

**Socio-Economic Impact of Early Marriages of Girls: A Case Study of Pachrukha Village, Purba Champaran**

**Dr. Hussain Dilshi**

Department of Geography  
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

**Abstract**

This paper analyzed the socio-economic impact of early marriages of girls in Pachrukha Village of Purba Champaran based on the field survey. Early marriages of girls happen in the name of tradition, patriarchy, security or future of a girl child and do not give freedom to young girls to decide about their future regarding age of the marriage and whom to marry. After examining the early marriages in study area it has been demonstrated that majority of early married girls have to face various issues like dropouts from school and colleges, have to face violence, have lots of health issues and they have less decision making participation in the house.

**Keywords:** Early Marriages, education attainment, work participation, domestic violence, health issues and decision making.

**Introduction**

Although early marriage (marriage of girls before 18 and boys before 21 years), is still a serious problem and is one of the worst kinds of human right violation, as it hampers the overall development of an individual, but girls are the real victims as they outnumber boys (Lee-Rife et al., 2012). Early marriage of girls happen in the societies in the name of tradition, patriarchy, security or future of a girl child and does not give freedom to young girls to decide about their future regarding age of the marriage and whom to marry (Davie et al., 2013). Early marriages results in issues related to physical, psychological and emotional development and hinder their progress and well being (Dixon-Mueller 2008) and they faced long term violence too (Santhya et al., 2010). According to Ahmed et al., (2013), young married girls suffer from depression and low self esteem and Clark (2004) and Clark et al., (2006) stated that they become victims of sexual abuse with very high risks of sexually transmitted diseases. In India and particularly in Bihar, poor as well as well to do families prefer early marriage of girls as more dowries has to be given to older girls (Anderson 2007). Early marriage complicates pregnancies, leading to maternal deaths, infants born under-weight and high infant mortality rate (UNICEF 2005, Raj et al., 2010 and Godha et al., 2013).

According to data from District Level Household and Facility Survey (DLHS) of 2007-08, there is marked district wise variation in early marriages of girls in India and the rate of such marriages are highest in Bihar as compared to other states. DLHS has categorized the states and it is clear that 92 percent of districts in Bihar come under the high category which is the highest as compared to other larger states (table 1).

**Table 1: Total number of Districts in Major States Having Currently Married Women Aged 20-24 who were Married before 18, DLFS (2007-08)**

States	Low (< 20%)	Moderate (21-50%)	High (51-70%)	Very High (> 70%)	Total Districts
Andhra Pradesh	0	4 (31%)	9 (69%)	0	13
Bihar	0	3 (8%)	34 (92%)	0	37
Gujarat	2 (12%)	21 (80%)	2 (8%)	0	25
Karnataka	3 (11%)	11 (41%)	13 (48%)	3 (11%)	27
Madhya Pradesh	1 (2%)	15 (33%)	29 (64%)	4 (11%)	45
Maharashtra	8 (23%)	16 (46%)	11 (31%)	1 (3%)	35
Odisha	7 (23 %)	18 (60%)	5 (17%)	2 (7%)	30
Rajasthan	0	11 (34%)	21 (66%)	5 (2%)	32
Tamil Nadu	14 (47%)	16 (53%)	0	0	30
Telangana	0	4 (40%)	6(60%)	0	10
Uttar Pradesh	2 (3%)	24 (34%)	44 (63%)	12 (17%)	70
West Bengal	0	7 (37%)	12 (63%)	1 (5%)	19

Source: District Level Study on Child Marriage in India, ICRW and UNICEF (2015)

**Data Base and Methodology**

According to McKinsey Global Institute Report by Woetzel et al., (2015) on gender parity, Bihar has performed worst on the Gender Parity Score (GPS) and in another study by Dilshi (2018) Purba Champaran has performed worst in Bihar. On the basis these two studies Purba Champaran has been selected for the field survey and although it had 1293 villages, but the one with the maximum population (Pachrukha) in 2011 was chosen for the primary survey which was conducted in 2017 of 400 married women by random systematic method. 200 married respondents were surveyed from both the major religious communities of the region i.e. Muslim and Hindu. Certain hypotheses were tested with the help of Chi-square test as it was applied to examine the extent of relationship between the dependent variable (early marriage) and independent variables (education, work participation, health, violence and decision making). This was done on the basis of primary data generated through field survey.

