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Incidence of Early Marriage Induced Girl Dropouts at Secondary Level: A Study of Bharsho Village in Naogaon District

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ABSTRACT

In this study, efforts have been made to explore the incidence of early marriage-induced dropout among girls at the secondary level of education. This study has three objectives. There are: to find different factors that affected girls' dropout; to investigate the extent to which child marriage functioned as a reason for girls' dropout; To relate the findings of the study to Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs. Social survey and case study methods have been applied for data collection. Data have been collected from 131 respondents with informed consent. The research area of this study was Bharsho village under the district of Naogaon in Bangladesh. In this study, the socio-economic condition of respondents' parents and father-in-law was poor. A majority of the respondents' main reason for dropping out was early marriage. Early marriage was a very significant factor that affects girls' dropouts. This study shows a strong relationship between Maslow's hierarchy of needs, early marriage, and girls' dropout.

INTRODUCTION

Every human being has a right to education. Education provides girls an opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills for personal development and contribute to the improvement of the socio-cultural fabric of a country (Amjad, 2007). Dainik Ittefaq (2019, June 14) reported that the dropout rate was particularly high among the girls, with 45.92 percent leaving education at the secondary level, against 33.72 percent of boys. Prothom Alo (2018, 12 March) reported that despite free textbooks, stipends, and other initiatives being accomplished by the government, almost 42 percent of the post-primary level girl students drop out before Secondary School Certificate examination. The Government of Bangladesh has provided stipends for girls in secondary and higher secondary education. But the incidence of girls' dropout persists. The situation demands urgent attention. Against this backdrop, efforts have been made in the present study to explore the incidence of early marriage-induced girl dropouts at the secondary

level of education. In this research, dropping out at the secondary level refers to someone who has left school/college before passing the Higher Secondary Certificate examination. Article 2.4 of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017 defines child marriage as "a marriage to which either or both of the contracting parties are minor", where 'minor' (article 2.1) is defined as "in case of marriage, a person who, if a male, has not completed 21 (twenty-one) years of age, and if a female, has not completed 18 (eighteen) years of age." The authors of the current paper have accepted this definition as the definition of early marriage. In this paper, the terms early marriage and child marriage have been used synonymously.

Adams (2013) in his study observed that the education of girls in Sub-Saharan Africa in general and South Africa, in particular, has been impeded by the high rate of school dropout due to pregnancies and demerits of sexual intercourse at an early age. Molosiwa and Moswela (2012) also researched girl pupils' dropout in secondary schools

in Botswana. The research findings show that the pregnancy of schoolgirls was a crisis that affected the socio-economic welfare of families, societies, and countries at large. This is because it was one cause, if not the leading cause of school dropout for female students.

A majority of girls drop out of school as a result of early marriage (Sekine and Hodgkin, 2017; Barr, 2017). Married girls are drastically less likely to attend school than their unmarried peers (Omoeva, Hatch, and Sylla, 2014). Ahmed et al. (2010) have also shown that the main reasons for girls' dropout are poverty and poverty-related factors. Rickets (2013) studied in Tanzania and Rwanda and found that girls have more domestic responsibilities than boys do and it leads to young girls dropping out of school at higher rates than young boys.

Lawrence (2016) found that girl students' dropping out of secondary school in Bagamoyo district in Tanzania was caused by economic, cultural, and school-based factors. Shahidul and Karim (2015) revealed that in male-dominated societies, some traditional cultural beliefs and practices largely functioned as barriers to girls' education. UNESCO's (2003) findings show that teachers' insults, angry shouts, corporal punishment, and sexual harassment influenced girls' dropouts.

