

# Early Marriages And Its Impact On Fertility In Rawalakot Ajk, Pakistan

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## Abstract

Marriage is one of the universal social institutions established to control and regulate the life of mankind. It is the approved social pattern whereby two or more persons establish a family. However, marriage, which occur without natural way or which violate the basic principles of human rights, creates critical social problems with multifaceted consequences. The current study investigates into various causes and consequences of early marriages and its impact on fertility in Rawalakot Azad Kashmir in 2017. The study was undertaken in Rawalakot that focused on 50 female respondents who ever married at the age of 15-24. The specific objectives were to investigate and to determine the causes and effects of early marriages and its impact on fertility. The study was guided by radical feminist theory which analyzes patriarchy as the cause of women's oppression and this in turn hinders them from participating in different fields of life the data was collected with the help of survey methods. The analyses reflect that early marriage is practiced due to illiteracy, deeply rooted traditional social structure and economic insurance, which laid devastating impacts in terms of social, physiological and psychological problems for the individual, family and society as a whole. The study found that girls drop out of school at an early age due to poverty and end up marrying early because of not having anything meaningful to do. It is recommended that parent education, proper role of government and the media will assist in the elimination of the curses of early marriage.

**Keywords:** Early marriages, Illiteracy, Poverty, psychological problems, physiological problems

## INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the universal social institutions established to control and regulate the life of mankind. It is the approved social pattern whereby two or more persons establish a family.

Marriage is a social institution that unites people legally and forms the basis of family formation through sexual and reproductive union. It is a social, religious and traditional practice acknowledged by the society. In most of the developing society, marriage is considered as a socially acceptable union of two people and the main purpose of getting married is considered to have children. Marrying off

girls in their childhood is considered as an early marriage. Although there is no clear definition of early age marriage, many studies define marriage before 18 years age as child marriage.

Marriage, occurs between persons who is under the age of 18 to 22 is called early marriage. It is also seen as a forced marriage, because a person as a child cannot decide what is good to her or his before the age of 18. Even if he or she wants to marry under the age of 18, because of being developmental age, his or her will should be ignored. Early marriages cause the emergence of unhealthy and young mothers by affecting the physical and mental development of

particularly the girls and cause them to find themselves in complicated roles while they are yet in adolescence period. The educations of the adolescent children who are materially and morally dependent are cut by the marriage of these children and they cannot also benefit enough from the employment opportunities since they have not been able to become qualified. Early marriages result mainly against the women. The woman who is not able to participate in the labor force and who has been deprived of education becomes obliged to leave her life depending upon her husband. UN defines early marriage as a modern version of slavery and early marriage is evaluated under the head of human trafficking.

Universally, early marriage is commonly classified as union formations by children under the age of 18. <sup>1</sup> It is a practice which affects mostly girls in developing countries.

The widespread execution of early family formation in most developing countries has attracted the attention of scholars from different disciplines, mainly because both the causes and the consequences of this practice are far reaching. Not only does early marriage pose serious health threats to girls who experience early sexual intercourse and childbearing following marriage formation; it also leads to social and economic underdevelopment both at the individual and aggregate level.

Early family formation is a traditional practice, which is socially and culturally institutionalized. While the practice is fed by gender inequality, poverty, and social norms, it also reproduces social power imbalances, such as increased economic vulnerability of women, lower educational attainment of girls, gender inequality at home and in the labor market, and last but not least,

physical and sexual violence against women.

Fertility is an ability of a woman to conceive and carry a child to delivery. It is a broad term used to cover all aspects of the reproductive performance of a population of a country. It is the average number of children each woman will bear in her fertile year. Fertility as a term generally used to indicate the actual reproductive performance of a woman or a group of women.

The crude birth is only one measure of fertility. Fertility measure the rate at which a population adds to it by births, and is normally assessed by relating the number of births to the size of some selection of the population, such as the number of married couples to the number of childbearing age, for example an appropriate yardstick of potential fertility.

The fundamental notion of fertility is an actual level of performance in a population, based on the number of live births that occur. Fertility can be ascertained from statistics of birth. The study of human fertility is central to the population. One of the basic population processes is fertility. It is a phenomenon which influences birth rate and consequently the population of a country. It is necessary to study the birth rates and the factor that influences it. Births affect and influence the family structure as well as the society. Human fertility is responsible for biological replacement and maintenance of human society. The growth of the population depends entirely on human fertility. It is through human fertility that a society replenishes itself. It is a positive force that helps expand.