Chi-square test:

$\chi^2$  will be computed by following formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \left[ \frac{(O - E)^2}{E} \right]$$

Where, O --- Observed Value, E --- Expected value and  $\sum$  --- Total sum

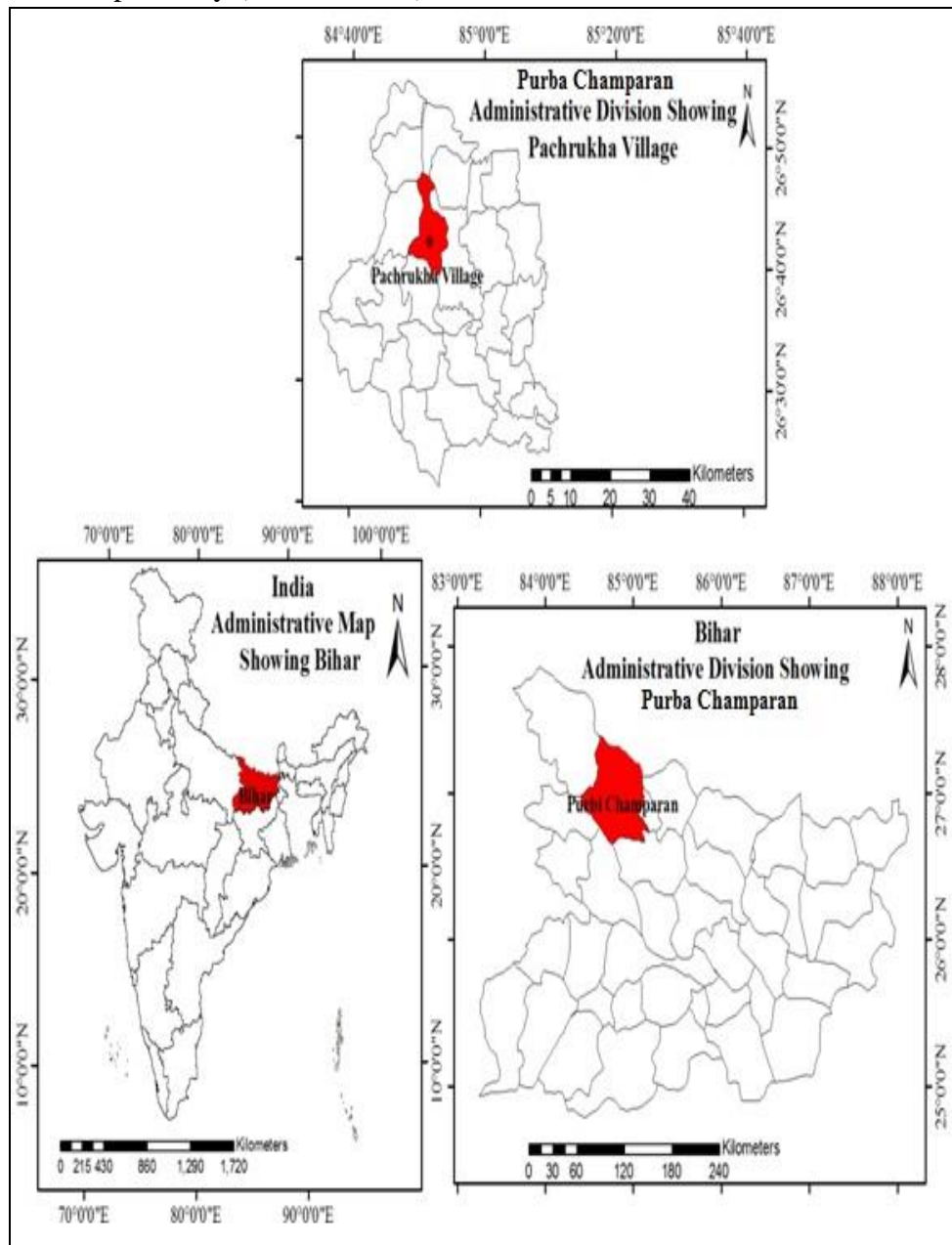
If the p-value is less than the significance level 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis.