Maslow (1943) developed a theory of motivation. In this theory, he constructed a hierarchy of needs with five elements. These are-physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, self-esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. These are very important in motivating a person. These five elements are (1) Physiological Needs: The first level of the hierarchy contains physiological needs (hunger, sex, food, rest, and thirst). (2) Safety and Security Needs The need for safety and security (protection, stability, freedom from fear and chaos). (3) Love and Belonging Needs: The need for love and belonging (intimacy, attention, and affiliation with a group), occupy the third level. (4) Self-esteem Needs: The fourth level of the hierarchy is self-esteem needs (consistent high view of self and respect for the esteem of others). (5) Self-actualization Needs: At the highest level of the hierarchy is the self-actualization needs (achieving the highest level of fulfillment of personal potential).

These needs appear one after another when each level of need is fulfilled. This theory has some important implications for girls' dropping out of the secondary level of education. Researchers of this study have linked this hierarchy of needs with girls' drop out. In the present study, when the continuation of school appears as a barrier to the fulfillment of the needs mentioned above girls choose to drop out. (1) Physiological Needs and Girls' Dropout: Due to poverty, many rural poor girls' family cannot fulfill their physiological needs (e.g., food and nourishment, educational costs, medical treatment, etc.). Parents think that rearing and educating a girl is a wastage of money. So, they arranged early marriage. (2) Safety Needs and Girls' Dropout: Due to a lack of social safety parents think that early marriage is better than education. (3) Love and Belonging Needs and Girls' Dropout: When family members (especially the guardians) are against a girl's schooling, she is most likely to agree to early marriage to retain the love of her family members. Belonging to her family becomes more important than her schooling. So, she drops out. (4) Self-esteem Needs and Girls' Dropout: Encouragement from parents and significant others boost the self-esteem of children regarding education. Often parents fail to encourage their daughters regarding their educational pursuits, which lowers their daughters 'self-esteem, eventually leading to dropping out of school. (5) Self-actualization Needs and Girls' Dropout: Self-actualization means a person's being able to bring out all her/his potential. When a girl realizes that she would not be able to continue schooling after the secondary level, or even if she does complete her tertiary education, she would not be allowed to pursue a career, she loses interest in schooling and drops out.

Several socioeconomic and cultural factors that lead to girls' dropout from the secondary level have been identified in various studies and the theory discussed above. These are given below: *Poor Academic Performance*. Arko (2013) reports that poor academic performance is one of the main factors influencing girls dropping out. Mzuza et al. (2013) comply that there is a strong relationship between poor examination passing rates and dropout rates. Because when a girl fails in her exam eventually, she loses interest to continue with school and drops out of education.

Lack of Own Interest in School. Some girls are not interested in continuing school despite the desire of their parents and husband. In such cases, the lack of the girls' own interest in school leads them towards dropping out of the secondary level of education.

Early Marriage. Marriage has always been a prominent cause of school dropouts among females (Grant, 2012). Holcamp (2009) found that girls' dropout rates became higher in rural areas. Parents think that they will not get any benefit from educating their girl child because they will leave their own family after getting married. Many people in rural areas think that marriage means the end of education for girls. 'If a girl gets married, she does not need education. This is a common understanding of some rural people in Bangladesh.

Pregnancy. Several studies also found that teenage pregnancy was a significant cause of girls' dropping out of school (Boyle et al., 2002).

Poverty. Poverty remains, according to Orkin et al. (2014), the most common primary and contributing reason for girls' dropping out of secondary school. Similar was the finding of Hunter and May (2011), who identified poverty as a plausible explanation for school disruption. At present, the government of Bangladesh provides books for students of all classes in secondary schools. However, school admission fees, exam fees, and private tuition fees are increasing day by day. Therefore, poor parents are failing to afford education costs. Poor parents think that they have no chance of gaining any benefit from investing money in their daughters' education.

Household Chores. Many studies observe that girls sometimes begin working at an earlier age than boys, especially in rural areas and girls also tend to do more work in the household than boys do. Studies indicate that female students tend to drop out of school to take care of their younger siblings (Brock and Cammish, 1997). A study indicates that if mothers work and get wages outside of the home, female children take some responsibilities in the household, which causes them to drop out (Fuller and Liang, 1999).

