

A Look at the Phenomenon of Child Marriage in Iran and the World

Salman Khazaei¹, Kamyar Mansori², Zaher Khazaei³, *Erfan Ayubi⁴

¹Department of Epidemiology, School of Public Health, Hamadan University of Medical Sciences, Hamadan, Iran. ²Social Development & Health Promotion Research Center, Gonabad University of Medical Sciences, Gonabad, Iran. ³Social Determinants of Health Research Center, Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences, Sanandaj, Iran. ⁴Department of Epidemiology, School of Public Health, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

Dear Editor-in-chief,

The recent statistics indicates child marriage has been a global concern especially in low and medium countries, so that more than 700 million of women were married before 18 years of age and out of them more than a third were less than 15 years. There is gender inequality in child marriage, so that it is more observed in girls (1). Some causes are introduced for incidence of child marriage including poverty and financial debility, extension of social network, and protection of girls against rape and violence (2). The consequences of child marriage are often far wider than just their impact on the individual children affected. The marriage of children has negative effects on families and communities. The practice thrives on poverty and impacts adversely on a country's health and educational sector (1-3).

Indeed child marriage in girls resulted in early pregnancy, social isolation, school dropout, reducing employment opportunities and increasing of domestic violence (3). According to important role of child marriage as a pivotal barrier in social and economic development, we encouraged that to write present letter. The letter aimed to provide a comparison of child marriage statistics in Iran and other parts of world, in addition to suggest some well-established solutions for reducing child marriage.

Key Words: Child marriage, Iran, Prevalence, World.

*Please cite this article as: Khazaei S, Mansori K, Khazaei Z, Ayubi E. A Look at the Phenomenon of Child Marriage in Iran and the World. Int J Pediatr 2016; 4(9): 3499-3501. DOI: 10.22038/ijp.2016.7201

*Corresponding Author:

Erfan Ayubi (MSc, PhDc), Department of Epidemiology, School of Public Health, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Email: aubi65@gmail.com

Received date Jun10, 2016; Accepted date: Mar 22, 2016

RESULTS

As shown in **Figure.1**, Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18 in different regions (3). The highest rates of child marriage are found in sub-Saharan region (39%), western and central of

Africa region (42%) respectively, while lowest percentage is observed in central and eastern of Europe region (11%). According to the last UNICEF report in 2016, in Iran this percentages were 3% and 14% respectively(3) .

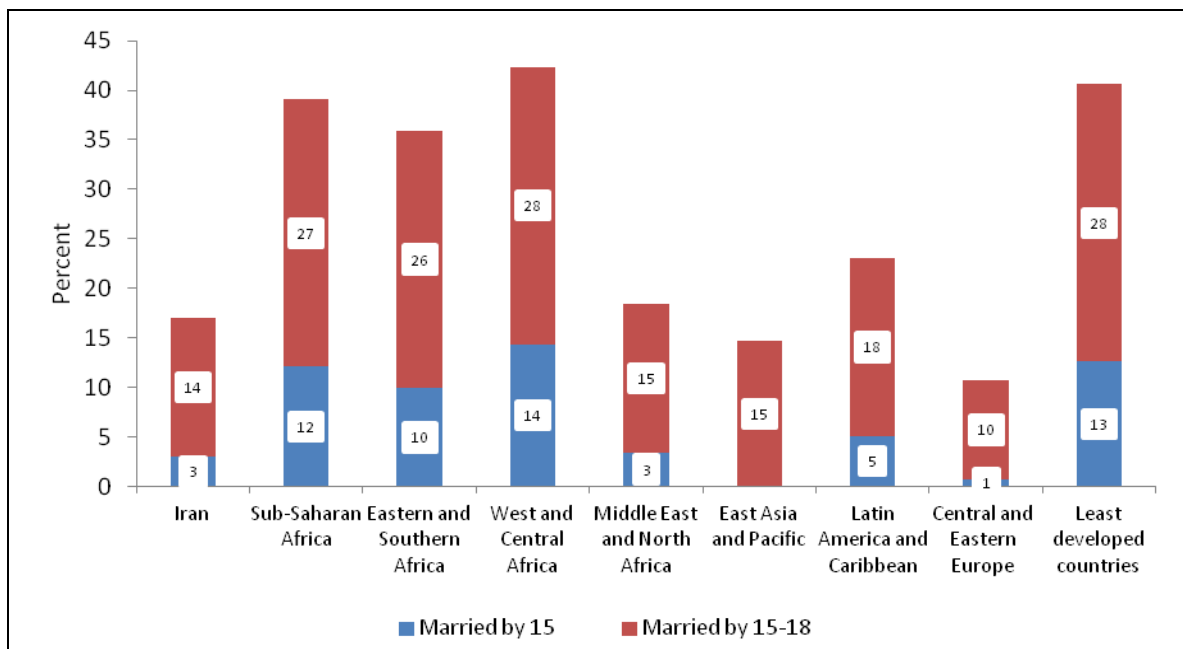


Fig.1: Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before ages 15 and 18 in different regions.

DISCUSSION

Child marriage is a human rights violation that prevents girls from obtaining an education, enjoying optimal health, bonding with others their own age, maturing, and ultimately choosing their own life partners and also has many effects on girls' health that including increased risk for sexually transmitted diseases, cervical cancer, malaria, death during childbirth, and obstetric fistulas. Girls' offspring are at increased risk for premature birth and death as neonates, infants, or children (4) .

Although child marriage in Iran is lower than many regions of the world, but still

considerable. The evidence suggests that programs with focusing on empowering girls are effective in preventing child marriage and it can lead to further the incidence rate of child marriage (5). The results from International center for research on women (ICRW) studies shows that there are five main strategies for delaying or preventing child marriage:

1. Empowering girls with information, skills, and support networks,
2. Educating and mobilizing parents and community members,
3. Enhancing the accessibility and quality of formal schooling for girls,

4. Offering economic support and incentives for girls and their families,
5. Fostering an enabling legal and policy framework (6).

CONCLUSION

So considering the above points for stop child marriage, policies and programs must educate communities, raise awareness, engage local and religious leaders, involve parents, and empower girls through education and employment.

REFERENCES

1. United Nations Children's Fund. Ending Child Marriage: Progress and prospects. New York: UNICEF, 2014.
2. Raj A, Saggurti N, Balaiah D, Silverman JG. Prevalence of child marriage and its effect on fertility and fertility-control outcomes of young women in India: a cross-

sectional, observational study. *The Lancet*. 2009;373(9678):1883-9.

3. UNICEF. Child marriage is a violation of human rights, but is all too common WHO; 2016 [updated Jun 2016; cited 2016]; Available at: <http://data.unicef.org/child-protection/child-marriage.html>.

4. Nour NM. Health consequences of child marriage in Africa. *Emerging infectious diseases*. 2006;12(11).

5. Lee-Rife S, Malhotra A, Warner A, Glinski AM. What works to prevent child marriage: a review of the evidence. *Studies in family planning*. 2012:287-303.

6. Malhotra A, Warner A, McGonagle A, Lee-Rife S, Powell C, Cantrell EV, et al. Solutions to end child marriage: what the evidence shows. International center for research on women 2011. Available at: <http://www.popline.org/node/218290>.