If the p- value is more than the significance level 0.05, null hypothesis will not be rejected.

**Study Area**

Pachrukha under Banjaria C.D. Block is the most populated village (39,140 persons) in Purba Champaran District of Bihar and has also the largest area in the district i.e. 3823

hectares. The literacy rate of male and female in the Banjaria C.D. Block is 62.95 percent and 43.88 percent respectively. The sex ratio and child sex ratio of Banjaria C.D. block is 890 and 958 respectively (Census, 2011).

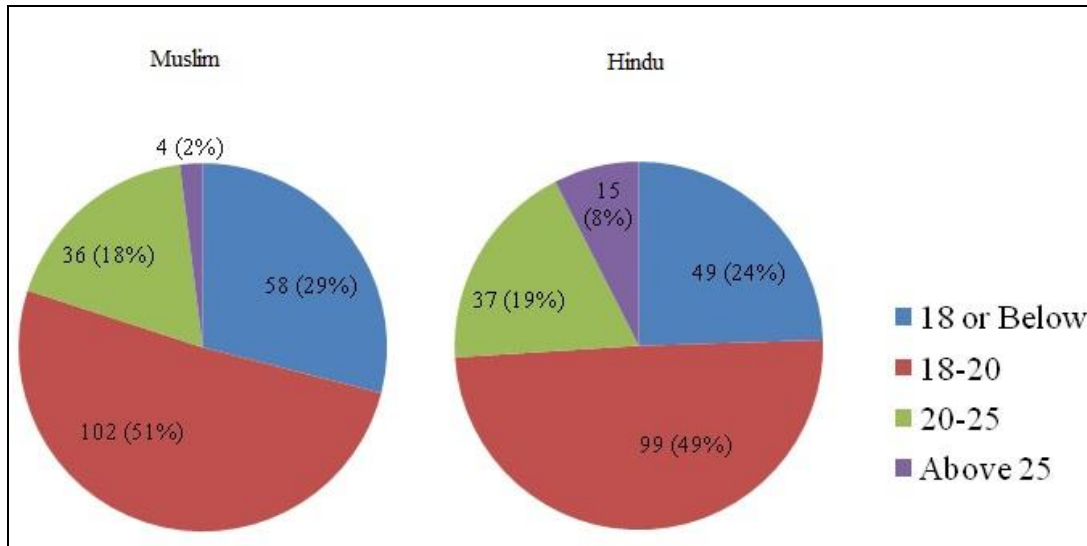


**Fig 1: Showing Pachrukha Village**

**Result and analysis**

Early marriage of girls is one of the major obstacles in the overall development of females. Early marriages of girl are common in both the Muslim and Hindu communities. 29 percent Muslim women respondents and 24 percent Hindu women respondents married at the age of 18 or below. Of the total, 80 percent Muslim women and 73 percent Hindu women married before 20 year of age (figure 2).

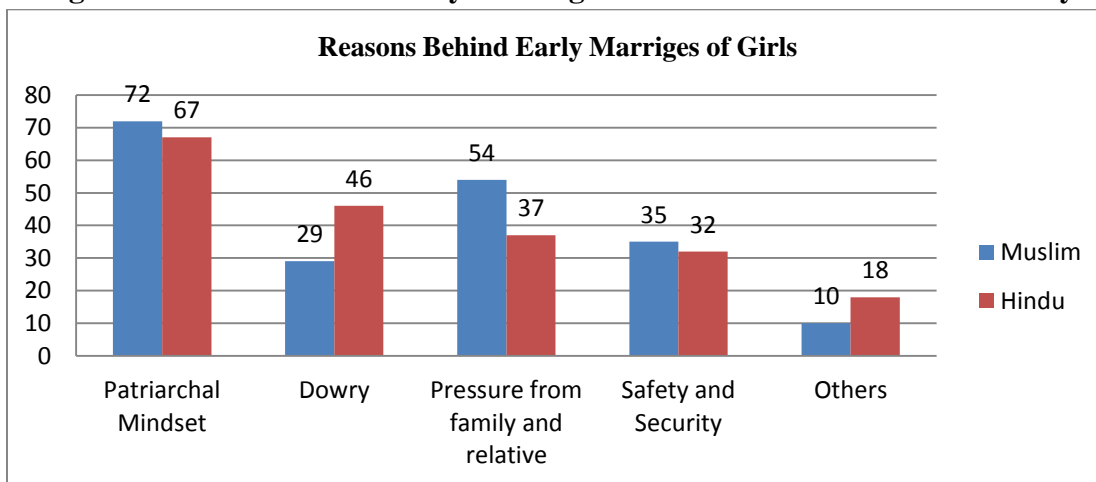
**Figure 2: Age at the time of marriage of Muslim and Hindu women respondents**



