

Exploring Child Marriage through a Public Policy Lens: Comparative Perspectives from Bangladesh and Singapore

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ABSTRACT

Child marriage remains a significant global concern, with Bangladesh experiencing some of the highest rates in South Asia. As defined in the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017, this practice involves brides under 18 and grooms under 21. Predominantly affecting girls, child marriage constitutes a violation of basic human rights and is perpetuated by multiple factors such as poverty, lack of education, dowry practices, natural disasters, social structures, and interpretations of Islamic teachings. This paper is based on secondary sources including journal articles, reports, and newspapers to examine the root causes and far-reaching consequences of child marriage, not only on young brides but also on their children. The negative effects span health, education, and intergenerational poverty. Drawing inspiration from Singapore, which reports the lowest child marriage rates in Southeast Asia, the study highlights the importance of strong legal frameworks, community awareness, and prioritization of education as essential strategies for reducing child marriage in Bangladesh. Comparative insights underscore the need for policy adaptation and more effective enforcement to address this complex social issue.

Keywords: Child Marriage; Cycle of Poverty; Education; Bangladesh; Singapore

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a legally binding union between consenting persons that legitimizes sexual relations and grants legitimacy to any offspring. It continues to be a revered and respected social institution worldwide, appearing in many forms across cultures. Child marriage, often termed early marriage, is characterized as any legal or informal union in which one or both partners are under the age of 18 (IPPF, 2007; Kraljić, 2023; Strungaru, 2024). Girls are the predominant victims of child marriage, a global humanitarian issue that infringes upon their human rights (Alqahtani & Alqahtani, 2022; Nour, 2009; Raj, 2010). It is unambiguous that child marriage is a violation of human rights. This situation undermines the rights of children, particularly girls, regarding their access to health, education, and safety from violence. Furthermore, early marriage directly affects the health of the children born to girls who marry before the age of 18 (Mahato, 2016; Nour, 2009). Each year, nearly 12 million girls are married before they turn 18, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality (MacKinnon, 2024).

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South Asia is known as the region with the highest occurrence of child brides globally, accounting for 45% of the worldwide total. In this region, there are about 290 million child brides, with around one in four young women married before reaching the age of 18 (United Nations Children's Fund, 2023a). Bangladesh demonstrates the most significant occurrence of child marriage in South Asia. Bangladesh is among the top ten countries globally for the prevalence of child marriage, with more than 38 million girls and women married before reaching the age of 18. In Bangladesh, 51% of girls enter into marriage before reaching 18

years of age, and 16% do so before the age of 15 (United Nations Children's Fund, 2020). The latest Demographic and Health Surveys from 2022 reveal that Bangladesh continues to hold the highest rate of child marriage in South Asia, with a concerning 50% of females get married before they reach at the age of 18. While Bangladesh has the highest rate, neighboring countries are also facing this challenge. In Afghanistan, the child marriage rate stands at 35%, while India and Pakistan report rates of 27% and 21%, respectively. Sri Lanka has the lowest rate in the region, standing at just 4% (TBS Report, 2024). During the COVID-19 pandemic, Bangladesh saw a 13% increase in early marriages. The increase is attributed to the extended closure of educational institutions, making many girls vulnerable to early marriage (Haque, 2021; Hossain et al., 2021). The prevalence of child marriage, which surged during that time, remains a persistent issue. This article explores the factors contributing to child marriage in Bangladesh and examines its impact. Additionally, it highlights the current policies in our country aimed at preventing child marriage, as well as the shortcomings within these policies. Furthermore, it illustrates how Bangladesh can implement the practices of the Southeast Asian nation, Singapore, to address the issue of child marriage in a contextually relevant manner.

METHODS

This study adopts a comparative qualitative approach to analyze child marriage through a public policy lens, focusing on Bangladesh and Singapore. The research is entirely based on secondary sources, including journal articles, government reports, newspapers and websites of reputable organizations.

RESULTS

Exploring the Causes of Child Marriage in Bangladesh

The issue of child marriage represents a considerable social challenge in Bangladesh. The prevalence of early marriage in Bangladesh is significantly influenced by poverty. Daughters are frequently perceived as financial liabilities for households. Families often choose to marry off their daughters at a young age as a means to reduce their financial burden. Data shows that 64% of women aged 20-24 who married before turning 18 come from the lowest income households, compared to 33.4% from higher income families. The median age at which girls from low-income households wed at just 15 years, as opposed to 18 years for

others who are from more affluent backgrounds (Fattah & Camellia, 2020; Hamida, 2024; Kabir et al., 2019; Ferdousi, 2014).