Eve-teasing. We hear almost every day that many girls face eve-teasing and sexual harassment at school, especially in Bangladesh. Because of this insecurity, some parents are inclined to marry off

their girls at an early age. Eventually, girls drop out from school.

Distance of School. Distance of school from home is an important determinant of school dropout for female students. Juneja (2001) observed that if the distance of school is too far from home, the trend of girls' dropout increases because of their vulnerability to sexual harassment. Ainsworth (2005) found that in Tanzania, a long-distance school from home increased dropout rates.

Parental Negligence and Gender Discrimination. Parents nurture gender discrimination between boys and girls regarding educational investment. A common perception of parents is that educating a girl child is a waste of resources as she will ultimately leave home after marriage (Hunt, 2008; Mawere, 2012).

Cultural Beliefs. Save the Children (2005) indicates that cultural norms and beliefs confine girls' education, especially in many developing countries. In these societies, religious superstitions and traditional values prevent girls from expressing their own opinions and making their own decisions.

A brief review of available literature reveals that studies carried out so far have investigated several issues such as the connection between parents' socioeconomic status, child marriage, and girls' dropout at the secondary level. They highlighted the factors of early marriage and other causes of girls' dropping out from the secondary level of education. However, most previous research focused on global, African, or Asian contexts. Although several studies have been conducted in Bangladesh's national context, sociological research on the association between early marriage and school dropouts among girls in northern Bangladesh and Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs and the relations between early marriage and girls' drop out is scant. The present research links the factors of girls' dropout from secondary level and early marriage with Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs. As far as the researchers have gone through no comprehensive research on this topic had taken place in the Naogaon district. A thorough understanding of local dynamics on provocative issues like child marriage, teen pregnancy, and girls' dropout from the secondary level can contribute to national policy formulations on education, child rights, and family affairs.

METHODS

The researchers have selected a village named Bharsho under Bharsho #1 Union, Manda Upazila of Naogaon District in Bangladesh for this study as they were informed that many cases of girls' dropout have occurred in this village. The researchers employed a social survey and case study methods for the study. Primary data were collected from targeted respondents the women aged 12-30 years, who had dropped out of school at the secondary level. Data were collected directly from the respondents with informed consent between 21-03-2019 to 05-04-2019. Questionnaire and interview schedules were used as data collection

tools. Although the researchers wanted to interview all (143) of the targeted women, they succeeded in interviewing 131 of them. The girls were interviewed extensively after building rapport with them. Three teachers of Bharsho High School were also interviewed to know about their opinions on the factors of girls' dropout. The case study method has been used to describe the particulars of 15 respondents in this research work. The unit of analysis was the individual. All the data were tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Statistical procedures, such as tabulation, frequency distribution, percentage, mean, ratio, and graphs have been used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section reflects on the survey results of this study and compares these findings with those of other researchers.

Table 1. Time of Respondents' Dropout

Time of respondents' dropout	Number of respondents	Percentage
Before marriage	13	9.92
After marriage	118	90.08
Total	N=131	100

Source: The authors.

Table 1 reflects the time when the respondents dropped out. It shows that only 13 (9.92%) of the secondary level dropout respondents had dropped out before marriage and 118 (90.08%) of them dropped out after marriage. Similar were the findings of the study by Nguyen and Wodon (2015), which revealed that each additional year of early

marriage reduced the probability of literacy among women who got married early by 5.7 percentage points, and the probability of having at least some secondary schooling by 5.6 points, and the probability of secondary school completion by 3.5 points.

Table 2. Reasons Behind Girls' Drop Out from Secondary School

Reasons behind Girls' dropping out from secondary school	Number of respondents	Percentage
Early Marriage	106	80.91
Poverty	52	39.69
Pregnancy	4	3.05
Eve teasing	5	3.81
School Distance	7	5.34
Parental Negligence	27	20.61
Lack of own interest in school	12	9.16
Others	11	8.39

Source: The authors.

