Determinants of Age of Marriage
in Saiha District, Mizoram

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to examine factors determining the age of marriage, especially early marriage in Saiha District in Mizoram. The analysis is mainly based on field surveys and a few from secondary sources like National Family Health Survey-5. Among many determining factors, the present research focuses on the role of education, rural-urban residence and poverty to the age of marriage in the Saiha district.It was found that of these three fundamental determinants, education becomes the most significant, while rural-urban residence and poverty also play an important role in the age of marriage of boys and girls in the study area. Furthermore, it is revealed that underage marriage is associated with illiteracy among boys and girls. The study shows that class 10 and below level education become the most significant pushing factor for boys and girls to marry early in the study area.

Keywords: Marriage, Age, Education, Rural-urban, Poverty

Introduction

Marriage as a social institution has been changing throughout human history, and it gets more and more attention from demographic scholars worldwide as it profoundly impacts fertility. Marriage is the basis of social life and happens in almost all societies. It is determined by various factors like family status, education, economy, parents of the spouses, etc. It is, therefore, a momentous event reflecting the communities' socio-cultural practices and socioeconomic conditions. The age of marriage differs from one place to another based on the population policy of different countries worldwide. For example, the legal age of marriage among girls ranges from 12 years in Equatorial Guinea, 15 years in Cameroon, Kuwait and Mali, to 21 years in Egypt, Botswana and Fiji. The legal age of marriage for girls in Equatorial Guinea is 12 years, 15 years in Bahrain and 22 years in China (UNSD, 2013). The legal age of marriage in India for girls is 18 years and 21 for boys.

The mean age at first marriage in India is 24.9 years among women aged 25-49, while the median age in Mizoram is 23.5 years. India's total fertility rate (children per woman) is 2.0, while 1.9 in Mizoram (NFHS-5), below the replacement level of 2.1. The present research shows that the mean age of marriage for boys in the Saiha district is 25.16 years, while the mean age for girls is 20.88 years, with a gap of 4.28 years. Marriage before attaining the legal age is still common in the Saiha district. Of boys, 19.24% engaged in marital affairs before attaining 21 years of age, while 26.46% of girls got married before 18. It is believed that some determinants cause the age of marriage of both boys and girls in Saiha district, like various research findings in different parts of the world.

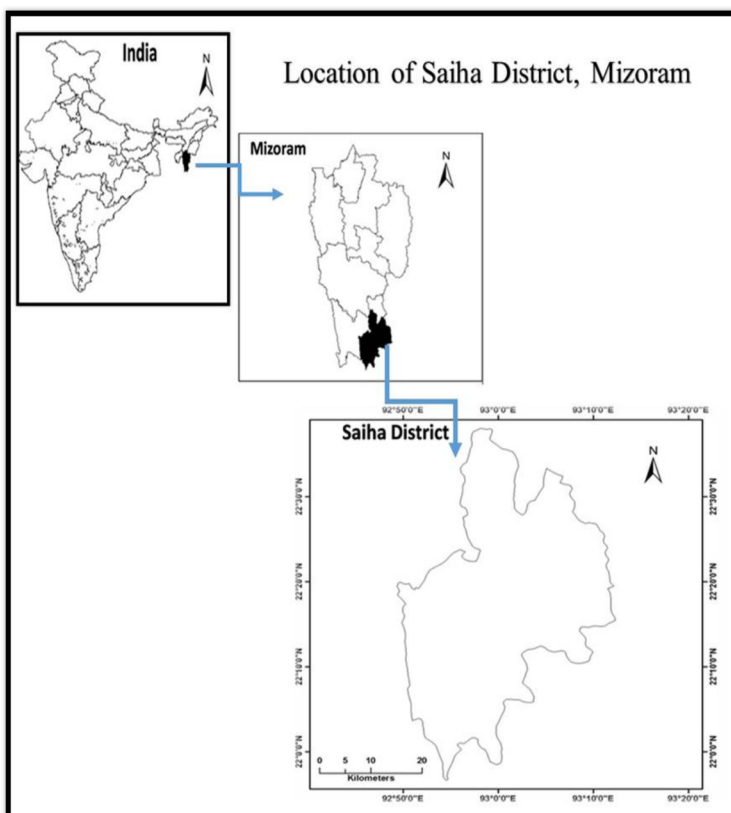## Objectives and scope of the research

The main objectives of the research are to examine the role of three important determinants, among other things, of the age of marriage like education, rural-urban residence and poverty in Saiha district, Mizoram. The research questions that education may play an important role in delaying the age of marriage. It was found in many parts of the world that girls with higher education and already

