

# Assessment of Knowledge and Attitude of School Girls Regarding Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy

V. Vandana<sup>1</sup>, K. Simarjeet<sup>1</sup>, S. Manisha<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nursing Tutor, Obstetric and Gynaecological Nursing Department, M.M. College of Nursing, Mullana.

<sup>2</sup>Clinical Instructor, Medical Surgical Nursing Department, M.M. College of Nursing, Mullana.

Corresponding Author: V. Vandana

## ABSTRACT

Pregnancy may be understood as a transition and as a part of a woman's transition to motherhood. Early marriage is defined as marriage carried below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, physiologically and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing. The objective of the study was to assess the knowledge and attitude of school girls regarding early marriage and early pregnancy. Non Experimental research approach with descriptive research design was used. The sample size comprised of 200 school girls selected by purposive sampling techniques of selected schools of Barara, Ambala. Structured knowledge questionnaire and attitude scale (5-point Likert scale) were used to collect data from school girls. The study result revealed that the mean percentage of knowledge scores of the school girls were relatively low (59.6) which shows that the school girls were having less knowledge regarding early marriage and early pregnancy. The findings of the present study also indicated that the mean percentage of attitude score of the school girls were relatively high (69.9) showing the moderately favourable attitude of school girls.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, Attitude, School Girls, Early Marriage, Early Pregnancy

## INTRODUCTION

*“Child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years and make registration of all marriages in an official registry compulsory”*

Marriage is a social institution that unites people in a special form of mutual dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family. As a social practice entered into through a public act, religious or traditional ceremony, it reflects the purpose, characters or customs of the society in which it is found. Many societies

have norms that limits the age of young girls to enter into marriage, but in some cases the age limit does not take into consideration their physical readiness for childbearing. <sup>[1]</sup>

Early marriage, better known as child marriage is defined as marriage carried below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, physiologically and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing.” Early marriage means also the individual becomes sexually active early, raising children while children themselves. The marriage of a young girl affects not only her life but that of the children she will bear. <sup>[2]</sup>

Child marriage, also known as early marriage, is a form of marital union of young children and adolescents or a practice in which the parents of a small child (even infants) arrange a future marriage with another child's parents. Girls marrying early become pregnant at a young age and face major problems related to reproductive health. [3]

Early marriage of children, particularly the girl child, is not an uncommon practice in over 40 countries, mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa and south and south East Asia, including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. A significant number of these countries are signatories to various international conventions and have guaranteed various rights of children, including the prescription of the legal minimum marriage at 18. [4]

In 2003, UNICEF and partners agreed to focus on five indicators related to child marriage:

- Percentage of women first in union by age 18 by age group (15-19, 20-24 and 45-49)
- Percentage of girls 15-19 years of age currently in union
- Spousal age difference
- Percentage of women currently in a polygynous union by age groups
- Percentage of ever-married women who were directly involved in the choice of their first husband or partner. [5]

According to the UN, complications from pregnancy and childbirth are the leading causes of death for girls aged 15-19 years in the developing countries. Of the 16 million adolescent girls who give birth every year, about 90% are already married. UNICEF estimates some 50,000 die, almost all in low and middle income countries. Stillbirth and newborn deaths are 50% higher among mothers under 20 than in women who get pregnant in their 20s. [6]

Marriages before the age of 18 are the reality for many young women. In many parts of the world, parents encourage the marriage of their daughters while they are still children in hopes that the marriage will

benefit them both financially and socially, while also relieving financial burdens on the family. In actuality, child marriage is a violation of human rights, compromising the development of girls and often resulting in early pregnancy and social isolation, with little education and poor vocational training reinforcing the gendered nature of poverty. [5]

“Child marriage makes girls far more vulnerable to the profound health risks of early pregnancy and childbirth – just as their babies are more vulnerable to complications associated with premature labor,” notes Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF. [6]

In India early pregnancy is there because of early marriage especially in rural areas, urban slums and low socio economic people. Childbearing during teenage period is a high risk experience for both mother and the child. They are at greater risk of complications, high maternal and child morbidity and mortality. Illegitimate early pregnancy may also cause psychological problems such as guilt feelings, emotional disturbance, lack of confidence, social outcaste, social stigma, prostitution etc. teenage mothers are also at greater risk of spontaneous abortion. [7]