People in rural areas prefer early marriages and follow many superstitions against birth control and abortion. Rural areas, therefore, record higher fertility

rates Marriage patterns have implications for the status of women, their health and fertility through out of wedlock birth are common in many countries, it is the entry into the marriage that usually marks the beginning of exposure to child bearing.

Globally, early marriage refers to any marriage of a child younger than 18 years old. This robs the girls of their youth as they are required to take up roles for which they are not psychologically and physically prepared. Many have no choice about timing of marriage with their partner. Some are coerced into marriage, while others are too young to make an informed decision. Premature birth, marriage deprives them of the opportunity for personal development as well as their rights to full reproductive health (RH), and well-being, education and participation in civic life.

Early marriage exists in some parts of Europe, for example, in the United Kingdom, where 4.1 per cent of all girls in the 15-19 age group were cohabiting (living in an informal union), while 8.9 per cent of all girls in that age group admitted to have been in a cohabitation relation before the age of 18. Over 4 per cent of all underage girls in the UK were teenage mothers.

In Latin America and the Caribbean Island, about 29 per cent of girls are married before age 18. According to UNICEF, Africa has the highest rates of early marriage in three nations, Republic of Central Africa, Chad and Niger, with over 70 per cent of girls marrying under the age of 18. Overall, Sub-Saharan Africa, over 40 per cent of women enter marriage by the time they reach the age of 18.

In South East Asia and Oceania, about 22 percent of Indonesian girls experience early marriage every year, and 12 per cent get married before age 15.

There are extreme cases of early marriages in Afghanistan and Bangladesh, where 50 per cent of the girls are married under the age of 18. In Oceania, the area that includes Australia and New Zealand, the average age at which women are married is over 20 years, except in areas such as the Solomon Islands and Marshall Islands where they are married at 18.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of social, economic and health outcomes are associated with early marriage, for example, early marriage tends to curtail young women's educational opportunities and those who marry early tend to have low levels of educational attainment (Jain & Kurz, 2007; Santhya et al., 2010). Likewise, studies in diverse settings have found that females who marry at young ages may be less capable than those who marry later of asserting themselves in their marriage, which may place them at higher risk of experiencing physical and sexual violence (Lloyd & Mensch, 2006).

Marriage has traditionally been early and universal and this has been blamed for high fertility. Fertility reduction is often associated with improved status of women, particularly, free partner choice, women's education and wealth of the family (Ayiga & Rampagane, 2013; Rutaremwa, 2014). Studies in low-income countries have shown that women's empowerment (i.e. The freedom of women to exercise their judgment in order to act in their own interests) influences a number of other reproductive and child health outcomes (Larsen & Hollos, 2003)

A negative correlation between age at first marriage and lifetime number of births is one of the most common relationships found in the research (Bongaarts, 1983). The physical

consequences of early childbearing can be life threatening for both mother and child. Worldwide, maternal mortality is the most prevalent cause of death among women aged 15 to 19. Women aged respectively under 20 and 15 faces a risk of dying in childbirth, which is two and five times higher than that of women over 20 and when they survive childbirth a considerable (Jejeebhoy & Rao, 1995)..

In populations with higher age at marriage, fertility is generally observed to be low. This reduction in the total fertility with increasing marriage age can occur under the following conditions if age-specific marital fertility rates do not differ by marriage age and if non-marital fertility is negligible. When marriage age increases under these conditions, fertility can decline because of the reduced number of women at risk of childbearing. In addition, marriage age can lower fertility when marital fertility among women marrying late is lower than among those marrying at a younger age., the relationship between late marriage and low fertility is the result of higher control levels of marital fertility among the populations that married early (Coale (1992).

The first factor to be considered is fecundability—defined as “the probability that a woman in a susceptible state will conceive during a month of unprotected intercourse. The variations in fecundability by marriage age of women, and broadly by female age, are well documented. These variations could be attributed to physiological and behavioral factors (primarily related to changes in coital frequency).