The relationship between education deficiency and the rising rates of child marriage in Bangladesh is an exception. The refusal of parents to send girls to school, spurred by economic hardship and cultural values, perpetuates the practice of early marriage (Chowdhury & Morium, 2018; Hossain et al., 2015; Kabir et al., 2019). High educational levels exhibit a strong positive correlation with rates of child marriage. Lesser-educated women tend to marry sooner, while educationally advanced females marry later in life (Islam et al., 2023; Rashid et al., 2024).

Husbands' education levels are especially important in controlling the rates of child marriage (Sultana et al., 2015). Educated husbands are associated with lower rates of child marriage since educated men understand the negative consequences of early marriage and are positive towards their wives' education. Those who have reached a higher level of education have improved economic prospects, which shape their attitude towards marriage and family planning. Better-educated husbands are more likely to appreciate the wives' education and health and appreciate the long-term benefit of delaying marriage for both of them. However, less educated men may stick to traditional norms that encourage early marriage as means of securing domestic support or following societal expectations (Biswas et al., 2019; Islam et al., 2023; Kamal et al., 2014; Rashid et al., 2024).

The societal framework in Bangladesh promotes child marriage by prioritizing marriage over educational attainment (Akhter, 2015). Young women are frequently raised to prioritize obedience and dependence on males, which obstructs their access to education and independence. The influence of patriarchal structures often results in men exerting control over various aspects of women's lives, including choices related to marriage. Families often view the early marriage of daughters as a way to secure their future and maintain family honor. This regulation limits the independence of girls and reinforces the idea that their main role is to become brides and mothers, instead of being educated individuals pursuing their own ambitions (Mim, 2017). The systemic inequity arising from the patriarchal structure of society relegates girls to a subordinate status, Making them susceptible to early marriage (Chowdhury & Morium, 2018; Gupta et al., 2022).

Traditional views in Bangladesh suggest that girls should enter into marriage as swiftly as possible. Societal norms impose the expectation that women should marry at least once in

their lifetime, and families often feel compelled to conform to these pressures. This pressure can lead to early marriages, even among females with impairments (Chowdhury & Morium, 2018). Traditional beliefs often suggest that a woman's value is closely tied to her marital status. Many families believe that marrying off their daughters at a young age protects their reputation and ensures their sexual purity. This perspective stems from the belief that single women are at risk of sexual harassment or engaging in premarital relationships, which could lead to shame for the family. Consequently, early marriage is viewed as a protective measure for upholding family honor and social status (Kabir et al., 2019; Naved et al., 2022).

The impact of Islamic teachings and interpretations on matrimonial ceremonies in Bangladesh is significant. A significant number of families believe that girls should enter into marriage right after on the verge of puberty, seeing this as a responsibility based on their religion. This is commonly substantiated by religious leaders and community figures in support of early marriages to accomplish cultural and religious obligations (Arnab & Siraj, 2020; Tasnim et al., 2024). These influential figures often articulate this viewpoint by referencing traditional interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence and societal norms.

Bangladesh faces significant obstacles due to natural disasters, such as floods and river erosion, which can exacerbate issues related to poverty, hunger, and insecurity. Families facing these challenges might prioritize arranging marriages for their daughters to ensure their safety and stability, thereby continuing the practice of child marriage (Chowdhury & Morium, 2018). These environmental adversities can influence familial decisions regarding the marital fate of their daughters, often resulting in the perpetuation of child marriage as a perceived safeguard against potential dangers and a means of ensuring their welfare and stability amidst the precarious socioeconomic conditions.

In Bangladesh, marriage is usually understood from the perspective of economic exchange, with dowry playing a central role. Young men's families look at dowry as a means to augment their resources, and girls' families consider it a serious source of finance that raises with the girl's age. Economic pressure can cause the families to marry off their daughters at an early age so that reduce dowry costs (Ahmed & Kashem, Akter et al., 2021; 2015; Alston et al., 2014; Chowdhury, 2004; Chowdhury & Morium, 2018; Hauer & Sood, 2021; Hussain, 2022; Samad, 2015). Child marriage remains a widespread occurrence in many communities

across Bangladesh. This cultural norm perpetuates the cycle of child marriage, as families often face pressure to conform to societal expectations (Gupta et al., 2022).

