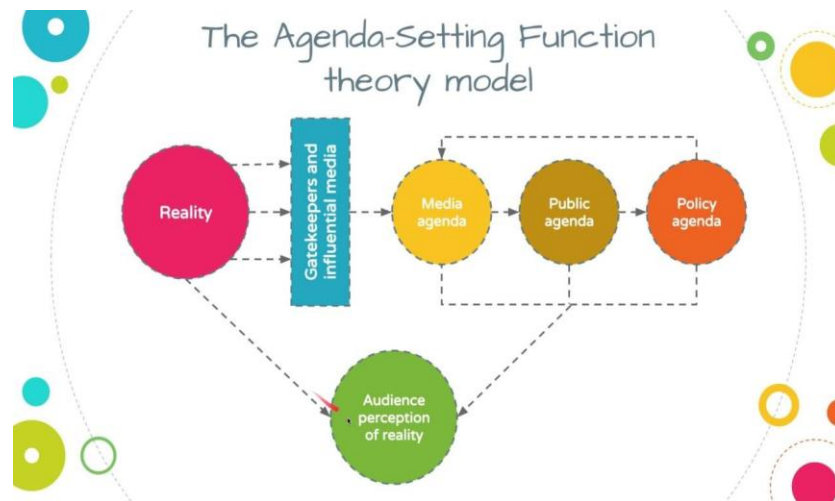
The television drama 'Ichhe Dana' is part of a larger community campaign by the Government of Bangladesh, which aims to change norms around gender roles and the practice of child marriage in the country.

Media is also encouraging some positive news where we can see our government is really doing great towards stopping child marriage and taking strong initiative. Our perception can be challenged by media whether it can be local or global. What I mean to say is media is kind of human face to the issue when we use it as advocacy. Like when we research and ask questions we can understand things from parent's perspective as well as a young girl's perspective. Both can be challenged by media advocacy. Media advocacy works with emotional and personal content and that help us to show the public and decision makers that the exact numbers and opinion of general people (PLAN International and Coram International; 2015).

In communication theories we often talk about Agenda Setting theory. Let's describe it shortly. Agenda-Setting concept defines the capability of the media to impact the significance placed on the topics of the public agenda. That is if a news item is enclosed regularly and obviously the audience will concern the issue as more vital.

So role of media is undoubtedly important to shape general people's mind on child marriage issue.





How can Media do its part to create more awareness?

- \* Media need to be more focused on this issue with passion,
- \* Media people need to understand this is a social welfare issue.
- \* Media need to engage youth community to spread this awareness more.
- \* Media must and should eradicate the negative perception perceptions
- \* Media need to be more committed to the fact that child marriage is illegal. Girls are not brides.
- \* Media need to be more careful while representing women. They need to give proper respect portraying women ethically and responsibly.
- \* Media has to be accountable to the communities and social awareness topics.
- \* Media with the help of civil society organizations need to be more opportunistic to expand the reach of the media stories.

We often watch the famous cartoon 'Meena'. Have we ever critically thought why this character being so popular where we easily pushes general peoples mind towards women empowerment without distracting social taboo. Now a day how we portraying women in media is a matter of question. Film, Advertisement, Videos songs everywhere we sale them as a product. But not in a good manner obviously. I think its high time media need to be more conscious on women empowerment and respecting them as an individual human being. Media also need to be more careful while they are showing female children. They shouldn't represent them with lots of makeup or a big girl costumes. They are mean to be child at this age and not to become models.

### **We need more movies like No Dorai using media to reach more people**

This film based on women's emancipation, achieving dreams by overcoming social obstacles hence this movie titled NODORAI where a young girl is fighting for her dream but society is not allowing her.



The plot is unique and based on the rural crucial social issue of our country which described the scenario where Bangladeshi society is built upon what women can do and cannot do. And here we can see how a teenager girl has to fight against early marriage. So I think these kind of movies need to be praised.

### **Birth Certificate for everyone**

Birth certificate need to be issued for every child. But it need to be the original, in Bangladesh we noticed some fake certificate registrations as well. When a child is born in Bangladesh it has to be mandatory. So in future when it's a matter of marriage legal procedure can be done easily.

### **Marriage Registration:**

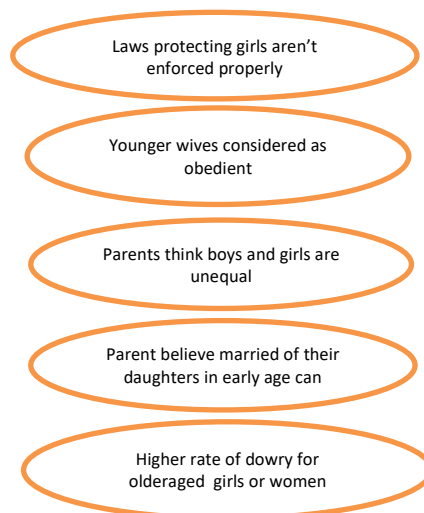
Marriage registration is mandatory in Bangladesh and every marriage should be registered. Based on the law it is an official document which can regulate the exact rights and responsibilities of a wife and husband and children.

### **Child marriage is a kind of child abuse:**

So when law is protecting pedophiles how can we protect our girls? If a girl is a victim of rape how can we just give justice by letting her married of with someone and not letting the girl live her life by her own choice. So question arises and still urban people are confused on this issue while rural people may take it as a weapon to practice this ill social custom of early marriage.

Now the question is how we can protect a girls honor by not giving her chance to live in her own terms rather make her a wife and mother before her age without her consent! So media need to be more careful while presenting the laws and representing it with their tools. Also we must understand there is a group of people always want women to stay indoor so we must understand the critical thinking behind these.

### **Why Early Marriage Happens:**



**Consequences of child marriage:**

Early marriage is one of the most dangerous social stigma of our culture. It's a harmful practice. Girls married early are more like experiencing vulnerable life.

They have to suffer with-

**Conclusion**

Apparently, the government is firming the legal framework to prevent early or child marriage and deliver authorization and remedies when such cases occurred. We trust that, children, both girls and boys, should be safe from the curse of early marriage by giving them with quality-full education, and accessibility of social services, information and knowledge. A defensive situation at the societal level is very significant, mainly for young girls to keep themselves from exploitation, sexual harassment, or assault. To prevent or stop early marriage, we need to set up volunteer institutions which can vigorously work to monitor issues related to this problem. The media can perform a big role in resolving this issue. Not only the mainstream media, but their stakeholders, sponsors and partners can also play an important role, through joint-initiatives with their other media partners.

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