

結婚行動における女性の社会経済的地位の影響

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The Influence of Socio-Economical Status in Women's Marital Behavior

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要旨

本研究は、近年におけるネパール農村地区の変化に焦点を定め、女性の結婚のパターンや年齢の変化を調査したものである。

ネパールの農村での結婚は、ごく最近まで若年期に行われ、伝統に従って両親により実質的に決められていた。しかし、近年の社会・経済的及び教育の変化により配偶者の選択について本人の関与が急激に増え、また、結婚年齢も上昇している。

本研究は現地調査により得られた基礎的データに基づき、グードの近代化理論を視野に入れ、基本的に次の二つの仮説を証明しようとするものである。まず、第一に、社会・経済的に豊かな家庭出身の女性たちは、遅い年齢で結婚するという。第二に、教育が結婚年齢を遅くさせ、かつ配偶者選択により多くの自由をもたらしている、ということである。この結果は次の事実と一致する。つまり、両親の高い社会・経済的地位および、高い学歴が娘たちにも高学歴をもたらし、その教育が女性の結婚年齢の上昇と配偶者選択の自由という二つの主要要素をもたらしている、という事実である。

SUMMARY

In the light of changing rural situation, this study examines women's current pattern of marriage and changes in age at marriage in rural Nepal. Marriages in this setting were done earlier and mostly arranged by the parents in conventional way. The change in social, economical and educational institutions have inspired a rapid increase in the participation of individuals in the selection of spouse and increase in age at marriage. This study is based on primary data obtained from the field survey. Keeping Goode's modernization theory in mind the present study tests primarily two hypotheses. Firstly, girls from socio-economically sound family are more likely to marry later. And secondly education leads later age at marriage and more freedom in spouse selection. The results are in consistent with the fact that parent's socio-economical and educational status has positive impact on daughter's education. And education in turn positively affects women's age at marriage and freedom in spouse selection.

1. Introduction

Marriage before the age of 18 is a reality for many young women in Nepal. Marriage during the teenage years is declining in many regions of the world but substantial proportions of women are still marrying extremely early in Nepal. Recently there has been a transition of marriage from traditional pattern to the modern pattern. A major characteristic of this change include later marriage and higher rate of celibacy, delayed child bearing, economic opportunities for women, tolerant attitude towards family behaviors etc.

Marriage is an important event in a woman's life, as it determines her status in the society. According to the Hindu marriage custom, the father should give *kanyadan* (donation of virgin) to acquire merit (*punya*)¹ and have a place in the heaven after death. The Hindu religion has projected marriage and motherhood as the be-all and end-all goal of every woman and not only from within the immediate family, but also from community members. The chastity of women is the prime issue of concern to all. Thus there

is a strong pressure to get daughters married as early as possible. Statistics show that in Nepal about 60 percent of the girls between the ages of 15 and 19 years are married. 20 percent of the Nepalese women are married before the age of 15 and nearly 7% of girl children are found to be married before reaching 10 years of age².

2. Theoretical and Empirical Background

According to the modernization theory, changing norms and ideas are one of the most important pathways through which process of socio-economic development delay women's age at marriage. Goode(1970) and Shorter(1977) have stressed three specific mechanisms; the prominence of choice rather than arranged marriage, a preference for nuclear family instead of extended family residence and the economic and social independence of women. The modernization argument also stresses that with urbanization, westernization and the accompanying changes in the economy and society, marriage becomes

Table 1: Singulate Mean Age at Marriage by Sex

Sex	Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (in years)				
	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Male	19.5	20.8	20.7	21.4	23.6
Female	15.4	16.8	17.2	18.1	20.3
Male-Female Difference in SMAM	4.1	4	3.5	3.3	3.3

Source: CBS,1995;CBS,2003

more individualized process to be entered for love or self-fulfillment rather than traditional family concerns³.

Theoretically, the age at first marriage of women is greatly and positively influenced by age at menarche (Goode, 1963, Caldwell, 1982). Likewise, there is a theoretical as well as empirical support that women's education is the principal factor in delaying age at marriage in addition to the socioeconomic status in the natal house. Many researchers have proposed different theoretical frameworks to study the marriage patterns (Goode, 1963; Smith, 1980). On Nepalese context too, a number of attempts have been made to study the patterns of age at marriage at the aggregate level focusing on the literacy, occupation and urbanization (Yabiku, 2002; Thapa, 1989; Ghimere et.al., 2006). Empirical studies from several developed and developing countries in general, basically support Goode's explanation, i.e. effects of modernization factors on timing of marriage. In addition to these, parent's socio- economic status also plays an important role in influencing their children's marriage. In this study more emphasis is laid on the socioeconomic status (measured by father's education and respondent's education) and its influence in age at marriage and mate selection.