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employed in the service sector choose to get married later than those who do not work or are engaged in modern occupations. Second, it has also been assumed that place of residence, whether rural or urban, is also believed to be one of the determinants of the age of marriage. Third, poor families are more likely to get married earlier by compulsion for their economic survival because being dependent on their parents for a long time is sometimes regarded as a burden in a family. Therefore, when young girls marry early, particularly to a rich husband, it can be a big relief to their parents. This kind of marriage relationship was prevalent even in the history of Mizoram. With this background introduction, the present research limited its scope to the relationship between age of marriage and level of education, place of residence and poverty in the Siaha district.

Study area: Saiha District is between 92^0 30' – 93^0 15' E and 21^0 5'- 22^0 60' N. It is one of the eleventh districts of Mizoram, located in the southeastern part of Mizoram. The Chin state of Myanmar bounds it on the east and south of the district. Lawngtlai District, Mizoram, is bounded by the north and the west. The geographical area of the Saiha district is 1399.9 square kilometres.

Data source and Methodology

There are two main sources for the present research. One is secondary data like the Census of India-2011, National Family Health Survey-5, statistical handbooks, journals and books,Sample Registration System (SRS) etc.It is, however, mainly based on primary information. In addition, intensive systematic fieldwork has been carried out in the Saiha district, Mizoram study area.

Sample Design

For choosing the sample villages, a position on compiling population data from the Census was taken from the Deputy Commissioner Complex, Saiha. The population data consist of different villages

with the number of households, number of children, sex and number of literates in Saiha and TuipangRural Development (RD) blocks and Saiha Urban area.

Based on the collected data, an attempt has been made to obtain sample settlements in the said RD blocks and the urban settlement of Saiha. The sample and its size have been obtained by arranging all settlements of Saiha rural development block, Tuipang rural development block and Saiha urban separately in descending order from the percentage of literacy. (Literacy is chosen as a medium of arrangement because it impacts marriage patterns).

From urban and RD blocks, Quartile 1, Quartile 2 and Quartile 3 have been selected for the study. Thus, nine settlements hadchosen by using the following method of identification:

$$Q1 = \frac{1(n+1)^{th} \text{ item}}{4}$$

$$Q2 \text{ (median)} = \frac{2(n+1)^{th} \text{ item}}{4}$$

$$Q3 = \frac{3(n+1)^{th} \text{ item}}{4}$$

Household sample

A diverse simple random method chooses households in a village or urban ward. Households of different types like Thatch, Assam type and RCC, which are important indicators of the economic condition of a family, represent the base for choosing the sample randomly. From each village or urban ward, 20% of the samplehouseholds are selected. Therefore, a complete household sample from rural and urban areas is 291 households taking one couple per household, meaning that 291 couples and 1079 children are studied for the sample.

Questionnaires

The questionnaire collects necessary information about the family, which any family member could answer freely.This questionnaire comprises of Household questionnaire and a Women's questionnaire. Under the household questionnaire, information like marital status, sex, year of marriage, level of education, occupation, ethnic nomenclature, type of marriage, whether arranged or love etc., are collected by directly asking the respondents.

Besides, questionnaires for both husbands and wives are generated separately because some personal confidential information needs to be collected from the spouses.

Quantitative technique used for the analysis of data

Spearman's rho for the non-parametric test is used to measure the strength of the relationship of association between two variables, calculated using a tool called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Mean, Simple percentage, bar chart, polygon, and ratio are commonly used to analyse data.

Age of marriage of boys and girls: The age of marriage for couples is divided into various categories. According to the law of 2006 by the prohibition of the Child Marriage Act of India, the legal age of marriage forms the base of grouping. For boys, it is categorised from the lowest to the highest as <21, 21-27, 28- 34 and .35; for girls, it is <18, 18-24, 25-31 and >32.