Although there are laws prohibiting child marriage, the enforcement of such laws is often weak. This allows families to prepare their daughters for marriage at a young age without being legally penalized. The few rules that exist may not be enforced properly, creating a culture of impunity for child marriage (Akter et al., 2021; Arnab & Siraj, 2020; Ferdousi, 2014; Gupta et al., 2022; Haque et al., 2022; Hossain et al., 2022). There appears to be a significant disparity between the existence of legal frameworks and their actual implementation on the ground, which may be attributed to various socio-cultural and institutional factors.

Communities lack sufficient information about the legal age of marriage and its consequences of child marriage. Lack of education regarding legal laws can result in families being unaware the legal consequences of their actions, thus perpetuating the practice of early marriage (Gupta et al., 2022; Kabir et al., 2019). This knowledge deficit can be traced to insufficient public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives that fail to reach all segments of the population, particularly those in rural and marginalized areas where child marriage is more pervasive. The lack of comprehensive understanding of the legal implications can lead families to unwittingly perpetuate this harmful tradition, oblivious to the potential legal consequences of their actions.

Social tolerance of child marriage can complicate the implementation of legal enforcement measures. Early marriage is seen by communities as tradition, the police officers might refrain from intervening out of fear of possible backlash or social dislocation. Social acceptance diminishes the likelihood of legal action being initiated against families who encourage early marriages among their daughters (Kabir et al., 2019). This societal endorsement serves to diminish the likelihood that legal actions will be taken against families who facilitate the early marriage of their daughters, thereby perpetuating the cycle of impunity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highly impacted various aspects of life, particularly in Bangladesh, leading to an increase in child marriages. The major factors attributing to the increase in child marriage during the COVID-19 pandemic are economic challenges, closure of schools, and prevailing social pressures and norms (Mahtab & Fariha, 2022; Bani, 2021). These factors have conspired to exacerbate the prevalence of child marriages during this global health crisis.

Impact of Child Marriage

Child marriage is a prevalent issue in Bangladesh, with long-term effects on the education and health of women. Child marriage usually leads to the abandonment of studies of young women. It is clear that child marriage is a significant hindrance to women's education. Article 17 of the Constitution of Bangladesh mandates the responsibility of the state to take necessary steps to ensure universal and free and compulsory education of all children. Early marriage has been linked with a high prevalence of dropout of schoolgirls (Patoari, 2020). Child marriage continues to sustain gender disparity by limiting girls' rights and freedom. It often leaves adolescent brides without autonomy, who could be forced into taking on priorities favoring home chores responsibilities to familial obligations and future careers and options and life choices (Arnab & Siraj, 2020; Barman, 2019). Child marriage obstructs the empowerment of girls by limiting their choice freedom and autonomy (Mim, 2017). Teen brides, traditionally married to significantly older husbands, are faced with severe power disparities that lead to more domestic violence. The dependence in such young girls may curb their ability to manage violent conduct, stemming from their lower role within the household. Studies show that approximately 68.9% of women in Bangladesh who married before 18 years reported physical intimate partner violence (Yount et al., 2016).

The connection between child marriage and lower wealth and economic opportunities is evident. These women, upon marriage at a young age, have few career choices and are left with low-income, informal jobs that do not offer cash benefits. This economic detriment can entrench poverty cycles (Malé & Wodon, 2016).

Adolescent pregnancies, which are a frequent outcome of child marriage, are major health issues. Young women are sometimes not physically and psychologically prepared for childbirth, thus an increased risk of complications like stillbirth, miscarriage, and abortion. The connection between these health outcomes and child marriage is large in magnitude. Early marriage also has negative effects on the psychological well-being of young women. Most of the population is afflicted by mental depression, physical abuse, and social solitude, which might lead to irreparable psychiatric disturbances. Early pregnancy, along with a lack of support, might exacerbate the psychological problems. The health and well-being of the children given birth to by young mothers could also be affected adversely. Early marriage and further teenage pregnancies correlate with higher infant mortality and illnesses for the children

as adolescent mothers tend not to have requisite knowledge and financial resources that are needed in order to effectively care for them (Barman, 2019; Kabir et al., 2019; Trommlerová, 2020).