3. Marriage Trend in Nepal

Universality of marriage and early marriage are the two predominant features in the history of nuptiality in Nepal. Marriages in Nepal have been greatly influenced by Hindu religious doctrines and early marriage was the norm. Age at marriage has been rising in Nepal in recent decades, although there exists differences in the pace of change in different regions. Age at marriage among females is still low and centers around 18-19 years. At least one third of the females in the age group 15-19 are married in Nepal (UNFPA, 1994). However, a gradual transition towards higher age at marriage seems to be underway.

Although the census was started from 1911, the 1961

census has only provided data on age at marriage. As shown in Table 1, the Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM) at marriage for female was 15.4 years in 1961 and it increased to 16.8 years in 1971. The significant increase in age at marriage between 1961 and 1971 could be promulgation of the *Muluki Ain*⁴ in 1963, which introduced a legal minimum age of marriage. According to the marriage act 1963 of Nepal, the legal age at marriage is 18 years for females. However, under parents consent girls are eligible for marriage in 16 years. Before 1963, it was 14 years (Thapa, 1989).

The 1981, 1991 and 2001 census have pointed out the SMAM for females as 17.2 years, 18.1 years and 20.3 years respectively. In 2001, it was the first time in the history of Nepal that female SMAM has crossed teenage. It has increased from 15.4 in 1961 to 20.3 in 2001 for females. During the same period SMAM for males increased from 19.5 years to 23.6 years. These facts prove that a considerable change have occurred in Nepal in timing of marriage. Between these four census years the SMAM is increased by 4.9 years for women in average. Data from table 1 also shows definite decline in male-female differences in SMAM from 4.1 years in 1961 to 3.3 years in 2001.

4. The Setting

Thaiba village is selected as the model for the research. The reason for choosing it is due to fast pace of modernization. It is well connected by basic transportation facilities with good frequency of vehicles to the capital city. Most of the people are engaged in household industry and agricultural related activities. Increase in access to new social organization, schools, employment opportunities etc. have shifted the individual's daily activities from domestic work sphere to non domestic activities. Literacy rate is soaring up. The number of small industries is increasing rapidly. The richer families from the cities started to migrate here. Interaction with urban people has changed the traditional attitudes. Almost every house has radio,

telephones and televisions. The expansion of services such as schools, health post, bus, market and communication facilities have led more young people going to school, working outside the family and interacting with mass media.

5. Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of information. Respondents are selected by random sampling method. Data has been collected from 72 married females from age 16 to 60 years old. The questionnaire is designated to elicit from the respondents themselves information that will throw light on changing attitude towards marriage and family. The survey questionnaire includes marriage and family related questions such as socio-economic backgrounds of the respondents, education, type of marriage, age at marriage, mate selection, marriage related decision making, attitude towards marriage etc.

The questionnaire is administered personally to the respondents in two categories. One is face to face interview with illiterate respondents and another is distribution of questionnaire to literate respondents. To check the validity and reliability of the questions framed in the schedule, a pre-test is conducted. Based on the pre-test result some of the questions in the questionnaire are modified. The respondents are divided into three birth cohorts: 1947-1961, 1962-1976 and 1977-1991 with interval of 14 years, representing the older, middle and younger generation respectively. The collected data are compared with the different birth cohorts and analyzed the impact of education on age at marriage and spouse selection.

Limitations are unavoidable in all the research works. This study confines only one village of Nepal, thus it doesn't claim to set out a full profile of transition of marriage and family in Nepal. In Nepal marriage and child birth registration is not compulsory. So the reporting age at marriage may not be accurate. As most of the womenfolk of the village are uneducated, they hesitate to express their reality. Furthermore, the investigation into economic aspects couldn't carry out precisely. Because of the fear of income tax, none of the respondents revealed their actual income.

6. Findings

6.1 Socio-Economic Characteristics

An examination of the socio-economic characteristic

Table 2: Current Age of the Respondents

Current age	No.	Percentage
below 20	2	2.8
21-30	20	27.8
31-40	20	27.8
41-50	19	26.4
51-60	11	15.2
Total	72	100.0

of the study population is very much essential for any research work to analyze or interpret the results. In this view, an attempt is made here to discuss the socio economic background of the respondents.

Current age of the women is an important factor in demographic analysis. From table 2, it is clear that majority of the sample women belong to the age group 21-40 years. All the respondents are ever married. Among the total respondents, 11% of the respondents are widowed. Remarried and divorcees are very small in number.

Traditionally, most young people even after marriage live together with their parents. Due to the economical hurdles and the desire to maintain better standard of living, nuclear families are getting popular recently. 58.2% of the respondents are living in nuclear family where as 41.8% of the respondents in the joint family.

