

The Nexus between Child Marriage and Women Empowerment with Physical Violence in Two Culturally Distinct States of India

Authors : Jayakant Singh, Enu Anand

Abstract : Background: Child marriage is widely prevalent in India. It is a form of gross human right violation that succumbs a child bride to be subservient to her husband within a marital relation. We investigated the relationship between age at marriage of women and her level of empowerment with physical violence experienced 12 months preceding the survey among young women aged 20-24 in two culturally distinct states- Bihar and Tamil Nadu of India. Methods: We used the information collected from 10514 young married women (20-24 years) at all India level, 373 in Bihar and 523 in Tamil Nadu from the third round of National Family Health Survey. Empowerment index was calculated using different parameters such as mobility, economic independence and decision making power of women using Principal Component Analysis method. Bivariate analysis was performed primarily using chi square for the test of significance. Logistic regression was carried out to assess the effect of age at marriage and empowerment on physical violence. Results: Lower level of women empowerment was significantly associated with physical violence in Tamil Nadu (OR=2.38, $p < 0.01$) whereas child marriage (marriage before age 15) was associated with physical violence in Bihar (OR=3.27, $p < 0.001$). The mean difference in age at marriage between those who experienced physical violence and those who did not experience varied by 7 months in Bihar and 10 months in Tamil Nadu. Conclusion: Culture specific intervention may be a key to reduction of violence against women as the results showed association of different factors contributing to physical violence in Bihar and Tamil Nadu. Marrying at an appropriate age perhaps is protective of abuse because it equips a woman to assert her rights effectively. It calls for an urgent consideration to curb both violence and child marriage with stricter involvement of family, civil society and the government. In the meanwhile physical violence may be recognized as a public health problem and integrate appropriate treatment to the victims within the health care institution.

Keywords : child marriage, empowerment, India, physical violence

Conference Title : ICPD 2016 : International Conference on Population and Development

Conference Location : Boston, United States

Conference Dates : April 25-26, 2016