



“Impact And Factors Affecting on Child Marriages During Covid-19 in Karnataka”

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Abstract

The paper examines the status of women and girl children since the dawn of humanity, showing how the girl child came to be seen as a liability that should be avoided at all costs, with child marriage as its obvious result. Lawmakers in the British era employed legislative measures to prevent child marriage and reduce the dangers involved with it since child marriage has a negative impact on the child and can thus undermine the growth and development of the nation. But because the laws were proving to be insufficient, India became independence and new sets of laws were created. Along with this, the government implements a number of programmes to organise the fight against child marriage and to educate the public. However, with the introduction of COVID-19, the legal system and all advancement in the industry came to a complete halt. In order to address the growing issue of child marriages in India, the article examines the state of Karnataka's best practises as well as the inclusion of information systems.

Key Words: Factors of child marriage, Impact, Why Ahead, Pressures Caused by Pandemic

Introduction

Child rights campaigners were concerned to witness a rush of child marriages being reported in Karnataka last year when the epidemic gripped the world and India went into lockdown. There are concerns that child marriages will go unrecognized given the current lockdown, which restricts weddings to homes due to tight rules.

According to reports from Child line from April 2020 to January 2021, a total of 2,180 child marriage instances were recorded in Karnataka, according to Fr. Antony Sebastian, chair of the Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR).

"In the past, there were people who might warn the appropriate authorities or campaigners who could arrive at time to stop child marriages when they occurred in wedding halls, temples, etc. But now that more marriages are taking place at homes, we might receive fewer alerts, and visiting them might be considered

trespassing, according to Nagasimha G. Rao of the Child Rights Trust, who wrote to Minister Shashikala Jolle, who oversees the department. But she hasn't yet replied.

During the previous lockdown, many child marriages were reported in Bengaluru Urban as well, according to P. Lakshapathi, founder and executive director of APSA (Association for Promoting Social Action), which works with the Childline in Bengaluru. This is likely because of the large number of migrants living in the area. between January and April 2021, the APSA had received 14 child marriage cases.

A number of factors

"During the first lockdown, we witnessed child marriages for a number of reasons, from the girl's insecurity to the parents' assumption that their obligation ends with her marriage to the fact that they could get away with a straightforward marriage without inviting too many people, resulting in less expense. As soon as we receive information, we work to raise awareness. Many people are unaware of the offence's punishment.

The contact with Child line learns about child marriages.

"Kindly inform the Child line whenever people learn about such marriages. If the relationship is underage, proceedings are still opened, and there have been occasions where the offenders have also received punishment. The goal is raising public awareness to stop other incidents of this nature. A commercial will occasionally play on TV. But continuous reminders, like the COVID-19 greeting melody, will help spread the word about the issue.

The problem of rising child marriages in Lockdown has recently been brought up by activists and organizations from Karnataka with the Ministry of Women and Child Development. In rural Karnataka, child marriages have increased as a result of the pandemic and the accompanying lockdown, according to a report released in December 2020 by Child Line India.

Children Marriage:

It is described as a girl or boy becoming married before they become 18 and includes both legally recognized marriages and unrecognized relationships in which youngsters live with one partner as though they are married.

According to UNICEF estimates, at least 1.5 million girls under the age of 18 get married in India every year, making it the country with the most child brides worldwide, making up a third of the total. According to a recent report by The Lancet, the Covid-19 pandemic may put up to 2.5 million more girls (under the age of 18) at danger of being married in the next five years.

Reasons why child marriages rise when there are lockdowns:

Absence of an alert system:

In the past, there were people who would warn the appropriate authorities or activists who could arrive at time to stop child marriages when they occurred in wedding halls, temples, etc. However, due to the increase in house weddings, we might receive fewer alerts and our presence there might be viewed as trespassing.

Pressures Caused by Pandemics:

Lack of schools was a key factor in the rise in violence against children and child weddings, as were economic pressures from the pandemic that forced poor parents to marry off girls young.

Common Reasons for Child Marriages:

The Age Factor

Some parents begin looking for a match for their child around the 15–18 age range because they view this time as being unproductive, particularly for girls. In addition, the Right To Schooling Act only mandates free and compulsory education for children up to the age of 14 and makes child marriage more common among underage girls than boys.

Insecurity:

Because Law and Order is still unable to offer females in their adolescent years a secure atmosphere, some parents choose to marry their daughters when they are still quite young.

Other Motives:

Poverty, economical and political constraints, a lack of education, patriarchy and gender disparities, etc.

Impact:

Defers the demographic dividend:

Child marriage encourages more families, which boosts the population. This postpones the demographic benefit that would have resulted from investment in education and decreased fertility.

Not Good for Family:

Young married children are not aware of the obligations of marriage. Family members struggle to comprehend one another as a result. Disrupts the institution of the family as a result.

Regarding the Child Bride:

It has a detrimental effect on children's rights to protection, health, and education. A female who gets married young is more likely to stop going to school, not make any money, and not give back to the community. She has a higher chance of contracting HIV/AIDS and experiencing domestic violence. Her prospects are higher dying due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

Governmental Programs to Avoid Child Marriage:

Child marriage is prohibited by the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929.

The Special Marriage Act of 1954 and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006 specify that a woman and a man must be 18 and 21 years old, respectively, to give their permission to marriage.

To address and correct the deficiencies of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 was enacted.

The Union Ministry for Women and Child Development has established a committee to look into issues relating to maternal mortality rates, the necessity of lowering them, and the enhancement of women's nutritional status.

Prevention of Child Marriage is a part of SDG which deals with gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.

Way ahead

Making sure there is a significant cohort of child protection workers among crucial health staff is one approach to prevent child marriages during the pandemic. India has a strong network of community workers who have done outstanding work to make sure that people can get health care and other social security services during these difficult times. Such social Workers could monitor girl youngsters at danger of early marriage and take preventative measures if they were integrated into the system. This could take the form of counseling for awareness and facilitating the delivery of benefits to the affected family.

Conclusion

Childhood is not a natural state. It is heavily influenced by culture. If this were more widely known, it would promote basic inquiries about children and citizenship in ways that are not currently common in the larger community. According to the life cycle concept, early marriage has a negative impact on a girl's life in general, with long-term implications including disrupted education, early pregnancies, vulnerability to domestic violence, and reduced economic opportunities. Without a doubt, underage marriages are against women's human rights. It's also true that a lot of kids get married young. In Karnataka, at least one in five females get married before they turn 18 years old. In light of this, it is evident that criminalization may not be the sole solution and that further efforts to strengthen institutions and service delivery are required on a broad scale. Because child weddings are prohibited by Karnataka law, these young girls do not acquire the status of wives, and the danger of avoidance of Child marriage.

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