Existing Legal and Institutional Frameworks in Bangladesh to Reduce Child Marriage

Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017 (CMRA) And Child Marriage Restraint Rules, 2018

The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017 (CMRA) is the primary legislative tool in Bangladesh to abstain from child marriage. The Act substituted the outdated Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 and established a legal minimum marriage age of 18 years for women and 21 years for men. The Act enshrines the statutory age of marriage as 18 for women and 21 for men, while also coexist alongside Muslim Marriage Law, which permits marriage at age 15. It is inconsistent creating a legal dispute that can be leveraged potentially leading to earlier marriages by religious instruction negating the sanctity of the Act (Arnab & Siraj, 2020).

Legislation bans negotiations, consent, or legalization of child marriage and allows punishment for any violation of the aforementioned provisions. The Child Marriage Restraint Rules, launched in 2018 under the 2017 Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA), are aimed to create a systematic method towards preventing child marriage in Bangladesh. The regulations entail the information and roles of Child Marriage Prevention Committees at various levels of administration (national, district, upazila, and union) to be actively engaged in preventing child marriages and ensuring legal adherence (Yasmin, 2020).

The 2017 Bangladesh Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA) was passed to solve the issue of child marriage; however, it has some shortcomings that minimize its effectiveness. The CMRA allows marriages with individuals below the age of 18 years in "special circumstances," provided that it is deemed to be in "the best interest of the minor." This phrase is problematic because has not clear-cut definitions. In the absence of a clearly defined minimum age for such marriage, the problem of child marriages may be increased rather than being reduced and may lead to exploitation. There is no definition of "the best interest of the minor" provided under the law. This ambiguity could lead to various interpretations, potentially allowing for the misuse of the legislation to justify child marriages. The CMRA outlines consequences for the filing of fraudulent complaints related to child marriages. This provision could discourage

individuals from notifying local authorities about possible child marriages, as they may fear repercussions if their claims are deemed unsubstantiated. This could result in a lack of accurate reporting and inadequate law enforcement (Datta & Hassan, 2022; Raisa, 2023).

National Plan of Action to End Child Marriage (2018-2030)

In 2018, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs collaborated with UNICEF Bangladesh to launch the National Plan of Action (NPA) aimed at eliminating child marriage in Bangladesh. This strategy outlines methods to significantly reduce the occurrence of child marriage by 2021, aiming for complete elimination by 2041. This highlights the importance of education, community mobilization, and the socio-economic empowerment of women as critical components (Nahian, 2018).

The national action plan aimed at eradicating child marriage includes 237 strategies and 172 programs set for implementation in 2021. The majority relate to the field of education and its institutions. The closure of educational institutions since March 2020 due to the coronavirus has resulted in the non-execution of these programs. Among the other initiatives, a list has been compiled to monitor at-risk adolescent girls; rehabilitation funds have been established at the district, upazila, and union levels; financial aid is being provided to impoverished families from the local government budget, contingent upon refraining from marrying off their daughters before the age of 18; and funds have been allocated in district and upazila budgets for cash assistance. The initiatives include providing young girls with loans for vocational training, collecting socioeconomic data on families at risk of child marriage, conducting mapping projects, developing strategies to help families escape these situations in the future, and creating specialised programs within the social safety net for girls in slums who are at risk of child marriage. Representatives are tasked with identifying low-income families with young girls as vulnerable and enrolling them in government funding initiatives. However, the pertinent departments did not provide any details about the degree to which these measures have been implemented (Hossai, 2021).

Ministry Of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA)

MoWCA plays a multifaceted role in preventing child marriage in Bangladesh by implementing national plans, forming local committees, raising awareness, collaborating with

international partners, developing legal frameworks, building capacity, monitoring progress, and promoting economic empowerment for women. The 2017 Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA) has provisions to allow marriage under the age where legally barred "in special circumstances." Such vagueness has the potential to be misinterpreted in various ways, leading to undue delay in enforcement on behalf of MoWCA. It becomes difficult to enforce since there is no explicit guideline of what will constitute "the best interest of the minor." The CMRA mandates imposition of penalty upon filing false complaints regarding child marriages, which may deter individuals from reporting suspicious cases. This problem may lead to inadequate reporting and a lack of awareness of the legislation, which may hamper MoWCA's capacity to gather data and respond to child marriages effectively. Beliefs that are deeply rooted in culture and view child marriage as normal pose significant barriers to enforcement. The majority of communities do not see the adverse effects of child marriage, as it renders it challenging for MoWCA to effectively change beliefs and practices (Ame, 2013; Datta & Hassan, 2022; Ferdous et al., 2019).