Source: Field Survey

According to the majority of respondents, patriarchal mindset of the society is the major reason behind the early marriage of female. Among Muslim community the second most important reason behind the early marriage is pressure from family and relative followed by safety and security and dowry while among Hindu community dowry is second most important reason behind early marriages (figure 3).

**Figure 3: Reasons behind early marriages in Muslim and Hindu community**

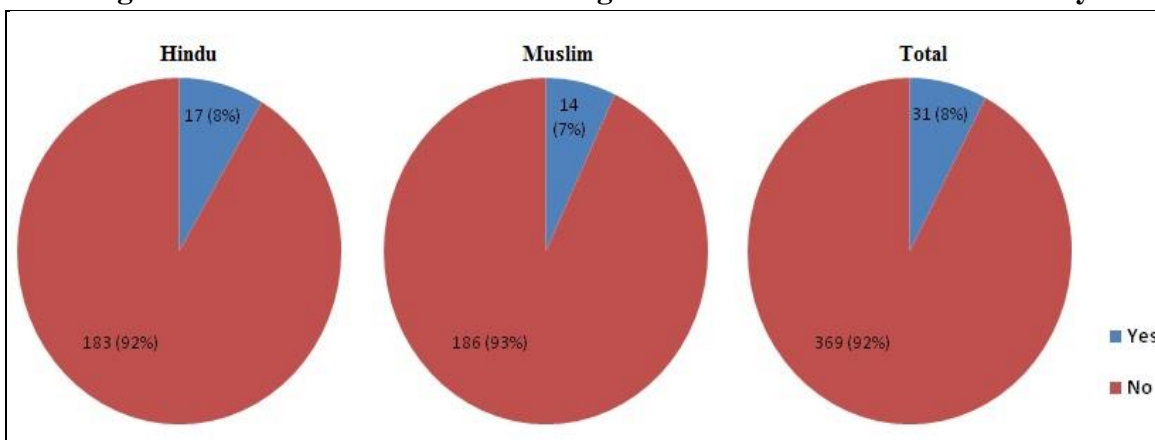


Source: Same as Fig.2

In Indian society it has been mostly seen that parents decide to marry their daughters without consulting them. The autonomy of women is still constrained as most of the female are not consulted before their marriages and mate selection.

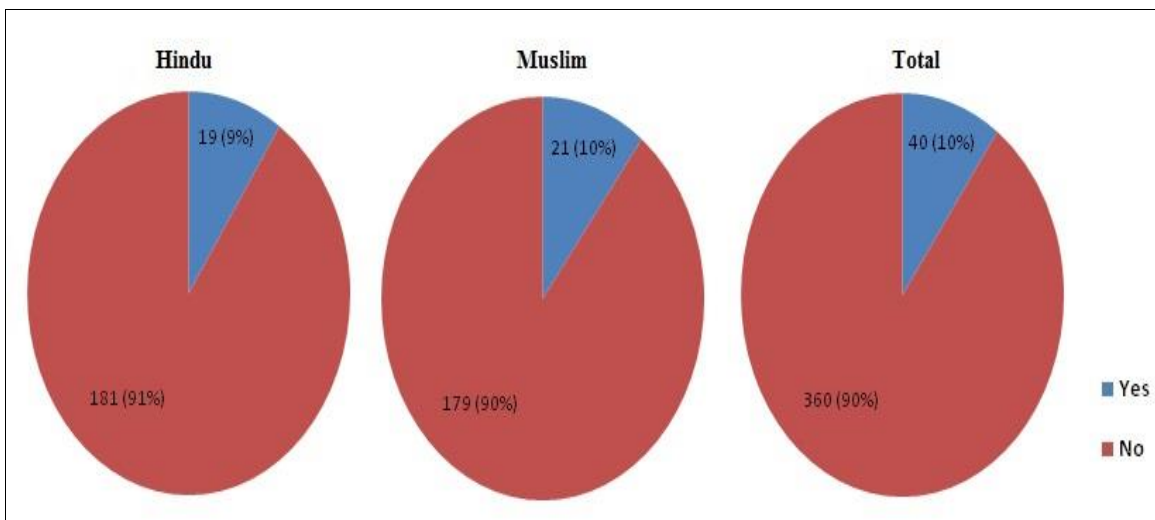
Out of total 400 married women respondents, only 8 percent reported that they were consulted prior to marriage, for parents normally fix the marriage and they were made to marry and this percentage was 8 and 7 percent respectively in Hindu and Muslim community respectively (figure 4). In terms of mate selection, of the total respondents, only 10 percent were consulted and of them 9 percent from Hindu and 10 percent from Muslim community were consulted (figure 5).