*Respondents were asked to mention the reason behind their dropping out of school (multiple responses accepted).

Table 2 identifies the main reasons as well as other reasons of drop out mentioned by the respondents. The table shows that 106 (80.91%) girls mentioned early marriage, 52 (39.69%) girls mentioned poverty, 4 (3.05%) girls mentioned

pregnancy, and 5 (3.81%) mentioned eve-teasing as reasons behind their dropping out of school. For this question, multiple answers from the respondents were accepted. Findings of the present study support Mawere's study (2012), in which economic

hardships, poverty, early marriages, and the traditional and mistaken religious ideas that educating a girl child is a wastage of resources were the factors of girl's dropout.

Research by Ainsworth (2005) found that in Tanzania where the distance of a school was too long from home, the rate of school dropout increased in those areas. For instance, in rural areas there were no roads and vehicles; hence, children had to walk for long distances through difficult terrain, and the dangerous environment consequently affected their performance and continuation in school. The findings of this research have similarities with this finding (Table 2). Among the 131 respondents of this study, 7 (5.34%) girls mentioned distance of the school from home as a factor that affected their drop out from school. Respondents of this study mentioned some other factors as well. Twenty-seven (20.61%) mentioned parental negligence, 12 (9.16%) mentioned lacking own interest in schooling, and 11 (8.39%) girls

mentioned other reasons. Among these 11 reasons, one girl mentioned the negative attitude of her neighbor to girls' education, one respondent referred to her sickness, one respondent mentioned the attitude of teachers towards students or teacher's maltreatment, one girl mentioned her guardians' idea that if a girl was more educated, it would be a problem to get equally qualified husband in their fisherman community; two mentioned lack of security, three respondents mentioned their father's sickness, one mentioned familial conflict (because she had a stepmother), and one mentioned very bad result as reasons behind their dropping out of school. Thus, it is evident that no single factor is responsible for girls' dropout at the secondary level, according to the findings of this study. Different factors were responsible for girls' dropping out at the secondary level. But a dominating factor of girls' dropout at the secondary level was early marriage.

Table 3. The Main Reason for Girls' Dropout

The main reason for girls' drop out	Number of respondents	Percentage
Early marriage	78	59.54
Pregnancy	4	3.06
Poverty	26	19.84
Eve teasing	3	2.29
Distance of school from home	3	2.29
Parental negligence	10	7.63
Lack of own interest in school	3	2.29
Others	4	3.06
Total	131	100

Source: The authors.

The respondents of this study were asked to identify the main reason behind their dropping out of school. Their answers are given in Table 3, according to which 78 (59.54%) of the respondents opined that the main reason was early marriage. For 26 (19.84%) respondents the main reason was poverty, for 10 (7.63%) it was parental negligence, and for 4 (3.06%) it was pregnancy. Eve teasing, distance from home, and lack of ownership interest in school were the main reasons for the same number of respondents (n=3, 2.29%). Four (3.06%) girls had dropped out for other reasons. Among these 4, one girl had dropped out for the negative attitude of her neighbor to girls' education, one respondent's illness was the reason for her dropping

out, and one dropped out for a teacher's maltreatment of students, which is similar to the finding of UNESCO (2003) and one girl dropped out because of her guardian's idea that if a girl was more educated, it would create a problem in getting equally qualified husband in the fisherman community, which resembles the findings of Chege and Sifuna (2006). Thus, findings show that according to a huge majority of respondents the main reason for their dropping out at the secondary level was early marriage. Similar was the finding of Mansory (2007), who found that in Afghanistan, early marriage was the foremost cause of school dropout among girls.

Table 4. The Age at Which the Respondents Drop Out at the Secondary Level

Drop out the age of the respondents (years)	Number of respondents	Percentage
12-14 years	81	61.83
15-17 years	50	38.17
Total	131	100

Source: The authors.