Literacy and sex ratio: In literacy divisions, the non-literate form the base level indicating illiterate persons. Above this, an education level below class X indicates a low level of education. Higher than this level is class 11 & 12, graduate and postgraduate.

Results and Discussion

This section covers the analysis of the role of education, place of residence and poverty on the age of marriage in the Saiha district.

Education and age of marriage

Various pieces of literature clearly show that educational level is one of the determinants of the age of marriage. A low level of education is understood to be related to being married at a young age.In communities where early marriage is widespread, there was a high drop-out rate in school, which signifies that marriage is a barrier to higher education. There has also been an opinion among many people that spending resources for the education of boys is more fruitful and economically more rewarding than resources spent for girls' education since girls are only considered to be homemakers by their parents, or otherwise, girls are more vulnerable to get married earlier than boys.Some study reveals that girls' higher education in Bangladesh acts partly as a substitute for a more considerable dowry. In addition, some parents consider that educating girls is unnecessary for their roles would only be a good housewife at the end of the day.

Level of women's education and age of marriage

This section analysed the educational level of girls and their age of marriage in Saiha District, Mizoram. The cross-tabulation of the table-1 displays different age groups ranging from underage, i.e., below 18 years of marriage, 19-24 years, 25-31 years and above 32 years. Out of the total sample of 291, 4.47% of girls are illiterate; 76.63% are below class 10 educated; 14.09% are attaining class 12education; 4.47% are graduates; and 0.34% are postgraduates.

Table 1: Saiha District: Percentage of the level of education of marriage age of girls

Education level grouping of women	Age Group of Women								Total Age Group	% from the total samples
	< 18		19 - 24		25 -31		>32			
	N=291	% from the total level of education	N=291	% from the total level of education	N=291	% from the total level of education	N=291	% from the total level of education		
Illiterate	1.03	23.07	3.09	69.23	0.34	7.69	0	0	13	4.47
10 and below	23.37	30.49	41.24	53.81	9.28	12.11	8.75	3.58	223	76.63
Class 12	1.72	12.19	7.22	51.21	5.15	36.58	0	0	41	14.09
Graduate	0.34	7.69	2.41	53.84	1.72	38.46	0	0	13	4.47
Post Graduate	0	0	0	0	0.34	100	0	0	1	0.34
Total	26.5		53.95		16.84		2.75		291	

Source: Field Survey, 2019

As shown in the table-1, under-age marriage is most common among illiterate girls and below class 10 level educations, followed by class 12 passed educated girls, while those girls attaining graduate and postgraduate recorded a minimal number of under-age marriages.

It is interesting to note here that all women in the age group of 32 andabove are below class 10 and have passed.The highest number of marriage age groups, i.e., 18-24, also has the highest figure of marriage under class 10 education. The table also shows that underage marriage is decreasing with the increase in education.
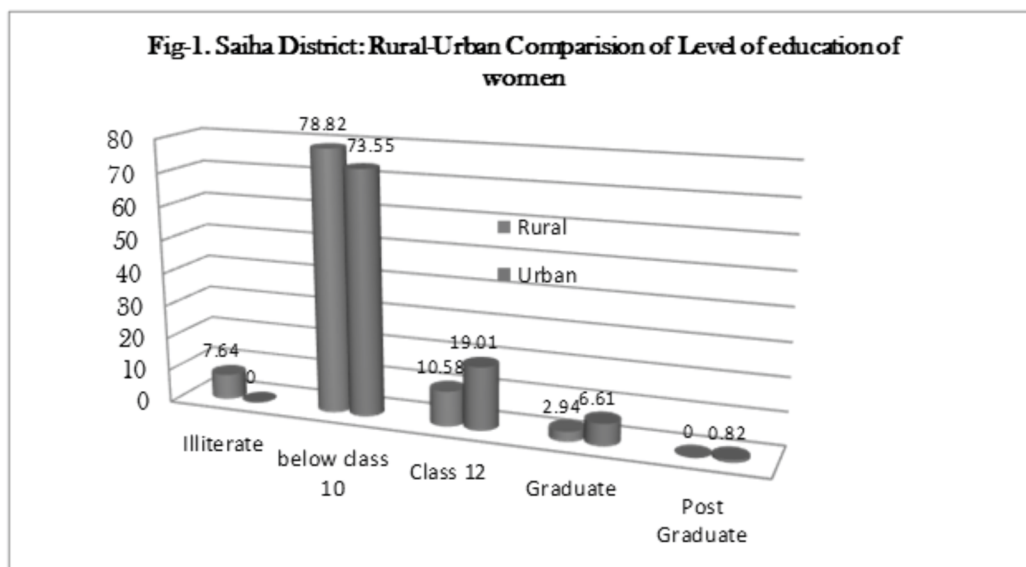
Statistical validity