Bangladesh is a signatory to several international treaties designed to protect children's rights including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). These pledges underpin national efforts to stop child marriage.

The inability of Bangladesh to prevent child marriage is evident, stemming from legal and institutional shortcomings, socioeconomic influences, cultural practices, and a general lack of awareness, among other factors.

Child Marriage in Singapore

Singapore has the lowest rate of child marriage in Southeast Asia. In Singapore, the occurrence of child marriage is remarkably low, with less than 1% of women aged 20-24 reporting that they were married before reaching the age of 18. This figure is significantly lower compared to other nations in the region, where rates can fluctuate between 11% and exceeding 30% in specific cases, such as in Cambodia and Laos (Girls Not Brides, n.d.). Singapore has the lowest rate of child marriage in Southeast Asia, due to a mixture of legal, cultural, and financial variables that discourage early marriage and promote the postponement of starting a family. The minimum legal age for marriage in Singapore is set at 18 for individuals of both genders, with very few exceptions to this rule. Child marriage is basically nonexistent attributed

to rigorous law enforcement and cultural norms that strongly promote marriage within legal parameters. It is commonly understood that reproduction is anticipated to occur within the framework of marriage. The stigma associated with unplanned childbirth is significant, leading to a strong tendency to delay marriage until individuals attain financial stability and are prepared for family life (Jones, 2012). Furthermore, a significant number of young Singaporeans place a strong emphasis on education and professional development before considering marriage. The focus on personal development often leads to postponed weddings, thereby decreasing the occurrence of child marriage (Hashmi & Mok, 2011).

Lessons Bangladesh Can Learn from Singapore to Prevent Child Marriage

The legal minimum age for marriage in Singapore is set at 18 years. Individuals who are between the ages of 16 and 18 are permitted to enter into marriage, provided they obtain consent from their parents. Furthermore, individuals under the age of 18 must obtain a Special Marriage License and take part in a Marriage Preparation Programme. Individuals who are 21 years old and older do not require any additional authorisation to enter into marriage (Generis Legal Intelligence, 2024). The rigorous implementation of the minimum marriage age in Singapore significantly diminishes the occurrence of child marriage. Bangladesh should improve its Child Marriage Restraint Act by addressing the flaws that allow for exceptions. The strict implementation of the minimum marriage age serves as a significant roadblock to child marriage.

In Singapore, education is given significant importance. Singapore has undertaken major investments in its education system. As a result, it has achieved some of the highest literacy rates globally. A focus on quality education greatly improves children's critical thinking skills, increases their understanding of their rights, and cultivates a career-focused mentality. Singapore's emphasis on education encourages young women to prioritize their academic endeavors and personal growth rather than early marriage, leading to a reduction in child marriage rates. Singapore's strong focus on education plays a significant role in preventing underage marriage (Kent, 2017). Bangladesh ought to take critical measures to prioritize education by providing financial incentives and support systems for families.

Section 9 of the Women's Charter in Singapore states that if either partner in a marriage is a minor and has not given complete and free consent, the marriage is considered void. Those

who utilize coercion or intimidation to compel an individual into marriage could face imprisonment for a maximum of three years, a fine of up to S\$3,000, or both penalties. Bangladesh should implement such types of penalty in child marriage strictly.

DISCUSSION

It is true to state that legislation by itself cannot effectively prevent the practice of child marriage. In Bangladesh, the prevention of child marriage cannot be achieved solely through legal measures, as it is significantly influenced by poverty, entrenched cultural norms, and a lack of community awareness. Until the root causes of child marriage are addressed, the practice of child marriage will persist. It is essential to offer economic assistance to vulnerable families to prevent them from marrying off their daughters before they reach the age of 18. Families can be offered financial incentives to ensure that their daughters remain in school. It is essential to enhance the understanding of the current laws aimed at preventing child marriage within the community. They should also be informed about the penalties associated with child marriage. Similar to Singapore, Bangladesh should implement strict enforcement of the marriage age to prevent child marriage.