Table 4 shows the age at which the respondents had dropped out of school. It indicates that 81 (61.83%) of the respondents dropped out when they were 12-14 years old and another 50 (38.17%) dropped out when they were 15-17 years old.

Table 5. Whether Respondents Spent a lot of Time for Their Younger Siblings

Whether respondents spent a lot of time for their younger siblings	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	10	7.63
No	121	92.37
Total	131	100

Source: The authors.

Table 5 portrays that only 10 (7.63%) respondents had spent a significant amount of time with their siblings.

Table 6. If Yes, Whether It Affected Respondent's Dropout

Whether it affected her dropout	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	0	0
No	10	100
Total	10	100

Source: The authors.

Table 6 shows that among these 10 respondents, none had mentioned it as a reason behind their dropping out of school. This finding is

not in agreement with that of Zaman's study (2014), the study by Brock and Cammish (1997) as well as the study by Fuller and Liang (1999) which found that many girl students dropped out because they had to take care of their young siblings in absence of their parents at home.

Table 7. Whether the Education Continued after Marriage

Whether schooling continued after marriage	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	8	6.10
No	123	93.90
Total	131	100

Source: The authors.

Thus, the findings of the present are fully in agreement with the findings of Sekine and Hodgkin (2017) and Barr (2017) that a majority of girls drop out of secondary school as a result of early marriage. Table 7 shows that only 8 (6.10%) respondents were able to continue school after marriage although they could not continue after S.S.C. A great majority of the respondents (n=123, 93.90%) were not able to do so.

Not an only continuation of school, but also regular class attendance was also affected by early marriage. Using recent household survey data from nine East and Southern African countries, a paper by EPDC surmised that marital status hurt school attendance (EPDC, 2014). The present study reveals that among the 8 girls who continued schooling after marriage, only 2 (25%) went to school regularly and 6 (75%) could not. Begum (1999) found that early marriage cut off educational opportunities and hampered personal growth. In the present study, only 3 (37.5%) girls got sufficient opportunities from their husband's family for their studies but 5 (62.5%) girls did not.

Table 8. Reasons for Dropping Out of School after Marriage

Reasons for dropping out of school after marriage	Number of respondents	Percentage
Lack of own interest	20	16.95
Husband's family did not allow	43	36.44
poverty	7	5.93
Pregnancy	5	4.24
Household chores	17	14.40
The notion that there is no need for education after marriage	16	13.56
After marriage, they could gain nothing by continuing school	5	4.24
Others	5	4.24
Total	118	100

Source: The authors.

Table 8 portrays the reasons for which the respondents dropped out after marriage. It points out that after marriage 20 (16.95%) respondents had dropped out due to lack of ownership interest in school, 43 (36.44%) respondents had dropped out as their in-laws did not allow, 7 (5.93%) dropped out due to poverty and 5 (4.24%) for pregnancy. According to the present study 17 (14.40%) respondents had dropped out of being overburdened with household chores, which resembles findings of UNICEF (2015) that new brides are expected and forced to take part in their husband's household chores like child domestic workers, a phenomenon that affects the continuation of their education. Sixteen respondents (13.56%) of the present study dropped out owing to a notion that 'there is no need

for education after marriage for women', 5 (4.24%) thought that they could gain nothing by continuing school after marriage, 5 (4.24%) had dropped out due to other causes after marriage. Among these 5, one dropped out because her parents did not allow her to study after marriage. They feared that there could be any trouble again in school. That is why her schooling was brought to an end after marriage. One could not continue for her ill health, 3 dropped out because at that time they did not understand the importance of continuing education. Thus, we find that after marriage most of the respondents dropped out because their husband's family did not allow continuation of school. Moreover, they did not have a clear idea regarding the importance of continuing education.