Religion was narrated as one of the reasons by the participants for continuation of early marriage practice in Pakistan. Participants’ perceives that their religion persuades parents to marry their daughters as soon they attain puberty. It may be noted that, in Pakistan, religion has

a great influence in everyday life of an individual and many people justify their mundane decisions in the name of religion. The role of religion and religious leaders is profound in the country with several religious leaders having strong hold in their communities. This strong influence of religious leaders may affect the willingness of parents to marry their children at a much younger age. Further, varying interpretation of religion may also play a role in continuation of child marriage practice in the country. Shariah Law defines puberty/menstruation for girls and facial hair for boys to signify the time when they can get married.

Avoiding social evils, delinquency, and adultery was also narrated as one of the reasons by the participants for continuation of early marriage practice in Pakistan. Not marrying the children before the age of 18 years could result in situations which can cause social evils, sins, and social problems. Protecting the “family honor” is listed as one of the reasons for early marriages in earlier studies. The moment girls reach puberty, they are believed to be a source of attraction and lust for boys, and parents thus, feel relaxed and free of the burden of guarding their girls from unchaste by marrying them at an early age. By marrying girls before the age of 18 years, parents believe that this practice could protect their daughters from unwanted attention from men and the likelihood of objectionable romantic relationship.

Primitive cultural practices, several of which are forbidden by the country’s laws are prevalent in rural and tribal areas of Pakistan, such as Watta Satta (bartering bride to bride), Pat Likkhi (marrying children before they are born or are still very young), Addo Baddo (marriage among tribes), and Swara / KhoonBaha / Vani / Sakh (girls given in

marriage as a form of dispute resolution), also lead to continuation of early marriage practice in the country.

Early marriage in Pakistan seems to be related to poverty. Worldwide, poverty is one of the main factors that is found associated with the early marriage practice. Early marriage practice is common in poor countries and regions of the world, and even within these countries, the practice is concentrated in poor families. In Pakistan, women are mainly considered as a financial liability, unlike men who are considered the source of income for poor extended families, getting girls married at an early age is an easy way to avoid responsibility of feeding, clothing and education. Particularly, misusing of dowry tradition in the country, make parents marry their girls at an early age to free them from financial liability; the older the girl, the higher the likelihood of dowry demand.

The status of women in society plays a key role in early marriage; women are seen as inferior and they are neglected and despised. For instance, in India, the birth of a girl is seen as an occasion of heartbroken sorrow and despair, even in relatively affluent and educated families. A girl is seen as a burden given the fact that she will get married elsewhere and leave her natal family. Thus, parents prefer to educate boys and marry the girls off at an early age. A male child is more likely to gain full education, gain employment and pursue a working life, tending to marry later. The low status of women in society is due to gender inequality. Gender inequality is a product of the culture in that male child is given preference which leads to poor treatment of girls and women in society.

This study was guided by radical feminist theory which emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Radical feminist theory analyzes patriarchy as the primary cause of women's oppression. One of the

proponents of this theory is Susan Brownmiller who argues that women are subordinated and exploited by men because of patriarchy. The feminists further assert that women can only be liberated through debates of overhauling patriarchal structures. They blame the exploitation of women on men because they see society as patriarchal - it is dominated and ruled by men. Radical feminists are distinguished by the analysis of gender inequality in which men as a group dominate women as a group and are the main beneficiaries of the subordination of women. From this point of view, they further argue that men are the ruling class, and women the subject class.

According to, patriarchy is indispensable for an analysis of gender inequality. She further argues that there are six patriarchal structures which restrict women and help maintain male domination, and these are paid work relations within the household, patriarchal culture, sexuality, male violence towards women and the state. In terms of their interrelation, Walby argues that each of these structures impacts upon one another but are also relatively autonomous. Their interrelationships constitute the different "forms" of patriarchy present in a particular society.

In the patriarchal nature of African culture, value is placed on the boy-child's education than that of the girl-child. Girls are subordinated and undervalued such that they do not have educational opportunities equal to boys. In homes where there is poverty with few financial resources, girls will be forced to drop out of school prematurely in favor of the boys. This is because some parents believe that boys are more intelligent, that they perform better in school and that they are a better educational investment than girls. A factor often ignored in discussions of parental preference for boy's education is the prevalence of patrilineal inheritance

systems. As the prime beneficiaries of family assets, boys are favored in human capital investment decisions. In addition, parents worry about wasting money on the education of girls who are likely to get pregnant or married before completing their schooling. In most African cultures, girls were meant to be housewives, mothers and home-makers doing domestic duties. The boys were to be household heads and the breadwinners or economics providers of their homes and this meant that they were to be educated and acquire wealth to manage these homes. Therefore, gender roles assigned to girls by the family, and society, are geared more towards marriage than the attainment of educational success.

