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Impact of Early Marriage on the Educational Attainment of Tribal Girls in Jharkhand

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ABSTRACT: Early marriage remains a pervasive practice in Jharkhand's tribal communities, significantly impacting the educational attainment of young girls. This paper explores the intricate relationship between early marriage and education, highlighting how sociocultural norms, economic conditions, and gender dynamics contribute to elevated dropout rates and limited opportunities for these girls. By analyzing literature, case studies, and empirical data, the study aims to inform targeted interventions and policies to mitigate early marriage's negative consequences, promote educational empowerment, and foster sustainable development in Jharkhand.

KEYWORDS: Early marriage, Tribal Communities, Tribal Girls in Jharkhand

I. INTRODUCTION

In the tribal communities of Jharkhand, early marriage remains a prevalent social norm, deeply rooted in tradition and cultural practices. This phenomenon has far-reaching implications, particularly concerning the educational attainment of young girls. Early marriage, typically defined as marriage before the age of 18, has been recognized globally as a significant impediment to the realization of girls' rights, including their right to education. In the context of Jharkhand's tribal societies, where traditional values often hold sway over modern approaches to education and gender equality, the impact of early marriage on girls' educational opportunities is particularly pronounced. This paper aims to explore the multifaceted impact of early marriage on the educational attainment of tribal girls in Jharkhand. By examining the various factors at play, including sociocultural norms, economic conditions, and gender dynamics, we seek to understand the complex challenges faced by these girls in accessing and completing their education. Furthermore, this study will highlight the broader implications of early marriage, not only on individual girls but also on their families, communities, and the society at large. Through a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, case studies, and empirical data, we endeavor to shed light on the detrimental effects of early marriage on the educational trajectories of tribal girls in Jharkhand. By elucidating these effects, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of the underlying issues and inform the development of targeted interventions and policies aimed at mitigating the negative consequences of early marriage and promoting the educational empowerment of tribal girls in the region [1-4].

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chatterjee et al. (2016) conducted a significant study on the consequences of early childbearing on women's growth and nutritional status in India. They filled a research gap by focusing on Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, where early marriage and childbirth are prevalent. The study found that women married before 18 had a higher likelihood of being undernourished. Additionally, early childbirth was linked to higher anemia levels. The authors concluded that early marriage and childbirth negatively impacted women's nutritional status, emphasizing the need to prevent early marriages to improve women's health and reduce maternal and child mortality.

Collumbien et al. (2011) tackled the challenge of providing sexual and reproductive health services to rural youth in India. Through a survey of 6,572 young people and 264 health providers in West Bengal and Jharkhand, they observed that 31% of young married women used contraception to delay their first birth, indicating a shift in traditional fertility practices. However, access to these services remained limited, particularly for unmarried youth, due to social norms and negative provider attitudes. The study highlighted the need for the public sector to expand its services and train informal providers to better serve rural youth's reproductive health needs.

Lal (2015) explored the social institution of marriage in India, focusing on the high prevalence of child marriage. The study revealed that 45% of Indian girls marry before 18, with severe consequences including domestic violence, health problems, and pregnancy complications. Girls married before 15 were particularly at risk, being five times more likely to die in childbirth than women in their 20s. Lal emphasized that child brides often suffer from sexual abuse and severe depression. The study underscored the urgent need for interventions to prevent child marriage and protect young girls' health and rights.



Agrawal and Agrawal (2010) examined the health and socio-economic disparities between indigenous and non-indigenous women in Jharkhand, India. Using data from the NFHS-2, the study highlighted that indigenous women were significantly disadvantaged in terms of socio-demographic, family planning, and maternal health indicators. Compared to their non-indigenous counterparts, indigenous women faced greater challenges in accessing healthcare and achieving nutritional adequacy. The authors called for urgent implementation of targeted health care strategies to address these disparities and improve the well-being of indigenous women in Jharkhand.

McClendon et al. (2018) investigated barriers and facilitators to family planning among women and girls in Ethiopia and India following child marriage prevention programs. Through in-depth interviews with 128 women and girls, the study identified social norms and lack of information as significant barriers to family planning. Benefits of family planning included delayed first birth, improved maternal health, and increased educational attainment. The research highlighted the effectiveness of Ethiopia's school-based programs in enhancing access to contraception compared to India's community-based approach. The findings stressed the need for multi-sector approaches to improve family planning among young wives.

Ghosh and Kar (2010) addressed the persistent issue of child marriage in rural West Bengal, despite legislative efforts and awareness campaigns. Using field research, Census data, and secondary sources, they analyzed the causes and consequences of child marriage. The study found that child marriage remained prevalent due to deep-rooted social norms and lack of education. Ghosh and Kar proposed strategies to combat this social evil, emphasizing the importance of community engagement and education to shift cultural attitudes and protect young girls' rights and well-being.

Goswami (2017) focused on the issue of human trafficking in Jharkhand, India, identifying it as a major hub for this crime. The study estimated that 33,000 girls are trafficked annually from Jharkhand, mainly for labor and sexual exploitation. Most victims were under 18 and from impoverished backgrounds. The research highlighted the severe human rights violations involved and the need for stringent measures to combat trafficking. Goswami called for comprehensive strategies addressing the root causes of trafficking, including poverty and lack of education, to protect vulnerable women and girls.