Table 9. Whether the Teachers Played a Role in Preventing Child Marriage and Dropout

Whether the teachers played a role in preventing child marriage and dropout	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	20	15.27
No	111	84.73
Total	131	100

Source: The authors.

Teachers played a positive role in preventing child marriage and drop out according to 20 (15.27%) respondents but according to 111 (84.73%), teachers did not or could not play any role in this regard (Table 9). Some respondents said that the teachers did not know about their (respondents') marriage.

Thus, the findings of this present study mostly resemble the findings of previous studies. According to this study the main reason behind respondents' dropping out of secondary school was early marriage (n=78, 59.55%); other reasons

included pregnancy (n=4, 3.05%), poverty (n=26, 19.84%), eve-teasing (n=3, 2.29%), distance of school from home (n=3, 2.29%), parental disinterest (n=10, 7.63%), lack of own interest in school (n=3, 2.29%) and 4 (3.06%) girls had dropped out for other reasons. One girl had dropped out for the negative attitude of neighbor to girls' education, one dropped out for a teacher's maltreatment of students and one girl dropped out because of the idea that was if a girl was more educated, it would create a problem to get equally qualified husband in the fisherman community.

In some societies, social exclusion is an additional barrier to girls' going to school. Certain groups of girls are more likely to be excluded from school based on caste, ethnicity, religion, or disability. For example, in Nepal, Dalit girls are almost twice as likely to be excluded as compared to higher caste girls (DFID, 2005). This research study shows that caste, ethnicity, religion, or disability did not affect girls' dropout at the secondary level. In America, it was observed that 28 percent of the females left school because of pregnancy and 12 percent did so because of early marriage (NCES, 2009). In the present study, early marriage and pregnancy were found to be important reasons behind girls' dropping out. But the influence of early marriage was much more prominent than pregnancy. Only 3.05 percent of females left school because of pregnancy and 59.55 percent did so because of early marriage.

Unlike previous studies, the researchers of this study included insufficient encouragement from family as a factor behind girls' drop out from the secondary level of education. Encouragement from parents boosts the self-esteem of children. Their encouragement works as a reinforcement for children to continue striving for higher and better educational achievements. Findings of this study reveal that 80 (61.07%) of the respondents opined that insufficient encouragement from family affects the rate of their dropping out of secondary schools. They expressed that family and society did not motivate and reward them towards education.

The findings of this study show a strong relationship between Maslow's hierarchy of needs, early marriage, and girls' dropout. Before the discussion, it is important to inform that in this study only 13 (9.92%) of the secondary level dropout respondents had dropped out before marriage and 118 (90.08%) of them dropped out after marriage. In the present study, 78 (59.54%) of the respondents opined that the main reason for their dropout was early marriage. Based on this information the relationships are discussed below:

Physiological Needs and its Relations with Early Marriage and Girls' Dropout. According to the findings of the present study, most of the respondents' parents' families' socioeconomic condition was poor. Most (58.77%) of the respondents' families' monthly income was less than 10,000 Taka. Some parents could not fulfill

their children's basic physiological needs such as nutritious food, medical care, clothing, etc. In the present study, 26 (19.84%) respondents' main cause of dropout was poverty. On the other hand, 33 (25.19%) respondents' main cause of early marriage was poverty. Findings also show that parents thought that marrying off daughters early brings rewards (e.g. lower age means more attractiveness of girls, lower cost for marriage). So, parents were more inclined to marry them off early, and consequently, girls dropped out from the secondary level of education.

Safety Needs and the Relations between Early Marriage and Girls' Dropout. If the physiological needs are fairly satisfied, then the need for safety will appear. As the main cause of dropout was poverty for 26 (19.84%) of the respondents, the need for safety will not be applicable for them. And the need for safety has appeared on the remaining 105 respondents. According to the findings of this study, 2.29 percent of girls dropped out for eve-teasing and 2.29 percent for long-distance of the school from home. They did not feel safe on the way to and from school. So, parents thought that marrying off daughters early would help them in avoiding punishment (e.g., insecurity, eve-teasing, and probability of losing beauty). So, parents felt that it was safer to marry off their daughters early and girls dropped out from the secondary level of education.

