



Contemporary Push and Pull Factors of Child Marriage: A Case of Nepal

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Abstract

Child marriage is a formal or informal union where one or both spouses are under 18 years old. Despite Nepal being a signatory party to the UNCRC 1989 and under the Marriage Registration Act, the minimum legal age of marriage in Nepal is 20 years for girls and boys; the high prevalence of child marriage practices across Nepal poses a critical challenge to achieve Nepal's target for SDG to stop child marriage by 2030, similar to other developing nations in South Asia. According to UNICEF (Child-marriage-Nepal-profile2019), approximately 37% of Nepali women aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18. In this context, this qualitative study explored the contemporary push and pull factors of child marriage, collecting data from 163 adolescents, child marriage survivors, friends of children who have done child marriage, community leaders, parents, children club members, grandparents, police, teachers and health post staff in 12 rural municipalities (local government areas) of 6 districts of Nepal, adopting a case study research design and purposive and snowballing sampling methods. This study considered strong research ethics principles and practices. This study conducted in 2023 revealed push and pull factors such as power dynamics, knowledge and life skills, education, finance and poverty (caused by many factors, including climate change), technology and social media, deeply rooted gendered and sociocultural beliefs and practices and lack of enforcement of available laws and policies which are associated mainly at three levels; individual, family and society and institutions.

Keywords: Child marriage, Nepal, children, push and pull factors, technology and social media