

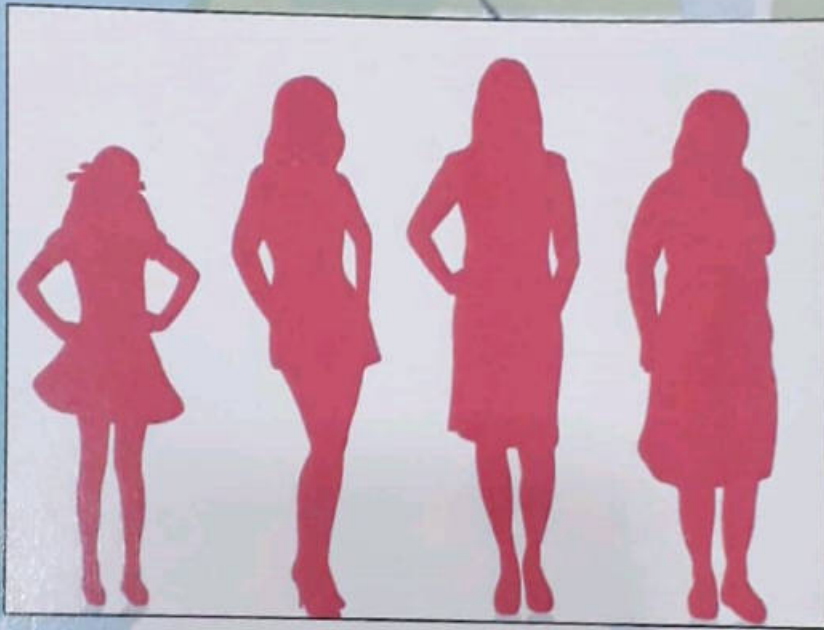


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16. Impact of Early Marriage on Physical & Psychological Health of Adolescent Girl

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Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional phase of growth & development between childhood and adulthood. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines an adolescent as any person between ages 10 & 19. Adolescence begins with the onset of physiologically normal puberty and ends when an adult identity and behavior are accepted. Adolescence is a critical time of life. It is a time when people become independent individuals for new relationships, develop social skills and learn behaviours that will last the rest of their lives.

Stages of Adolescence

There are three stages of Adolescence

1. Early Adolescence: 11 to 14 years period
2. Middle Adolescence: 15 to 17 years period
3. Late Adolescence: 18 to 21 years period

Puberty is intimately tied to adolescence. Girls generally begin puberty earlier on typically between ages 10 & 14 years. In many societies, however adolescence is narrowly equated with puberty & the cycle of physical changes culminating in reproductive maturity. In other societies adolescence is understood in broader terms that encompass psychological, social and moral terrain as well as the strictly physical aspects of maturation. Some specialists find that the difficulties of adolescence have been exaggerated and that for many adolescents the process of maturation is largely peaceful and untroubled.

Adolescence period is a stressful developmental period characterized by specific types of behavior. Adolescence should be the best time of life. Most physical and mental functions such as speed, strength, reaction time and memory are more fully developed during the teenage years. Also in adolescence new, radical and divergent ideas can have profound impact on the imagination.

Objectives

- To study the impact of early marriage on physical and psychological health of adolescent girls.
- To study causes of early marriages of Adolescence girl.

Methodology

Secondary method is used for collecting data.

Result & Discussion

Child marriage is one of the burning problems of Indian society. In India Legal marriage age is minimum 18 years for females and 21 years for males. According to the Registrar General of India (RGI) Report (2001) Rajasthan has the highest 40.8%, Bihar 39.6%, Madhya Pradesh 34.1%, Jharkhand 32.9% and Andhra Pradesh 32.3% of females married among 15-19 years.

Child marriage is still common in India. According to the Report prepared by a Lancet commission made up of 30 experts from 14 countries were released on May 11, child marriages in India is declining very slowly. As per the report 47% of women are married before 18 years. The highest prevalence is in five states Madhya Pradesh 73%, Andhra Pradesh 71%, Rajasthan 68%, Bihar 67% and Uttar Pradesh 64%.

Generally most of the families discriminate between boys and girls education. So male children treated as future assets and economic base of the family where as female children treated as a economic burden on the family. They are treated as someone else assets as they are to be given to someone in marriage. Due to this discrimination parents gives priority to male children education than female children. Adolescent girls who marry early or are forced into an early marriage often have to dropout school.

Causes of Child Marriages

According to India child marriage statistics, there are so many causes were found in India.

Causes of child marriage	Percentage
Traditional system	27%
Demand of dowry	16%
Pressure from Relatives	13%
Safety & Security problems of girls	10%
Pressure from family members	10%
Land ownership related Issues	4%
Economic hardship and poverty	2%
Others	18%

Physical Health

Child marriage naturally leads to early pregnancy resulting into many health complications due to lack of physiological knowledge. Anemia during pregnancies at an early age the strength of the young girls due to blood loss and the stress on the reproductive system that is not ready for child bearing. These girls thus suffer from anemia that further reduces their capacity to reproduce. As the reproductive system of adolescent girls has not fully developed child bearing and delivery of a baby often results in serious complications & abortions are found in this period. Infant & child mortality & morbidity rate is increased due to adolescent pregnancies. Adolescent girls who are not fully mature themselves give birth to premature or low birth weight babies. These children arrive in the world at a physical disadvantage and may not develop into well adjusted useful members of the society. Child marriage affects the entire society and country.

Adolescent girls have often basic reproductive health information, skills in negotiating sexual relationships and access to affordable, confidential reproductive health services. Pregnant adolescents have less access to safe abortion and to skilled medical care before, during and after childbirth.

Lack of sex education for adolescents especially the low and middle income countries. The girls who receive some education have little knowledge about sex and do not know how to avoid pregnancy if they marry early. They feel too inhibited to ask questions about contraception and contraceptives. Effective sexual education is lacking in many countries. The one global measure of coverage related to sexual education indicates that only 36% of young women aged 15-24 years in developing regions have comprehensive and correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS.

Psychological Health

Adolescence is a very vulnerable period of life. It is a period of development when neither the body nor the mind is fully developed. If the body and mind are not allowed to develop and grow fully in the right directions, consequences will have to be faced not only by the adolescent concerned but also the family, country and society at large. Married at an early age adolescent girls are under depression, insomnia and anxiety along with their physical sufferings. As per WHO depression is the top cause of illness and disability among adolescents and suicide is the third cause of death. Violence, poverty, humiliation and feeling devalued can increase the risk of developing mental health problems among adolescent girls.

Suggestions .

1. To avoid child marriages before 18 years of age.
2. To avoid pregnancy before 20 years of age.
3. Increase adolescent girls education.
4. Increase the knowledge about use of contraception to avoid the risk of pregnancy.
5. To provide sex education.
6. To avoid gender discrimination
7. To take proper care of health and nutrition among adolescent period.
8. To develop strong support system to keep girls in school.

Conclusion

From the above discussion it is concluded that early married adolescent girls suffers from physical, psychological, economical & social problems in their life. It is necessary to get education for over all development of the adolescent girls.

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