It is obvious that the low educational attainment of girls has distinct negative consequences, one of which is child marriage (Wodon et al., 2018). In addition to expanding knowledge, education plays a crucial role in empowering girls by elevating their value and expanding their opportunities within society. Girls who obtain an education engage in the workforce and undoubtedly provide financial support to their families (Parsons & Sills, 2014). Singapore placed considerable focus on education, which consequently led to a decrease in the rate of child marriage. To effectively address the issue of child marriage in Bangladesh, it is essential to prioritize the education of girls. Furthermore, educators in Bangladesh's educational institutions ought to incorporate life skills and financial literacy into their teaching curriculum.

To prevent child marriage, the education of boys is also significant. In Singapore, observations indicate that as boys attain higher levels of education, they tend to support the educational pursuits of their female counterparts, a trend that is ultimately associated with a reduction in child marriage rates (Chang, 1995). It is evident that the education of boys can significantly contribute to the prevention of child marriage. Bangladesh should concentrate on the importance of encouraging boys to pursue higher education, as males with higher education

are less inclined to marry underage girls and possess a better understanding of the detrimental effects of child marriage (Islam & Razzaque, 2023). It is evident that the education of boys plays a vital role in changing societal perspectives on early marriage.

In Singapore, a collaborative effort is underway among government entities, non-governmental organizations, and community organizations to enhance awareness and provide support services aimed at eradicating child marriage. In Bangladesh, there exists a coordinated effort across multiple sectors, with active involvement from various stakeholders, aimed at reducing the incidence of child marriage. However, the prevalence of child marriage continues unchanged. Bangladesh ought to advance comprehensive strategies that encompass the involvement of families, educational institutions, healthcare services, and legal frameworks. Furthermore, similar to the approach taken by Singapore, it is imperative for Bangladesh to initiate comprehensive nationwide campaigns that engage community leaders, religious leaders, and media outlets. These campaigns should focus on altering the prevailing social norms that support child marriage, while highlighting the legal repercussions and the rights of girls.

CONCLUSION

Child marriage is an alarming global issue impacting millions of girls from various regions, cultures, and socioeconomic strata. A significant proportion of girls in Bangladesh enter into marriage prior to reaching the age of 18. A multitude of factors plays an integral part in the elevated incidence of child marriage in Bangladesh. The practice of child marriage in Bangladesh is influenced by several critical factors, including poverty, inadequate education, harassment, natural disasters, societal pressures, and the tradition of dowry. Child marriage certainly causes grave implications in the life of girls in Bangladesh. It has grave implications for the children too, whose mothers are victims of child marriage. Child marriage disallows girls an education. The girls are thrown out of school early. Childhood is severely denied to the child brides. Minor girls are put at greater risks attributable to childbearing and pregnancy. Furthermore, child marriage poses great health effects on the health status of new-born. The primary health threats to newborns include an increased risk of low birth weight, a high infant mortality rate, and susceptibility to malnutrition, among many others.

Among all Southeast Asian nations, Singapore has the lowest child marriage rate. Strict enforcement of the age of marriage, emphasis on education, activities of creating awareness among girls on their rights, and imposition of severe penalties on child marriage are the most notable those factors which have contributed to the decline in Singapore's child marriage practice. Bangladesh can benefit greatly from their experiences. Except for the contextual difference between Singapore and Bangladesh, Bangladesh can replicate their mechanism with precision. In controlling child marriage successfully, it is crucial to break the deeply established social cultural mores. Child marriage must be prohibited. It should be made known to individuals that child marriage is not natural. It is the tradition that exists in society. It should be ensured that individuals become aware of the ill effects associated with child marriage. Moreover, there should be a serious emphasis on the education of girls. To address this issue, it is important to provide economic incentives to poor families to encourage them to retain their daughters in school. It is important that schools provide skill development training for girls specifically. It is important for society to realize that girls are not a liability to a family. Girls can be breadwinners to their families with education. Also, it is necessary to focus on boys' education. More educated men have a lesser preference to marry underage girls. It is clear that laws alone cannot successfully stop child marriage. But laws can play a significant role in preventing child marriage. Therefore, it is necessary to strictly implement laws to prevent child marriage in Bangladesh aside from ensuring that girls receive access to schooling, providing them with skill-building training, and providing economic incentives to their families, among other interventions.

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