**Figure 4: Consultation before marriage in Hindu and Muslim community**



Source: Same as Fig.2

**Figure 5: Consultation before mate selection in Hindu and Muslim community**



Source: Same as Fig.2

Some of the hypotheses were tested to examine the impact of early marriages of girls on their socio-economic development:

**H<sub>1</sub> Early marriages of girls lead to their dropout from schools and colleges**

**H<sub>0</sub> Early marriages of girls do not lead to their dropout from schools and colleges**

From the chi-square test to analyze the interdependence between early marriage of girls and their school and college dropout, it was found the value to be 26.9045 with 4 degree of freedom and significance level .05. The p-value is .000021, which is less than the significance level (.05), so we reject the null hypothesis thereby indicating the significant association between the two variables and are strongly interdependent. Among Hindu married women 61 percent verified the statement and among Muslims the percentage is quite higher i.e. 84. Overall 72.5 percent respondent agreed that early marriages of girls have great impact on their school and college dropout (table 2).

**Table 2: Relationship between early marriage and dropout**

Category	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Hindu	58 (29%)	64 (32%)	20 (10%)	34 (17%)	24 (12%)	200
Muslim	86 (43%)	82 (41%)	8 (4%)	14 (7%)	10 (5%)	200
Total	144	146	28	48	34	400
	<b>290 (72.5%)</b>		<b>28 (7%)</b>	<b>82 (20.5%)</b>		

Source: Same as Fig.2

Chi Square value- 26.9045

Degree of Freedom-4

p-Value- .000021

Level of Significance-.05

**H<sub>2</sub> Young married girls face more violence than the girls who marry late.**

**H<sub>0</sub> Young married girls do not face more violence than the girls who marry late.**

From the chi-square test to analyze the interdependence between early marriage of girls and occurrence of violence, it was found the value to be 21.9578 with 4 degree of freedom and significance level .05. The p-value is .000204, which is less than the significance level (.05), so we reject the null hypothesis thereby indicating the significant association between the two variables and are strongly interdependent. Among Hindu married women 61 percent verified the statement and among Muslims it is 82. Overall 71.5 percent respondent agreed with that early marriages of girls have to face more violence (table 3).

**Table 3: Relation between early marriage and violence**

Category	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Hindu	66 (33%)	56 (28%)	16 (8%)	32 (16%)	30 (15%)	200
Muslim	86 (43%)	78 (39%)	8 (4%)	16 (8%)	12 (6%)	200
Total	152	134	24	48	42	400
	<b>286 (71.5%)</b>		<b>24 (6%)</b>	<b>90 (22.5%)</b>		

Source: Same as Fig.2  
Chi Square value- 21.9578  
Degree of Freedom-4  
p-Value- .000204  
Level of Significance-.05

**H<sub>3</sub> Young marriages of girls severely impact their health.**  
**H<sub>0</sub> Young marriages of girls do not severely impact their health.**

From the chi-square test to analyze the interdependence between early marriage of girls and their health, it was found the value to be 24.894 with 4 degree of freedom and significance level .05. The p-value is .0000503, which is less than the significance level (.05), so we reject the null hypothesis thereby indicating the significant association between the two variables and are strongly interdependent. Among Hindu married women 60 percent verified the statement and among Muslims it is 82. 71 percent respondent agreed that early marriages of girls impact their health (table 4).

