



# IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CHILD MARRIAGES

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## ABSTRACT

UNICEF has released a report on the International Women's Day on Child Marriage, highlighting that vulnerable girls are inevitably forced to marry during the Covid-19 pandemic due to increased school closures, financial stress, service disruptions, pregnancy and parental deaths due to the epidemic.

**Keywords:** child marriage, covid-19, health.

## INTRODUCTION

UNICEF released its survey report on 'child marriage' on International Women's Day, bringing the shocking news that there have been around 25 million child marriages in the last decade.

The pandemic has had harmful effects on the most susceptible household economies and raises the risk of child marriage (Ramaswamy&Seshadri,2020). This claim is backed by evidence indicating that in some disaster-affected countries poor families, in times of crisis and disaster, marry their underage children as a way to pursue other sources of income or reduce the current household burden

Child marriage occurs when at least one of the partners, as described in the Convention on the Rights of Children, is under 18 years of age. Child marriage or early marriage poses significant challenges to women's health, dignity and autonomy.

**The key points of the report are:** Despite several countries taking significant precautions regarding child marriage in recent years, it has warned that over 100 million girls will be at risk of child marriage in the next decade.

Globally, child marriage has decreased by 15 per cent in the last 10 years. However, the outbreak of the Covid Pandemic has predicted that the marriage will rise in the coming decade

It has warned that more than 10 million girls are getting into trouble due to the current Covid-Wave. An estimated 650 million girls and women worldwide are married as a child. Of those, half reported being married in Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, India and Nigeria. The goal set out in the Sustainable Development Goals is to significantly accelerate progress - to mitigate the effects of Covid-19 and to prevent childbirth by 2030.

### **Complications from Covid-19's disease**

The rate of child marriages has increased by 25 per cent per year due to school closures. Consequently, they risk marriage throughout their childhood.

**Pregnancy:** Child marriage is on the rise as a result of closing school and having children quit school pregnant death: Parental mortality is expected to have little effect on child marriage. There have been instances where death has been the only occasion.

**Economy shocks:** In countries where the bride price is high and the income is low, the likelihood of a wedding is about 3% higher. Similarly, in countries where dowry is common, the risk is as low as 1%, with the result being 4%.

**Disruptions to Programs and Services:** It is estimated that if the wedding program is delayed for the purpose of preventing child marriage, the specified programs will lose one year of its income. The risk scenario is only one per cent if the effective program is mobilized. 33 percent said to be reduced.

It is estimated that early childhood marriages are more likely to occur in older women due to Covid-19 Pandemic.

COVID-19 is profoundly affecting the lives of girls. Pandemic-related travel restrictions and physical distancing make it difficult for girls to access the health care, social services and community support that protect them from child marriage, unwanted pregnancy and gender-based violence. As schools remain closed, girls are more likely to drop out of education and not return. Job losses and increased economic insecurity may also force families to marry their daughters to ease financial burdens.

“One year into the pandemic, immediate action is needed to mitigate the toll on girls and their families,” added Fore. “By reopening schools, implementing effective laws and policies, ensuring access to health

and social services – including sexual and reproductive health services – and providing comprehensive social protection measures for families, we can significantly reduce a girl’s risk of having her childhood stolen through child marriage.”

### **Safety measures for child education**

The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic is likely to have an impact at least for the next decade. However, it is now known that increasing the risk of child marriage for young girls is the norm. Evidence suggests that conditional cash transfers are the most effective intervention to improve girls' retention and their academic progress in school and delay child marriage.

### **CONCLUSION**

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimates that as many as 24 million children and adolescents, including 11 million girls and young women, can drop out of school due to the economic impact of the Pandemic.

Closing school or quitting school has led to an increase in the rate of marriage and pregnancy among teenagers. Therefore, it is important to identify appropriate measures to ensure continuity of learning when schools are closed and safe measures should be taken when schools reopen. It cautioned children to look out for children and deprived communities, especially in poorer countries.

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