The correlation of the age group of women and level of education is positively correlated with a significant level of 0.01, which exposes that educational level plays a vital role in determining the age of marriage among girls in Saiha district (r=0.216). It means thatgirls' marriage age increases with higher education levels and vice-versa.

Table 2: Saiha District: Correlations between the level of education and female age of marriage

			Age Group of Wife	Education Level of Wife
Spearman's rho	Age Group of Women	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.216**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	291	291
	Education level Wife	Correlation Coefficient	.216**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	291	291
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Rural to Urban comparison of the level of education and age of marriage among girls

There are 170 samples of women in urban areas and 121 samples in rural areas. Out of 121 samples in rural areas, 7.64% of women are illiterate, 78.82% are below class 10, 10.58% are class 12, and only 2.94% are graduates. No women are attaining a postgraduate level of education in rural areas. In Urban areas, all women are literate. However, the majority of the women (73.55%) are below class 10 level education, 19.01% of them are attaining at least class 12education, 6.61% are graduates, and just 0.82% are postgraduate level education.

Fig-1. Saiha District: Rural-Urban Comparision of Level of education of women

The similarity between rural and urban areas is that most women in both areas are below class 10 passed, followed by class 12 passed educated mothers and graduates. No single women

educate postgraduates in rural areas, while just 0.82% are in urban areas.It has been observed that rural-urban variations ineducation level and marriage age in the Saiha district. Another similar characteristic of rural and urban Saihais that under-age married are common among women below class 10.

As shown in the table-3, marriage is most commonamong the age group of 18-24 years of age in both rural and urban areas, followed by the age group below 18 (underage marriage) and the age group of 25-31, while the late marriage of after 32 years of age is not common in both rural and urban residences.

Table-3. Saiha District: Rural-Urban variation on level of education and age of marriage among girls

Rural-Urban			Age Group of women								Total
			Below 18		19 to 24		25 to 31		32 &Above		
Rural	Education level ofwomen	Illiterate	3	23.07	9	69.23	1	7.69	0	0	13
		10 and below	43	32.08	68	50.74	17	12.68	6	4.74	134
		Class 12	2	11.11	10	55.55	6	33.33	0	0	18
		Graduate	0	0	3	60	2	40	0	0	5
	Total		48		90		26		6		170
Urban	Education level of women	10 and below	25	28.08	52	58.42	10	11.23	2	2.24	89
		Class 12	3	13.04	11	47.82	9	39.13	0	0	23
		Graduate	1	12.5	4	50	3	37.5	0	0	8
		Post Graduate	0	0	0	0	1	100	0	0	1
	Total		29		67		23		2		121
Source: Field Survey, 2019											

It is found that underage marriage among girls is still prevalent in rural and urban areas, with girls attaining below the class 10 level of education and illiteracy, particularly in rural areas. Most women marriages in the 18-24 attain just class 10 or below education while the late marriage of girls above 32 years is uncommon in Saiha district. By and large, girls living in rural areas marry earlier than those living in urban areas. Research revealed an association between girls' early marriage and low levels of education in the Saiha district.

Level of husbands' education and age of marriage

The level of education of boys from the total sample of 291 exposes that the highest samples of educational qualification fall in the category of class 10 and below (69.76%),followed by class 12 (13.40%), graduate (12.71%) and illiterate (2.75%). The share of boys who attained a postgraduate level of education is higher (1.37%) than that of girls (0.34%).