According to the Union health ministry's Family Welfare Statistics 2011, compiled by the Registrar General of India, for every woman aged below 18 getting married in urban centres, three women are doing so in rural areas. In percentage-wise decline, Jammu and Kashmir has seen the largest dip in under-aged brides in the recorded five years at 83%, followed by Chhattisgarh (78%), Andhra Pradesh (71%), Haryana (70%) and Madhya Pradesh (69%). Maharashtra has seen a 57% decline in under-aged brides, Delhi (53%), Bihar (55%), Odisha (48%), Karnataka (44%) and Punjab (46%). States with lowest percentage of decline in under-aged brides since 2005 include West Bengal (14%), Rajasthan (23%), Jharkhand (27%), Tamil Nadu (29%), Gujarat (33%) and Uttar Pradesh (38%). [8]

A comparative study of teenage pregnancies was conducted. Girls aged < or =19 years were compared with pregnancy outcomes in older women (19-35 years) in the same hospital. The study took place in the Government General Hospital, Sangli, India, a teaching hospital in rural India, with an annual delivery rate of over 3,500. The incidence of teenage pregnancy in the study was 10%. A significant proportion of teenage pregnant mothers were in their first pregnancies. The teenage mothers were nearly three times more at risk of developing anemia. Teenage mothers were twice as likely to develop hypertensive problems in pregnancy and were more likely to deliver vaginally with no significant increase in the risk of assisted vaginal delivery or caesarean section. Young mothers were nearly twice at risk of delivering low birth weight babies and 50% less likely to have normal birth weight babies. The outcome of this study showed that teenage pregnancies are still a common occurrence in rural India in spite of various legislations and government programmes and teenage pregnancy is a risk factor for poor obstetric outcome in rural India. Cultural practices, poor socioeconomic conditions, low literacy rate and lack of awareness of the risks are some of the main contributory factors. [9]

Adolescent girls need to be informed and empowered to prevent pregnancy (and contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV). Adolescents with the knowledge, skills and values to make responsible choices about their sexual and social relationships. Similarly, adolescents need to be informed about safe abortion care, where legally available, and to be knowledgeable about the dangers of unsafe abortion. Adolescent girls need to develop their life skills, and improve their links to social networks and social supports that can help them to refuse unwanted sex and to resist coerced sex, actions that they often feel powerless to do. [10]

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Non experimental research approach with descriptive research design was used to assess the knowledge and attitude of school girls regarding early marriage and early pregnancy. The sample size comprised of 200 school girls in the age group of 12-18 years who were studying in s.m.s. senior secondary school Barara, Ambala and selected by purposive sampling technique.

Structured knowledge questionnaire and five point likert's scale were used to assess the knowledge and attitude of school girls regarding early marriage and early pregnancy. Content validity of the tools was established by submitted to nine experts. Nine experts included three experts from obstetric and gynecological nursing, four from community health nursing, one from mental health nursing and one from medical surgical nursing. The reliability coefficient for the structured knowledge questionnaire was established using kuder richardson-20 formula and was found to be 0.73. The reliability coefficient for the likert's scale was established using split half method was found to be 0.93. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional ethical committee for conducting the research study. The purpose for carrying out research project was explained to the study subjects and assurance for confidentiality was given. Written informed consent was taken from each subject after explaining the purpose of research project. Finally interview was done and at the same time recording in the tool was also done. It took 45-50 minutes.

## **RESULTS**

### **Demographic Characteristics**

Data shows majority of the school girls (70.5%) were in the age group of 15-17 years and (3%) were in the age group 18-20 years. More than half of the school girls (57.5%) were from 11<sup>th</sup> class followed by (42.5%) were from 9<sup>th</sup> class. Less than half of the school girls (47%) were having family income of Rs. 5,001- 10,000/- followed by (41%) were having family income of Rs. ≥10,000 and (12%) were having family income of Rs. ≤5,000. More

than half of the school girls (57%) belonged to nuclear family and (43%) belonged to joint family. More than half of the school girls (56.5%) belonged to Hindu religion followed by (43.5%) belonged to Sikh religion. Education of father of less than half of the school girls (39%) were graduated followed by secondary education (35.5%), primary education (19.5%), post graduate (5.5%) respectively and (0.5%) were non literate. Education of mother of less than half of the school girls (37%) were secondary education followed by graduate (33%), primary education (20%), non – literate (5.5%) and (4.5%) were having post graduate qualification. Occupation of father of maximum of school girls (45%) were self-employed followed by private employee (23.5%), government employee (23%), labourer (6.5%) and least were unemployed (2%). Occupation of mother of majority of the school girls (84.5%) were homemaker followed by private employee (6.5%), government employee (6%) and (3%) were self-employed. All the school girls (100%) were unmarried, most of the school girls (64%) were not exposed to any formal education/information about early marriage and early pregnancy.