Ghosh (2011) examined the prevalence of child marriage in West Bengal and its detrimental impact on adolescent girls. Despite legal provisions, the practice persisted, depriving girls of education, health, and freedom. The study emphasized the failure of existing strategies and the importance of engaging community stakeholders, particularly adolescent girls, in prevention efforts. Ghosh's research underscored the need for a combination of preventive and protective measures to safeguard the rights of child brides and ensure their well-being.

Prusty (2014) provided insights into contraceptive knowledge and use among scheduled tribes in India, focusing on Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. The study found that tribal women had lower awareness and use of contraception compared to non-tribal women, primarily due to health-related fears and accessibility issues. The unmet need for family planning was notably high among tribal women. Prusty highlighted the necessity of educating both women and their husbands about modern contraceptives and strengthening health systems to deliver quality family planning services.

Konwar et al. (2017) explored the lives of unmarried adolescent girls in Assam's tea gardens, highlighting the socio-cultural challenges they face. The study, based on the narratives of girls like Kamala, revealed struggles related to early marriage, elopement, and societal norms. Despite contributing significantly to Assam's economy, the tea tribe community remained marginalized. The research stressed the need for educational opportunities and state interventions to empower girls and improve their socio-economic conditions. Konwar et al. called for a deeper understanding of the community's history and identity to address these issues effectively.

III. SOCIOCULTURAL NORMS AND EARLY MARRIAGE

In Jharkhand's tribal communities, deeply ingrained sociocultural norms play a pivotal role in perpetuating the practice of early marriage among girls. These norms often prioritize traditional roles and responsibilities over educational pursuits, leading to the normalization of marriage at a young age. Factors such as family honor, community expectations, and the preservation of cultural identity contribute to the perpetuation of early marriage practices. Additionally, beliefs surrounding gender roles and the perceived value of girls' education within these communities influence parental decisions to marry off their daughters prematurely. Understanding the interplay between these sociocultural norms and early marriage is essential for developing effective interventions aimed at promoting the educational attainment and empowerment of tribal girls in Jharkhand [5].



IV. EFFECTS ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND DROPOUT RATES

Early marriage exerts a profound impact on the school attendance and dropout rates of tribal girls in Jharkhand. Many girls are compelled to discontinue their education prematurely upon entering into marriage, as societal expectations prioritize domestic roles over schooling. Consequently, early marriage often leads to a significant decline in school attendance rates among affected girls. Moreover, those who do manage to continue their education face numerous challenges, including increased absenteeism due to marital responsibilities, social stigma within educational institutions, and decreased academic performance resulting from the strain of balancing marriage and schooling. As a result, early marriage significantly contributes to elevated dropout rates among tribal girls in Jharkhand, perpetuating a cycle of limited educational attainment and reinforcing socioeconomic disparities within these communities [6-7].

V. LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES AND CYCLE OF POVERTY IN TRIBAL GIRLS

Early marriage among tribal girls in Jharkhand often results in limited opportunities for socioeconomic advancement, thereby perpetuating a cycle of poverty within these communities. By curtailing their education, early marriage diminishes girls' prospects for acquiring the skills and qualifications necessary for gainful employment or higher education. As a consequence, many married girls are relegated to low-paying, menial jobs or are entirely dependent on their spouses for financial support. This economic vulnerability exacerbates the prevalence of poverty among tribal families and undermines efforts towards community development and empowerment. Moreover, the intergenerational transmission of poverty is perpetuated as early marriage deprives girls of the opportunity to break free from socioeconomic constraints and contribute to their families' economic well-being. Addressing the root causes of early marriage and investing in educational and economic opportunities for tribal girls are critical steps towards breaking the cycle of poverty and fostering sustainable development in Jharkhand's tribal communities.

IV. RISKS OF EARLY PREGNANCY AND MATERNAL HEALTH OF TRIBAL GIRLS IN JHARKHAND

Early marriage significantly increases the risk of early pregnancy among tribal girls in Jharkhand, posing grave threats to their health and well-being. Adolescent girls, whose bodies are not fully developed, are at heightened risk of experiencing complications during pregnancy and childbirth. These complications may include obstructed labor, preterm birth, low birth weight, and maternal mortality. Moreover, early pregnancy often deprives girls of the opportunity to complete their education and pursue personal aspirations, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities. In Jharkhand's tribal communities, where access to quality healthcare services is often limited, maternal health outcomes are particularly concerning. Many tribal girls lack access to skilled birth attendants, prenatal care, and emergency obstetric services, increasing the likelihood of adverse outcomes for both mother and child. Additionally, prevalent sociocultural practices may hinder girls' ability to make informed decisions about their reproductive health, further exacerbating the risks associated with early pregnancy. Addressing the risks of early pregnancy and maternal health among tribal girls in Jharkhand requires comprehensive interventions that prioritize access to reproductive health education, family planning services, and maternal healthcare. By empowering girls with knowledge about their reproductive rights and providing them with essential healthcare services, we can mitigate the adverse consequences of early marriage and promote the health and well-being of tribal girls and their communities [9-10].

V. CONCLUSION

Early marriage in Jharkhand's tribal communities severely curtails educational opportunities for girls, perpetuating cycles of poverty and poor maternal health. Effective interventions must address sociocultural norms, enhance access to education, and improve healthcare services. By empowering tribal girls through education and health initiatives, it is possible to break the cycle of poverty and foster community development, ultimately contributing to gender equality and socioeconomic advancement in Jharkhand.

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