

# Socio–Economic Rights of the Early Married Muslim Women



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## Abstract

Early marriage is one of the major social problems faced by young girls among the Muslim Community in Delhi Sahib Darga at Parangipettai. The Muslim Women are dominated to a great extent in society. They adhere to the strict culture and practices. Muslim Women, right from their childhood are forced to do things whether they like it or not and accept them as they exist.

The objective of the research is to study the demographic details of the respondents, to investigate the causes of early marriage, to analyze the educational level, and the awareness of the rights perspective and the consequences of early marriage.

The Study is descriptive in nature and used Simple Random Sampling Lottery Method and purposive sampling method for both Quantitative and Qualitative analysis respectively. The Universe consists of 142 units and with the help of Simple Random Sampling Lottery method; the required number of 50 respondents were selected. Based on the triangulation of data collected through in-depth interviews and focused group discussions a number of themes emerged as key findings for Qualitative analysis.

The researcher found that the parents of the respondents marry and give their daughters soon so that their responsibilities are over. On the other hand, the respondents' health condition is affected, the respondents are tortured, abused, in both their childhood residence and in their In-Laws house just because they are born as female and are in extreme poverty that the respondents' education is a big question. The researcher has also offered feasible suggestions based on the main findings of her qualitative analysis to improve the socio-economic status and the rights of the respondents.

**Keywords:** Early Marriage, Muslim Women, Simple Random Lottery Method, Qualitative Analysis, Marry

## Introduction

In India, especially in Tamil nadu, Muslim Women of some parts of the State are dominated to a great extent. The Muslim women are not allowed to have a second thought or to take decisions of their own. Muslim Women are never allowed to question. There are innumerable families who are still conservative. These people still live in their own traditional beliefs.

The patriarchal society does not allow the Muslim women to have sufficient access to education, knowledge and are never let to have a broad vision towards the outer world. The Muslim families are bound into the orthodox culture.

Women are viewed as vulnerable section in our society and are considered to be inferior. Parangipettai is a small area in Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu, where a lot of Muslim Women are trapped in the Early marriage Scenario. Early Marriage is very much prevalent and due to which the Muslim Women are caught in the Domestic life at an early age. The following quotation is taken from Quran that criticizes the attitude of parents who reject their female child:

“When news is brought to one of them, of (the birth of) a female (child), his face darkens and is filled with inward grief! With shame does he hide himself from his people because of the bad news he had! Shall he retain her or and contempt, or bury her in the dust? Ah! What an evil (choice) they decide on?”

-Quran, 16:58-59

## Explanation of the Quotation

The Quotation says about the feelings and the condition of the father when a female child is born to his wife. It portrays the hatred towards a daughter since the father expected a son and out of shame, he hides himself. The father considers his daughter as a burden and now he has been left with a choice as whether to have the female child and bring her up or else to "bury her in the dust". Here, it is very clear about the extent of gender discrimination that occurs in our society especially among Muslim Women. It can also be interpreted as one of the reasons why the parents marry their daughters at an early age. Family is the first social place for the development of a child. In this condition, when the parents themselves reject or hate the female child, then it becomes very difficult for the Women to survive in society. Despite the fact that, Quran portrays the feelings of the father, the last line of the Quotation describes the preference given to the male child as an evil choice.

## Specific Objective

- To study the demographic details of the respondents
- To investigate the causes of early marriage
- To analyze the educational level of the early married muslim women
- To examine the rights of the respondents
- To explore the consequences of early marriage on marital dissolution, work status and occupation.

This research study focuses on the socio-economic conditions of the early married Muslim women in Delhi Sahib Darga at parangipettai. The Muslim women in this area are caught in the crossfire at different levels. The Muslim Women living in this area silently wipe their tears behind the Purdah unable to raise their voice against injustice.

## Statement of the Problem

Most of the women in Parangipettai area get married at an early age and give birth to children. This is due to the cultural practices that are strongly inherited from generations after generations. Also, Poverty is one of the major causes for child marriage. Muslim Women are never asked about their views towards wedding and are forced to accept the Bridegroom. The Muslim people have a notion that puberty alone is the only eligibility for marriage. They just refuse to think whether a Muslim girl is really ready for her married life, whether she is physically and psychologically strong enough to get into the domestic life and has the capacity to give birth to a child. The Muslim Women are pushed into the threshold of marriage.

Most of the Muslim women are considered as a burden in their house as soon as they attain puberty. Their parents want to get their daughters somehow married no matter

whether the bridegroom is an employed, an educated, a well-mannered person and so on. They also get their daughters married to a person who is already married and even to a physically challenged person. In Some families, there are four or five daughters where the situation is pathetic. It is due to fear of dowry at a late age, they get their daughters married at a young age itself.

The Muslim Women are unable to defend due to lack of education, lack of support, confidence, and lack of income and so on. They are not strong enough to defend and make use of their own rights because they are dependent on their family and act according to their intentions. Only if they are educated, they will be confident to face difficulties and will gain power to live independently. Most of the early married Muslim Women attain a low level of education.