Love and Belonging Needs and the Relations between Early Marriage and Girls' Dropout. Love and belonging needs refer to a human emotional need to affiliate with and be accepted by members of a group. Most people try to live up to the values and interests of their family members. For about 75.58 percent of respondents of this study physiological and safety, needs were fairly satisfied. So, the need for love and belonging appeared for them. The findings of this study show that 10 (7.63%) of the respondents' main reason for dropping out was parental negligence. Eighty (61.07%) of the respondents opined that the negative attitude of parents affected their dropout. They also faced gender discrimination in their family. They wanted to continue school for a longer period. But their parents forced them into marriage without listening to them. To respect their parents' decision, respondents had no other choice but to get

married and as a result, they dropped out of secondary school.

So, 75.58 percent of the respondents' journey through the hierarchy of needs about the continuation of schooling stopped at this level. As a result, they could not reach the following stages of self-esteem and self-actualization need. At this stage, they got married to assure the continuation of love and affection of their parents. And after marriage, they had dropped out of education.

The findings of the present study show that all factors included in the conceptual framework influenced girls' dropping out at the secondary level. The researchers collected data as a case study from three teachers of Bharsho high school to know about their opinions on the factors of girls' dropout. They opined that early marriage, lack of girls' interest in education, love affair, moral turpitude, poverty, parents' belief that if a girl were more educated, it would create a problem to find an equally educated husband for her, fear of losing honor, love affair, separation of parents, lack of awareness of family, parents' feeling that their daughters were a burden on them, gender discrimination and eve-teasing were the factors of girls' drop out. They also opined that early marriage is the main reason for girls' dropping out from the secondary level of education.

The findings of this study reveal that the conceptual framework presented at the beginning of this paper does not cover all the factors behind girls' dropping out from the secondary level of education. Some other factors were found to have affected girls' drop out from the secondary level of education as reported by the three teachers and the dropout girls who were interviewed. These are respondent's sickness, teacher's rough behavior toward students, discouragement of parents, the idea that if a girl was more educated, it would create a problem to get an equally qualified husband, lack of security, father's sickness, parents feeling that their daughters were a burden on them, lack of awareness of family, conflict within the family, love affair, moral turpitude, having to live with stepfather or stepmother, and fear of losing beauty charm were also reasons behind girls' drop out. Many parents thought that higher age means lower beauty charm. So, they married off their daughters very early and girls dropped out of school as a consequence. Nevertheless, early marriage/child marriage was the

principal factor behind girls' dropout at the secondary level of education according to the findings of this study.

CONCLUSION

The three important findings of the study were (a) the highest of the respondents' main reasons for dropping out was early marriage; (b) the extent of child marriage/ early marriage was very high for girls' dropout at the secondary level of education in the study area and (c) this study shows a strong relationship between Maslow's hierarchy of needs, early marriage, and girls' dropout.

Some policy recommendations have been derived from the analysis of the researchers for decreasing girls' early marriage and dropout from the secondary level: (1) To ensure girls' security exemplary punishment should be executed for those convicted of eve-teasing and the government or other stakeholders should arrange a safe transport system for female students. (2) At least one secondary school should be established for each village. (3) GOs and NGOs should take some steps to build up awareness among marginal people about the importance of girls' education and the negative aspects of child marriage. (4) Teachers should come forward to a greater extent to stop child marriage. (5) Parents should monitor whether girls go to school or other places and should be cautious regarding their children's use of mobile phones. (6) Implementation of laws on early marriage is necessary to prevent early marriage.

Given the findings of the study, we may expect that by implementing the above-mentioned steps, girls' early marriage and dropout from secondary school would decrease in countries like Bangladesh.

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