### **Relevance of the Theory to this Study**

This theory was relevant to this study in the sense that it helped the researcher to analyze the aspects of the culture, for example, their beliefs and practices that explained early marriage. The radical feminist analysis also helped the researcher to establish the effect of early marriages of girls and women. Patriarchy hinders women and girls from being involved in development activities in the society. Culture is a product of patriarchy and in patriarchal societies, it is the men who become rulers over their wives and this means women do not make decisions in both public and private spheres. A woman cannot decide on the number of children to have and when to have them and also who among girls and boys should go to school, and in most cases girls do not go to school. Therefore, based on the provisions of patriarchy, the researcher assessed benefits that men reap from early marriages and in what ways these marriages ensured

male dominance and female subordination.

It is posited that early marriage is caused by poverty and economic transaction, traditional cultural practices such as FGC, the cementing of alliances, and women's status in the society which is a factor contributed by patriarchy. On the other hand, early marriage leads to early pregnancy, reproductive health complications such as fistula, childhood responsibilities and denial of education.

A proportion of them suffer from severe pregnancy or childbirth complications. Early motherhood is also associated with poor maternal health outcomes that subsequently feed through to the child.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study was carried out using a purposive design that used quantitative methods of data collection. The quantitative data were collected through a survey questionnaire. Quantitative data were cleaned; coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 17 and the results are presented using tables of frequencies and percentages as well as charts.

#### **Questionnaire**

Questionnaires are frequently used in quantitative research. They are a valuable method of collecting a wide range of information from a large number of individuals, often referred to as respondents. There are two types of questionnaire open ended, close ended.

#### **Open ended**

No options or predefined categories are suggested. The respondent supplies their

own answer without being constrained by a fixed set of possible responses.

### **Close ended**

Respondents' answers are limited to a fixed set of responses. Researchers use close ended questionnaire because it is reliable for the researcher to ask respondents similar questions in the same order, thus making it easy to compare the responses.

### **Survey Method**

For the purpose of the data collection researcher took survey method. The survey method was conducted through a standardized questionnaire. The respondents were required to give their views, opinions, perceptions and challenges on the causes and effects of early marriage. The survey method is appropriate since it provides for direct interaction between the respondents and the researcher. It has a further advantage in that the respondents are asked similar questions in the same order, thus making it easy to compare the responses. This increases reliability. In this study quantitative survey method is used.

### **Sampling technique**

The researcher used the purposive sampling, which was suitable for the present research, in which a respondent according to the requirement of the study recommends who match the criteria of the study. This sampling was helped for the studies those respondents who were most appropriate were accessed and who consume less time, so that target population reached in a stipulated time period. In this study random sampling technique is used.

### **Sample size**

To study the whole population is a tough task for the researcher within a short time period. So, in order to take it easy and possible researcher selected the sample size of 50 respondents.

The study population consisted of all the women who married early. The unit of analysis was the women married early. The sample population consisted of 50 women the sample was limited to ever-married women aged 15-24 years with at least one child birth. Our sample focused on 15-24-year-old mothers.

### **Research Site**

The geographical area of study was Rawalakot. It is located in the Pir Panjal Range. Its other name is Pearl Valley because the excess of almond blossoms in the valley gives an impression of scattered pearls when seen from a mountain in summers Rawalakot is one of the most beautiful valleys of Jammu & Kashmir which is located 80 km away from Rawalpindi and Islamabad. By road it takes two and a half hours to Rawalakot city and its surroundings are very peaceful and beautiful. Rawalakot is located at Latitude 33°51'32.18"N, Longitude 73°45'34.93"E and an Elevation of 5374 feet. Rawalakot is approximately 76 kilometers from Kahuta and about 120 km from the city of Rawalpindi, Pakistan.. It is linked with Rawalpindi and Islamabad via Goyain Nala and Tain roads Via Kotli Satiyan and Kahuta. It is also linked with Rawalpindi via Sudhnuti.