The Muslim Women in Parangipettai area do not have exposure to mass media like radio, television and so on. The uneducated people just watch movies which is entertaining to them. They do not even have the intention to gain useful information. It also has a significant effect on marriage. Women with no access to media were more likely to have married early because of their unawareness on the consequences of early marriage. The Muslim Women are unable to teach their own children due to lack of education. They are easily cheated in society and people take advantage of the illiterate Muslim Women. Therefore, all these problems arise due to early marriage.

## Research Design

The researcher while attempting to study the socio-economic rights of the early married Muslim Women found out that no one had undertaken any research related to this study in Delhi Sahib Darga at parangipettai earlier. The researcher had adopted a DESCRIPTIVE DESIGN for the study. Since no one has undertaken any research before, the researcher was unable to obtain hypothesis. Also, descriptive design is used for the summary of the case studies for Qualitative Analysis.

## Method of Sampling

There were 142 Muslim Women who were married early at an age group of below 18 years, which constitutes the universe for the study. The researcher had to use Simple Random Sampling Lottery method in order to acquire the required number of respondents i.e., 50 respondents. Simple Random Sampling Lottery method is where the researcher wrote all the names of the 142 units and asked a person to pick up 50 lotteries who is not related to the research in anyway

To collect the Qualitative, the researcher used purposive sampling method to select 10 respondents for the case studies. The data were collected through in-depth interviews and focused group discussions. Based on the triangulation of

data, various themes emerged as key findings. The data was analyzed on the basis of their economic condition, social life, cultural aspects, family background, health condition, and human rights point of view.

**Sources of Data**

Data are the collection of related information obtained for the study from the various sources. The primary source of information was the respondents. The methods that were involved are:

- Personal observation and investigation
- Group discussions
- In-depth interview guide
- Interview Schedule.

The secondary source of information were obtained from books, magazines, and journals. The information was also obtained from local BLESS NGO reports, field staff and supervisors.

**Focussed Issue**

Here, in Delhi Sahib Darga, most of the girls are forced to marry at an early age. There are cases where the girl was forced to marry at 11 years even before attending puberty. A young girl who is physically and psychologically immature is pushed into the threshold of marriage.

This area is itself in a very pathetic condition where a common man who is just visiting that area would easily come to know that the people are living in extreme poverty. The people live in hut houses where women, even to fetch a bucket of water from a neighbouring house wear purdah. The researcher found that the girls living in that area are married at an early age for various reasons such as poverty, considered as a burden, due to many female children in their house, fear of dowry at late marriage, to avoid love marriages, because parents are sick, because the bridegroom is first cousin and wants the wedding to take place early and so on.

In that case, a girl is never allowed to take decisions. She just acts like a doll to whatever others say. She is not allowed to raise her voice and even if she does so, she is ill treated by her own parents. The condition of these girls is worse since they do not know what to do. At an early age where girls wish to play, laugh, learn, and dream of their future life end tragically which looks as if they are born only to get married soon.

**Major Findings**

**Figure – I: Age of the respondent**

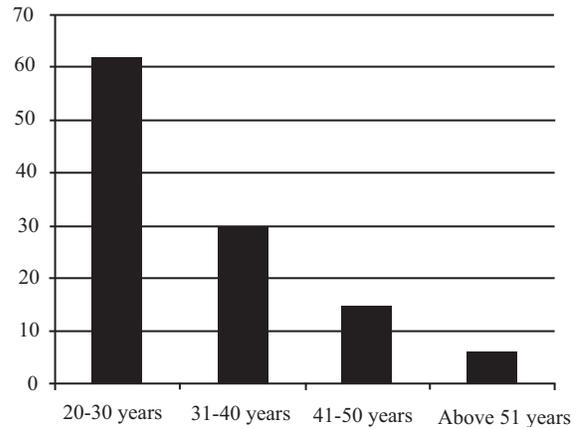
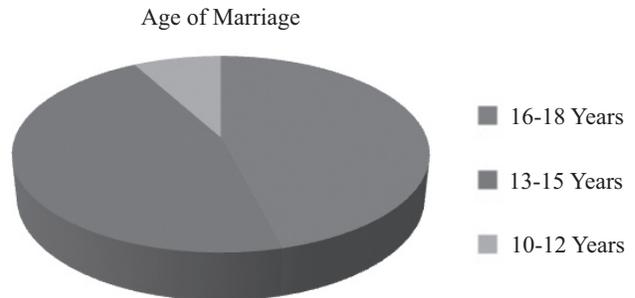


Figure 1 shows that 62 percent of the respondents were between the age group of 20-30 years that signifies that the respondents are very young. 30 percent of the respondents fall under 31 – 40 years and 6 percent of them fall above 51 years.

**Figure – II: Age of marriage**



The researcher analyzed the Age of marriage of the respondents and found that 8% were married at the age of 10 – 12 years and 46% of them between 13 – 15 years.

**Figure – III: Inclusion of the respondents opinion towards marriage**

Respondents Opinion Towards Marriage



Nearly 52% of the respondents were not asked about their liking towards marriage. Their parents and their relatives just consulted among themselves and fixed the wedding without giving importance to the respondents wish and whether they are willing to marry or not.