Table-4. Saiha District: Age group and educational level of boys

Education level grouping of man	The age group of man								Total	%
	Below 21		21 to 27		28 to 34		35& Above			
	% from the total level of education	N=291	% from the total level of education	N=291	% from the total level of education	N=291	% from the total level of education	N=291		
Illiterate	25.00	0.69	25.00	0.69	0.00	0.00	50.00	1.37	8	2.75
10 and below	21.18	14.78	54.18	37.80	20.19	14.09	4.43	3.09	203	69.76
Class 12	15.38	2.06	53.84	7.22	28.21	3.78	2.56	0.34	39	13.40
Graduate	13.51	1.72	45.94	5.84	37.83	4.81	2.71	0.34	37	12.71
Post Graduate	0	0	25.00	0.34	25.00	0.69	50.00	0.34	4	1.37

Source: Field Survey, 2019

As shown in the cross-tabulation-4, underage marriage (<21 age) among boys is prevalent among the illiterate boys with 25%, followed by class 10 passed (21.18%), class 12 passed (15.38%) and graduate (13.51%) level education respectively. There are as many as 25% illiterate among the 21-27.There is no illiterate man in the age group of 28 and 34. However, in the marriage age of boys 35 & above, the share of the illiterate husband is 50% scoring the highest per cent of all the illiterate samples ofboys.
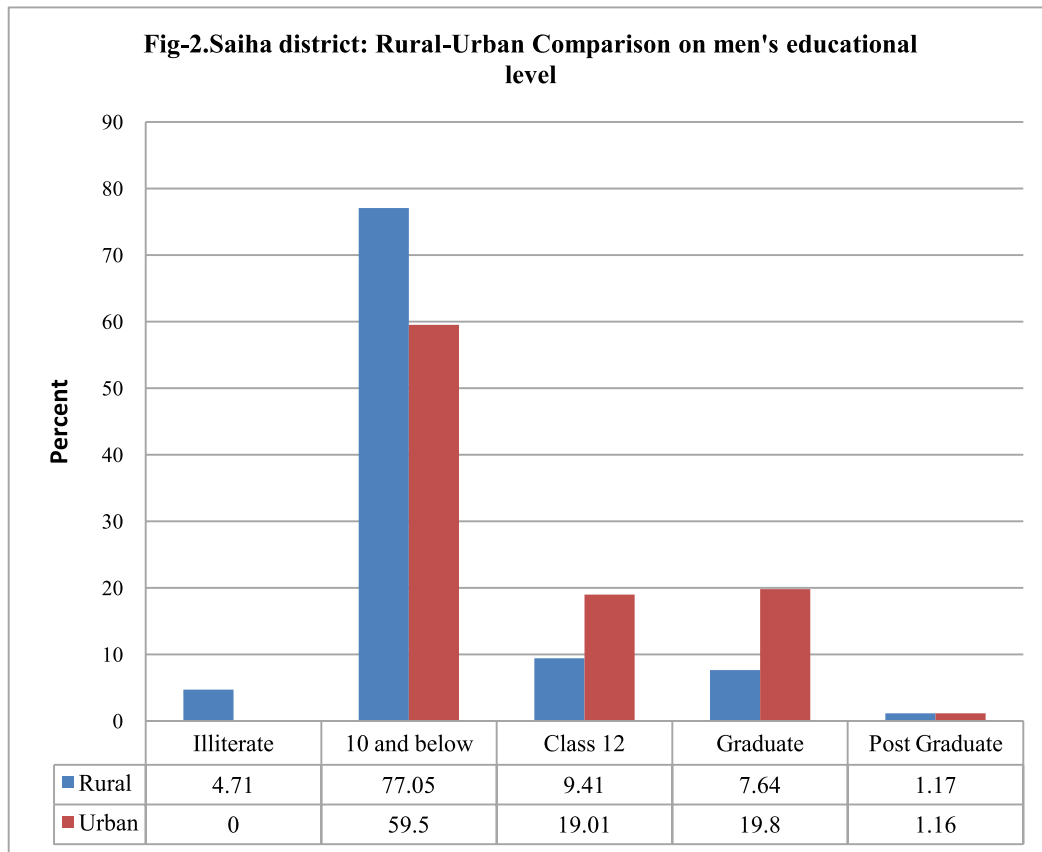
In the educational level of class 12, the highest share percentage belongs to the age group of 21-27, followed by the age group of 28-34, with a percentage of 28.21. The age group below 21 shares 15.38%, and the smallest percentage is shared by the marriage age group of 35 & above, with only 2.71% of the total educational level.