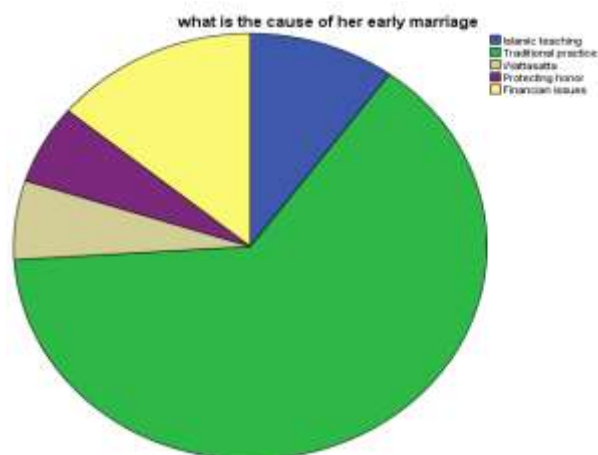
## **RESULTS**

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**Table 4.1 Cause of early marriage**

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Causes of early marriage		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Islamic teaching	5	10.0
	Traditional practice	32	64.0
	Watta satta	3	6.0
	Protecting honor	3	6.0
	Financial issues	7	14.0
	Total	50	100.0

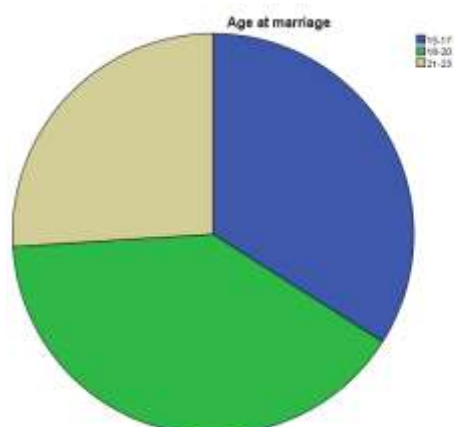


The above table show that 5% respondent say the cause of early marriage is Islamic teaching.32% say cause is traditional

practice.3% say cause is Watta satta.3% say cause is protecting honor.7% say cause is financial issues in family.

**Table 4.2 Age at marriage**

Age at marriage		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	15-17	17	34.0
	18-20	20	40.0
	21-23	13	26.0
	Total	50	100.0

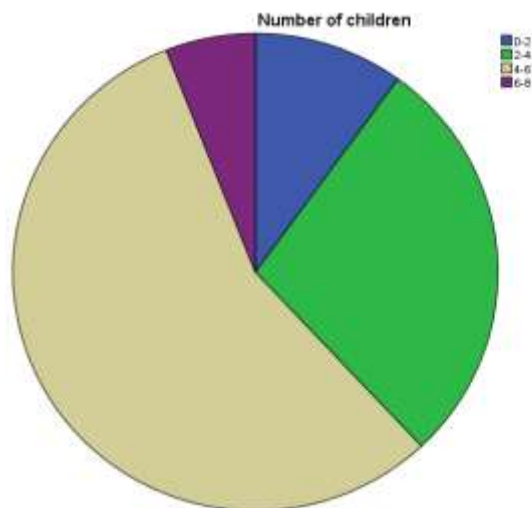




The above table show that 17% respondent have age between 15-17.20% have between 18-20. 13% have between 21-23 range.

**Table4.3 Number of child**

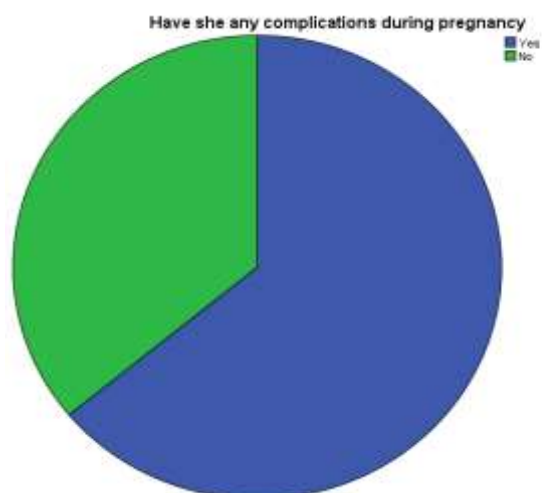
Number of children		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	0-2	5	10.0
	2-4	14	28.0
	4-6	28	56.0
	6-8	3	6.0
Total		50	100.0



The above table show that 5% respondent have 0- 2 children.14% have 2-4 Children.28% have 46 children. 3% have 6-8 children

**Table 4.4 Complication during pregnancy**

Complication during pregnancy		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Yes	32	64.0
	No	18	36.0
Total		50	100.0



The above table show that 32% respondent have complication duringPregnancy. 18% have no complication during pregnancy.