**Table 4: Relation between early marriage and health**

Category	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Hindu	58 (29%)	62 (31%)	14 (7%)	36 (18%)	30 (15%)	200
Muslim	78 (39%)	86 (43%)	10 (5%)	14 (7%)	12 (6%)	200
Total	136	148	24	50	42	400
	<b>284 (71%)</b>		<b>24 (6%)</b>	<b>92 (23%)</b>		

Source: Same as Fig.2  
Chi Square value- 24.894  
Degree of Freedom-4  
p-Value- .0000503  
Level of Significance-.05

**H<sub>4</sub> Early married girls have very little say in the decision making process of the house.**  
**H<sub>0</sub> Early married girls do not have say in the decision making process of the house.**

From the chi-square test to analyze the interdependence between early marriage of girls and their decision making in the house, it was found the value to be 23.9637 with 4 degree of freedom and significance level .05. The p-value is .000081, which is less than the significance level (.05), so we reject the null hypothesis thereby indicating the significant association between the two variables and are strongly interdependent. Among Hindu married women 58 percent verified the statement and among Muslims it is 78.5. Overall around 68 percent respondent agreed with the statement that early married girls have very little say in the decision making process of the house (table 5).

**Table 5: Relation between early marriage and decision making**

Category	Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly	Total
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	Agree				Disagree	
Hindu	56 (28%)	60 (30%)	12 (6%)	35 (17.5%)	37 (18.5%)	200
Muslim	77 (38.5%)	80 (40%)	13 (6.5%)	17 (8.5%)	13 (6.5%)	200
Total	133	140	25	52	50	400
	<b>273</b> <b>(68.25%)</b>		<b>25</b> <b>(6.25%)</b>		<b>102</b> <b>(25.5%)</b>	

Source: Same as Fig.2

Chi Square value- 23.9637

Degree of Freedom-4

p-Value- .000081

Level of Significance-.05

**H<sub>5</sub> Early marriage of girls reduces their capacity of work participation outside home.**

**H<sub>0</sub> Early marriages of girls do not reduce their capacity of work participation outside home.**

From the chi-square test to analyze the interdependence between early marriage of girls and their work participation outside home, it was found the value to be 22.6323 with 4 degree of freedom and significance level .05. The p-value is .00015, which is less than the significance level (.05), so we reject the null hypothesis thereby indicating the significant association between the two variables and are strongly interdependent. Among Hindu married women 65.5 percent verified the statement and among Muslims it is 83. Overall around 74 percent respondent agreed with the statement that early married girls of girls reduce their chance to work outside home (table 6).

**Table 6: Relation between early marriage and work participation**

Category	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Hindu	75 (37.5%)	56 (28%)	9 (4.5%)	38 (19%)	22 (11%)	200
Muslim	84 (42%)	82 (41%)	7 (3.5%)	10 (5%)	17 (8.5%)	200
Total	159	138	16	48	39	400
	<b>297</b> <b>(74.25%)</b>		<b>16</b> <b>(4%)</b>		<b>87</b> <b>(21.75%)</b>	

Source: Same as Fig.2

Chi Square value- 22.6323

Degree of Freedom-4

p-Value- .00015

Level of Significance-.05

**Conclusion**

Early marriage of girls is one of the major problems in two largest religious communities in Pachrukha village where almost three-fourth of girls marry before they attain the age of 20. Major reasons behind their early marriage in both the communities are patriarchal mindset,

dowry, pressure from family and relatives and safety and security. Girls in the both the communities are not consulted either at the time of mate selection or marriages. After testing the hypothesis the following has been discerned:

- Early marriages of girls lead to their dropout from schools and colleges.
- Young married girls face more violence than the girls who marry late.
- Young marriages of girls severely impact their health
- Early married girls have very little say in the decision making process of the house and,
- Early marriage of girls reduces their capacity of work participation outside home.

From the above analysis it became clear that there is not much variation in the data community wise as the causes, reasons and consequences behind the early marriages is almost same in both the communities. Women in both the communities have to suffer a lot because of their early marriages.

The consequence of early marriage of girls is not felt at individual level only but it has far reaching impact on the children, families, communities and overall on whole nation.

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