The education level of graduates is 13.51% among boys below 21 age of marriage, 45.94 % of the age group of 21-27, 37.83% of the age group of 28-34 and 2.71% of the marriage age group of 35 & above. At post graduate level, there is no underage marriage of boys.

Statistical tests show no significant correlation between the education level of men and their age of marriage in the Saiha district. However, the above analysis revealed that underage marriage of boys becomes common among the illiterate compared to boys attaining a higher level of education, whereas there are a maximum number of illiterates among the age group of 35 and above.

Rural-urban comparison of men's educational level

Fig-2 shows the rural-urban variation in the level of education and age of marriage among men. In rural areas, 4.71% of men are illiterate, 77.05% are class 10 & below, 9.41% are class 12 passed, 7.64% are graduates, and just 1.17% are postgraduates. In urban areas, there is no illiterate while the lowest level of education among men in urban areas is class 10 & below with 59.50%, while 19.01% of men attained up to class 12, and almost a similar number of them attained graduate level education (19.8%) while merely 1.16% of men are getting postgraduate degrees.

Fig-2.Saiha district: Rural-Urban Comparison on men's educational level

	Illiterate	10 and below	Class 12	Graduate	Post Graduate
■ Rural	4.71	77.05	9.41	7.64	1.17
■ Urban	0	59.5	19.01	19.8	1.16

The research found differences between rural and urban men in the Saiha district as far as the level of educational attainment is concerned. In the meantime, it is also observed that men attaining below class 10 got maximum proportions in both rural and urban areas.

The age group of men and their level of education

The present study revealed that underage marriage is most common among men who are attaining class 10 or below, with a huge shared of 87.5% in rural areas, followed by men who are illiterate and graduate level education with6.25% each marriage before attaining the legal age of 21 years while there is no report of underage marriage among men who attained up to class 12 education.

In the rural area, the highest percentage of underage marriage happened among the men who attain class 10 or below in urban areas, with a large proportion of 62.5%, followed by class 12 passed

(25%) and graduate-level education (12.5%).Another similarity between rural and urban areas is that maximum married happened among the age group of 21-27 with the educational level of class 10 or below (table-5).

Table 5: Saiha District: Age group and education level of males

Rural-Urban			Education level grouping of males										Total
			Illiterate		10 and below		Class 12		Graduate		Post Graduate		
Rural	The age group of man	Below 21	6.25	2	87.5	28	0	0	6.25	2	0	0	32
		21 to 27	2.19	2	78.02	71	12.08	11	7.69	7	0	0	91
		28 to 34	0	0	70.58	24	14.71	5	11.76	4	2.94	1	34
		35 Above	30.76	4	61.53	8	0	0	0	0	7.69	1	13
	Total			8		131		16		13		2	170
Urban	The age group of man	Below 21	0	0	62.5	15	25	6	12.5	3	0	0	24
		21 to 27	0	0	65	39	16.66	10	16.66	10	1.66	1	60
		28 to 34	0	0	50	17	17.64	6	29.41	10	2.94	1	34
		35 Above	0	0	3.33	1	3.33	1	3.33	1	0	0	3
	Total					72		23		24		2	121
Source: Field Survey, 2019													

It is interesting to find out that there are no illiterate men in all the age groups in the urban area, and the level of education begins with class 10 & below in all the age groups. The present study shows that the majority of men in the Saiha district got marriage at the age of 21-27 years, and the maximum of them got marriage when they attained class 10 or below, which is also true in the case of girls both in the rural and urban areas. Therefore, it may be concluded that class 10 level school drop-out among boys and girls leads to early marriage in the Saiha district.

Poverty and Marriage

Poverty is considered one of the most influential factors determining the age of marriage worldwide, particularly in developing countries.The situation gives rise to a feeling of discrepancy in society. For many poor families, marrying their daughter is a policy for economic sustenance. Therefore, poverty is believed to be one of the causes of early marriage, especially among girls.

For the present research, Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Antyodana Anna Yojana (AAY) areconsidered to measure poverty. The AAY scheme introduced in 2001 represents the poorest of the poor, while the BPLis an economic benchmark to indicate economic disadvantages and to identify individuals and households in need of government assistance. Therefore, the number of couples holding BPL and AAY card are considered for poverty measurement. On the other hand, people having a white ration card are categorised as Above Poverty Line (APL) as the indicator of not being poor.