- Around 92% of the respondents go for arranged marriage due to the strict cultural practice. The respondents were never allowed to go out, interact with outsiders, mingle with people and so on.
- The majority of the respondents were married early due to poverty that holds 58 percent.
- The educational level is not so good because among those who were allowed to go to school, 64 percent of them had attended primary school and only 24 percent of the respondents attended high school.
- Forty four percent of the respondents were allowed to go to school of which 28 percent went to school below 10 years, 16 percent between 10-15 years and after that they are not allowed to study.
- The researcher found that 60 percent of the respondents were not allowed to schooling due to poverty.
- Forty percent of them are unable to teach their own children and 28 percent are unable to take decisions on their own.
- Twenty – three percent of the respondents are tortured due to female gender and the persons who tortured are parents, grandparents and in-laws.
- Twenty – eight percent of the respondents had experienced both physical and psychological abuse in their own childhood residence. 14 percent had undergone all kinds of abuse like physical, psychological, sexual and verbal.
- Only 10 percent of the respondents were not demanded for dowry.
- Only 1 percent of the respondents family were able to give sufficient dowry at the time of marriage.
- Nearly 39 percent of the respondents went to work before marriage and the reasons are due to low economic status, forced to earn money, to clear debts and to give sufficient dowry at the time of marriage.
- Eight eight percent of the respondents undergo abuse in society and in in-laws house.
- Twenty percent of the respondents were abused within the first month of marriage and the saddest part is that 2 percent of the respondents were abused on the very first day of marriage.
- 48 percent of the respondents are tortured due to the improper wedding arrangements and 30 percent are tortured for physical appearance.

|                                    |    |     |
|------------------------------------|----|-----|
| Life endangering physical violence | 8  | 16  |
| Psychological violence             | 11 | 22  |
| Total                              | 50 | 100 |

1. Nearly 46 percent of the respondents are battered everyday like kicking, stabbing, beating, insulting and so on.
2. Ninety percent of the respondents are physically and psychologically affected due to violence that takes place.
3. Only 2 percent have space and independency in marriage.
4. The researcher found that 52 percent of the respondents are unaware of the presence of Rights itself.
5. Eighty six percent of the respondents are never allowed to take decisions of their own.
6. Ninety six percent of the respondents are unable to raise voice due to lack of confidence.
7. Eighty eight percent of the respondents health is affected at the time of Pregnancy, Delivery, Natural Abortion, under-nourishment, underweight babies are born and so on.
8. Seventy two percent of the respondents are unable to understand and adjust with the husband when conflicts take place.
9. The researcher found that 54 percent of the respondents were not allowed to study after marriage.

**Sachar Committee Report**

The Sachar Committee Report also says that according to the 2001 census, the Muslim population in the country was enumerated at 138 million. The report estimates that as of 2006 it must have crossed 150 million people. The report confirms that Muslims have higher population growth rates and higher fertility rates than the rest of the population even when adjusted to regional variations such as the north (with a higher population growth rates) or south (with near replacement level growth rates). In both instances, the Muslim population growth rate is slightly higher than that of the other socio-religious communities in the said region.

The report also says that Muslims have the most favourable Child Sex Ratio among all socio-religious communities in the Country. An average of 986 females to every 1000 males compared to 927/1000 for the general population. They have a lower rate of Am compared to the rest of the population but paradoxically have a higher incidence of child under-nourishment cases. Muslims have a younger age profile compared to the general population.

**Table – I: Kind of violence undergone in in-laws house**

|  | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|
| Battering everyday like beating, kicking, stabbing, insults. | 23        | 46      |
| Sexual Violence  | 8         | 16      |

## Suggestions

A range of policy and programmatic actions are needed to reduce early marriage and its impact. Actions should take place to fulfill or to restore the rights of those already married should go hand in hand with preventive action aimed at wider society. The aim should be to inform parents and young people currently comfortable with the practice of early marriage so that they are aware of its true implications and empowered to resist it. The role of Government and civil social institutions is to develop and implement suitable systems to prevent or discourage the practices.

- Physical welfare of the respondents is intended to maintain sexual and reproductive health by ensuring that young girls learn about sex, reproduction and the related risks at early marriage.
- There is an urgent need to transform attitudes and approaches towards adolescent health care and provide services that are accessible to parents and their children.
- Life skill education for sexual health and negotiation needs should be provided in the classroom, youth clubs, newsletters, radio and so on.
- The key for Girl's progress depends on education and learning. When girls have lost formal education due to poverty, non-formal programmes can help them catch up on the intellectual and personal growth. These programmes can have a direct impact.

## Conclusion

Early Marriage among the Muslim women impairs the realization and enjoyment of virtually every one of their rights. The imposition of a marriage partner on children or Adolescents who are in no way ready for their married life, and whose marriage will deprive them of freedom, opportunity for personal development, and other rights including their health, education, and participation in civic life, nullifies the meaning of Convention on The Rights of the Child (CRC)'s core protections for those concerned. Unless measures are taken to address early marriage, it will continue to be a stumbling block to the achievement of Human Rights.

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