### Assessment of knowledge of school girls regarding early marriage and early pregnancy

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of School Girls in terms of Knowledge Regarding Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy N=200

Level of knowledge	Range of Score	f	%
Good	21-24	14	0.7
Average	15-21	171	85.5
Below average	0-15	15	7.5

Maximum score = 24 Minimum Score = 0

Data presented in the Table 1 depicts that majority of the school girls (85.5%) were having average level of knowledge followed by (7.5%) below average and least (0.7%) school girls had good knowledge regarding early marriage and early pregnancy. Thus it can be concluded that majority of school girls had average knowledge.

Table 2: Range, Mean, Mean %, Median and Standard Deviation of Knowledge Score of School Girls Regarding Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy. N=200

Score	Range	Mean	Mean %	Median	Standard Deviation
Knowledge	10-21	14.3	59.6%	13.0	2.3

Maximum score: 24

Minimum score: 0

The data presented in Table 2 depicted that the range, mean, mean percentage, median, standard deviation of knowledge score of school girls regarding early marriage and early pregnancy. The mean of knowledge score was 14.3 and mean percentage was 59.6%. The median for knowledge score was 13 and standard deviation was 2.3.

### Assessment of attitude of school girls regarding early marriage and early pregnancy

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of School Girls in terms of Level of Attitude Regarding Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy N=200

Level of Attitude	Range of scores	f	%
Moderately favourable	50-70	105	52.5
Favourable	>70	95	47.5

Maximum Score=100

Minimum score = 20

Data presented in the table 3 depicts that among the school girls, the more than half of the school girls (52.5%) were having moderately favourable attitude, followed by (47.5%) were having favourable attitude regarding early marriage and early pregnancy.

Table 4: Range, Mean, Mean%, Median and Standard Deviation of Attitude Scores of School Girls Regarding Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy. N=200

Scores	Range	Mean	Mean %	Median	SD
Attitude	1-97	9.9	9.9	70	10.1

Maximum score: 100

Minimum score: 20

The data presented in table 4 indicates that the mean attitude scores of the school girls was 69.9 and SD was 10.1. It revealed that school girls have favourable attitude regarding early marriage and early pregnancy.

### Correlation between Knowledge and Attitude of School Girls Regarding Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy

Data showed that the co- efficient of co-relation (0.29) between knowledge and

attitude score obtained by school girls suggested a weak positive co – relation which was found to be significant at 0.05 level of significance.

### **Association of Levels of Knowledge and Attitude Scores of School Girls Regarding Early marriage and Early Pregnancy with Selected Demographic Variables.**

The findings of the study showed that the computed chi square value of age (1.72), educational status (3.31), family income per month (6.04), type of family (0.909), religion (0.963), education of father (7.44), education of mother (12.1), occupation of mother (5.86), was found to be statistically non significant whereas occupation of father (16.0), formal education regarding early marriage and early pregnancy (10.5) and source of information (27.9) was found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance

The findings suggested that the computed chi square value of age (5.91), family income per month (4.99), type of family (3.60), religion (0.217), education of father (6.30), occupation of father (3.23), occupation of mother (0.201), was found to be statistically non significant whereas educational status of school girls (5.40) and education of mother (10.4) was found to be statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance.

### **DISCUSSION**

The findings of present study indicated that the occupation of father and mother, education of school girls was influenced on early marriage and early pregnancy which are similar to the study conducted by Sanker Obaida Nasrin et al (2012) <sup>[11]</sup> which revealed that education, family's monthly income, religion are the most influential factors in determining the likelihood of early age at marriage.

The findings of present study indicated that the higher education of school girls influenced on their attitude towards

early marriage and early pregnancy which are similar to the findings of Rahaman MM et al (2004) <sup>[12]</sup> which revealed that encouragement of female education, introduction family life education in school curriculum, creating community awareness for seeking the health care and empowerment of women in household decision making process helps to bring changes in the attitude of adolescent towards early marriage.

### **Recommendations**

The researcher further recommended that the study can be replicated on larger sample to validate the findings and make generalizations, to assess knowledge and attitude of girls of urban and rural area and also assessed the knowledge and attitude of boys and girls regarding early marriage and early pregnancy.

### **Implications**

The findings of the study can be implemented to conduct regular health education program by the nursing personnel in the community areas to help reproductive age women to prevent unwanted pregnancy and their by reducing the mortality and morbidity due to early pregnancy. Nurse educators can teach the nursing students regarding early marriage and early pregnancy and to enhance their knowledge and attitude to prevent adolescent girls against early marriage and early pregnancy. Mass media plays an important role in spreading awareness regarding early marriage and early pregnancy so that they can prevent themselves to get into that threat.

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