The entire respondent for this study is 291 couples. Out of these are 199 Above Poverty Line (APL) couples, 73 BPL couples and 19 AAY couples. Of 199 APL women, there are 55 in the age group below 18 of marriage age of girls (underage), 105 females in the age group of 18-24, 36 females in the age group of 27-31 and only 3 in the age group of above 32 years.

Out of the total BPL card holders, there are 19 females in the age group of below 18 years, 39 females in the age group of 18-24, 11 females in the age group of 25-31 and 4 females in the age group of above 32 years.

Relationship between poverty and age of marriage

Poverty and Above Poverty, as mentioned above, are the two categories to analyse the relationship between poverty and marriage age. From the 291 samples, 92 (31.61%) couples live in poverty. Out of 92 poor husbands, 22 (23.9%) belong to underage marriage (<21 years),44 (47.8%) are in the age group of 21-27, 17 (18.5%) are in the category of 28-34 age group and just 9 (9.8%) are in the age group of 35 and above.

Table 6 : Saiha district: Age group of husband and wife and poverty

The age group of Husband		Poverty			Total
		Above Poverty	Husband with Poverty card	% Husband Poverty	
	Below 21	34	**22**	**23.9**	56
	21 to 27	107	**44**	**47.8**	151
	28 to 34	51	**17**	**18.5**	68
	35 & Above	7	**9**	**9.8**	16
Total		199	**92**	**100.0**	291
		Poverty			Total
		Above Poverty	Wife with a Poverty card	% Wife Poverty	
Age group of wife	Below 18	55	**22**	**23.9**	77
	18 to 24	105	**52**	**56.5**	157
	25 to 31	36	**13**	**14.1**	49
	32 & above	3	**5**	**5.4**	8
Total		199	**92**	**100.0**	291
Source: Filed work,2019					

Out of 92 (31%) poor women, 22 (23.9%) belong to the underage group (below 18 years), while a maximum number of 52(56.5%) are in the age group of 18-24 and 13 (14.1%) are in the age group of 25-31 while the remaining 5(5.4%) are in the age group of 32 and above (Table6).

Even though there is no significant statistical correlation, table-8 reveals a relationship between poverty and age of marriage as underage marriage becomes the second highest poverty in both men and women, with 23.9% each in the study area.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the overall analysis that education plays the most significant role in the causes of early marriage in the Saiha district. The correlation of the age group of women and level of education is positively correlated with a significant level of 0.01, which showed that educational level plays a significant role in determining the age of marriage among girls in Saiha district (r=.216). It means that girls' marriage age increases with higher education levels and vice-versa.

It is found that underage marriage among girls is still prevalent in rural and urban areas, with girls attaining below class 10 levels of education and illiteracy, particularly in rural areas. Most girls' marriages happened among the 18-24 who are attaining just class 10 or below education, while the late marriage of girls above 32 years is not common in Saiha district. By and large, girls living in rural areas are married earlier than those living in urban areas. There is an association between girls' early marriage and low levels of education in the Saiha district.

Statistical tests show that there is no significant correlation between the educational level of man and their age of marriage in the Saiha district. However, the present study revealed that the maximum number of marriages of boys happened between the ages of 21 and 27 in all education levels. It is also found that underage marriage of boys becomes common among the illiterate compared to boys attaining a higher level of education. It is also observed that there are maximum numbers of illiterate among the age group of 35 and above.

Research showed differences between rural and urban men in the Saiha district as far as their level of educational attainment is concerned. In the meantime, it is also observed that men attaining below class 10 got maximum proportions in both rural and urban areas.

It is interesting to find out that there are no illiterate men in all age groups in urban areas. However, the present study shows that most men in the Saiha district got married at 21-27 years, and most of them got married when they attained class 10 or below, which is also true for girls in rural and urban areas. Therefore, it may be concluded that class 10 level school drop-outs become the biggest push factor for boys and girls to get married in the Saiha district.

Even though there is no significant statistical correlation, the study revealed a relationship between poverty and age of marriage as underage marriage becomes the second highest in relation to poverty in both men and women, with 23.9% each in the Saiha district.

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