**Table 4.5 Complications during delivery**

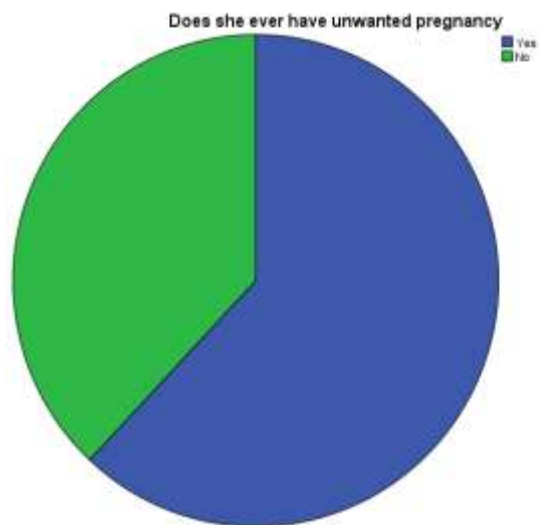
Complication during delivery		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Yes	33	66.0
	No	17	34.0
Total		50	100.0



The above table show that 33% respondent have complication duringPregnancy.17% have no complication during pregnancy.

**Table 4.6 Unwanted pregnancies**

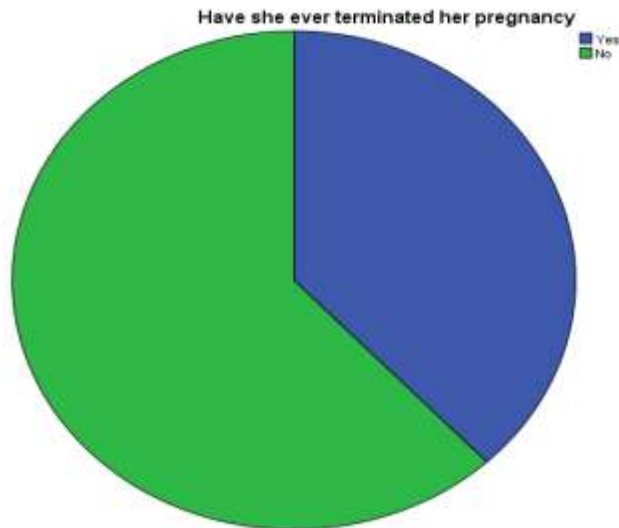
Unwanted pregnancy		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Yes	31	62.0
	No	19	38.0
	Total	50	100.0



The above table show that 31% respondent have an unwanted pregnancy.19% have no unwanted pregnancy.

**Table 4.7 terminated her pregnancy**

Terminated her pregnancy		Frequency	Percentage
Val	Yes	19	38.0
	No	31	62.0
Id	Total	50	100.0



The above table show that 19% respondent have terminated their pregnancy. 31% have not terminated their pregnancy.

### Hypothesis Testing

#### Chi-Square Test

$H_0$ : there is no association between causes (Islamic teaching, Traditional Practice, Wattasatta,

Protecting honor, financial issues) and early marriage.

$H_1$ : there is association between causes (Islamic teaching, Traditional Practice, Wattasatta, Protecting honor, financial issues) and early marriage.

#### Test Statistics

Causes of early marriage	what is the cause of her early marriage
Chi-Square	61.600
Df	4
P value.	.000

If the p value is less than 0.05 null hypothesis is rejected and the result is statistically significant. In the above table p value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 so null hypotheses is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted and Concluded that is associated between causes (Islamic teaching, Traditional Practice, WattaSatta, Protecting honor, Financial issues) and early marriage.

#### Chi-Square Test

$H_0$ : there is an indirect relationship between pregnancy problems and early marriages (before the age of 23 year).

$H_1$ : there is a direct relationship between pregnancy problems and early marriages (before the age of 23 year).

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Pregnancy problem	Have she any complications during pregnancy
Chi-Square	3.920
Df	1
P value.	.048

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If the p value is less than 0.05 null hypothesis is rejected and the result is statistically significant. In the above table p value is .024 which is less than 0.05 so null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted and Concluded that is an association between pregnancy problems and early marriages (Before the age of 23 years).

#### Chi-Square Test

H<sub>0</sub>: there is indirect relationship between delivery problems and early marriages (before the age of 23 year).

H<sub>1</sub>: there is direct relationship between delivery problems and early marriages (before the age of 23 year).

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Delivery problem	Have she any complications during delivery
Chi-Square	5.120
Df	1
P value.	.024

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If the p value is less than 0.05 null hypothesis is rejected and the result is statistically significant. In the above table p value is .024 which is less than 0.05 so null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted and Concluded that is association between delivery problems and early marriages (Before the age of 23 years).

#### Chi-Square Test

H<sub>0</sub>: there is relationship between unwanted pregnancy and early marriages (before the age of 23 year).

H<sub>1</sub>: there is no relationship between unwanted pregnancy and early marriages (before the age of 23 year)

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Unwanted pregnancy	Does she ever have unwanted pregnancy
Chi-Square	2.880
Df	1
P value	.090

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If the p value is greater than 0.05 null hypothesis is accepted and the result is statistically significant. In the above table p value is .090 which is greater than 0.05 so null hypotheses is accepted.

#### Chi-Square Test

H<sub>0</sub>: there is relationship between terminated pregnancy and early marriages (before the age of 23 year).

H<sub>1</sub>: there is no relationship between terminated pregnancy and early marriages (before the age of 23 year).

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Terminated pregnancy	Have she ever terminated her pregnancy
Chi-Square	2.880
Df	1
P value	.090

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If the p value is greater than 0.05 null hypothesis is accepted and the result is statistically significant. In the above table p value is .090 which is greater than 0.05 so null hypotheses is accepted.

#### ANOVA

H<sub>0</sub>: there is a relationship between age at marriage and the number of children.

H<sub>1</sub>: there is no relationship between age at marriage and the number of children.

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ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15.191	1	15.191	56.138	.000
	Residual	12.989	48	.271		
	Total	28.180	49			

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If the p value is less than 0.05 null hypothesis is rejected and the result is statistically significant. In the above table p value is .000 which is less than 0.05 so null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted and Concluded that is associated between age at marriage and the number of children.

#### CONCLUSION

On the basis of the above findings, it can be concluded that early marriage exists in Rawalakot and it is as a result of poverty and culture. Early marriage imposes fundamental challenges on the advancement of the female education If early marriages do not happen, females got more opportunities to get an education. Early marriages have both positive and negative effects, but the

negative effects are more than positive. Parents as well as culture play a significant role in the practice of early marriages. The parents decided to marry their daughters because of Islamic teachings or traditional practices and sometimes it happened because of Watta Satta or protecting honor. Females who married early feel regrets because it brings too many family responsibilities which they cannot face due to immaturity.

Early marriage changes their life and they feel alienated in their in-law's family. They suffered from depression due to violence such as physical, mental, emotional. They have a high fertility rate because their in-laws want more children and sometime their partner. They have a pregnancy in the first year of their marriage and sometime two

childbirths in 24 months of marriage, they have complications during pregnancy as well as in the delivery, sometime they faced an unwanted pregnancy which compels them to terminate their pregnancy. Being a young parent, they faced many challenges like health issues, premature child birth and depression.

Through this research it concludes that females who married early have a high fertility rate as compare to those who married late.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the conclusions, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. The laws prohibiting the practice of early marriage may be enforced so that anybody found committing the offense is criminalized and sentenced to jail.
2. Punishment may be given through law to move and witnesses who is involved in marriage activity.
3. The government may arrange awareness sessions to aware people about the negative effects of early marriage.
4. Improvement in educational field can alleviate the problem of early marriage.
5. To ask parents to not marry their daughters in early years and also aware females raise their voice to avoid early marriage.
6. By spreading awareness about the negative aspects of early marriage the problem of early marriage eliminated.
7. To some extent no need to follow your culture and give education to females to make them independent
8. The problem of early marriage will decrease with the decrease of Watta Satta practice
9. Avoid early marriages because it is more stressful for females and cause depression.
10. Conduct females' health programs to decrease the problem of early marriage.

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