The surveyed area is predominantly agricultural. Although agriculture is the main occupation, it could not meet the food demand of the people due to low productivity. To generate some extra income, they are engaged in additional business like trade, sewing, knitting, garment and carpet weaving, wage labor etc.

Even though the annual income of the household is asked to the respondents to understand the economic status, none of the respondents exposed their actual annual income. So an attempt is made to find out the household economical condition of the respondents based on the size of the house, material used in the house, ownership of multimedia facilities (radio, T.V., computers, telephone etc) and ownership of vehicles. By evaluating their belongings, the respondents are classified into four economic status; higher, upper middle, middle and lower. Majority (74.7%) of the respondents belong to the middle class.

6.2 Educational Status

Respondents are considered literate if he/she could

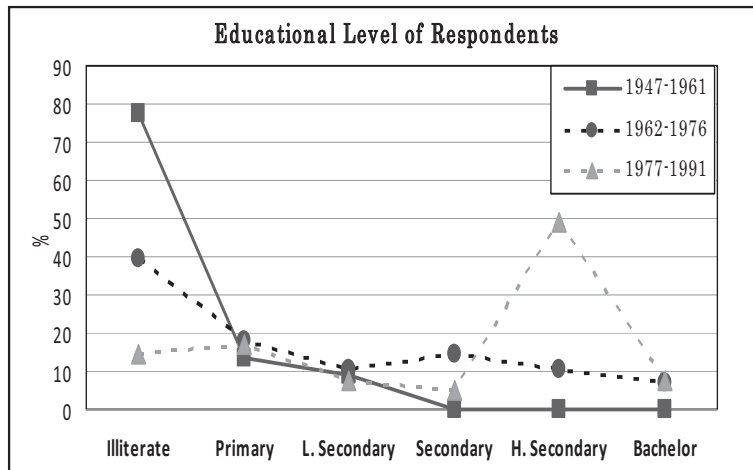


Figure 1: Educational Level of Respondents

sign his/her name instead of marking with a thumb print. Information provided by the respondent indicates that people are becoming more aware of the importance of education. The reason is that parents are finding difficult to marry off their daughter who was not educated. As shown in the Figure 1, the illiteracy rate is decreased from 77% to 39% in transition between the older and middle birth cohort and further decreased to 14% in the younger birth cohort. None of the respondents from the older birth cohort has secondary level of education. In the middle birth cohort, 14.3% have secondary level education. 10.7% have higher secondary and 7.1% have bachelor level of education. In the younger birth cohort only 14.6% are illiterate. Maximum numbers of respondents (56%) have higher secondary and above level of education. Coincidentally, father's education is also found improving from 100% illiterate in the older birth cohort to 57% literate in the middle cohort and 71% literate in the younger birth cohort. On the contrary majority of the mothers are illiterate in all birth cohorts.

6.3 Age at Marriage

In Nepal, marriage registration is not compulsory. In many cases, some respondents are found not able to tell their exact marriage year. So age at marriage is roughly estimated by asking questions on respondent's eldest child's age and after how many years of marriage their first child was born. Early marriage is not viewed desirable by most of the respondents. The respondents who married before 20 thought that they married early and did so according to parent's will. The majority believe that the best age for a girl to marry is in the range of 22-25 years. Table 3 demonstrates data on age at marriage of the respondents.

Comparing the age at marriage among the birth cohorts, majority of the women in the former cohort are found marrying within 19 years. There was a considerable increase in the Mean Age at Marriage (MAM) between the older and the middle birth cohorts, and between middle and the younger birth cohorts. The MAM is 17.1, 18.3 and 19.6 respectively for the older, middle and younger birth cohort. In recent years, girls are marrying in later age. The desires to gain higher education and to be economically independent are the chief reasons for it.

Table 3: Age at Marriage of the Respondents

Birth Cohort	14-16 Yrs. (%)	17-19 Yrs. (%)	20-22 Yrs. (%)	23-25 Yrs. (%)	MAM (In years)
1945-1960	36.4	54.5	9.1	0	17.1
1962-1976	21.4	50.0	25.0	3.6	18.3
1977-1991	13.6	40.9	27.3	18.2	19.6

6.4 Respondent's Age at Marriage and Father's Education Level

It has long been recognized that an individual's educational attainment dramatically influenced by various factors of social background including socio-economical status of the parents. Since a large majority of the marriages of the society is generally arranged by the parents, timing of marriage is closely related to the socio-economic and educational status of the parents. It is observed that educated parents are found giving more importance on the education for their children. Particularly, a secondary level

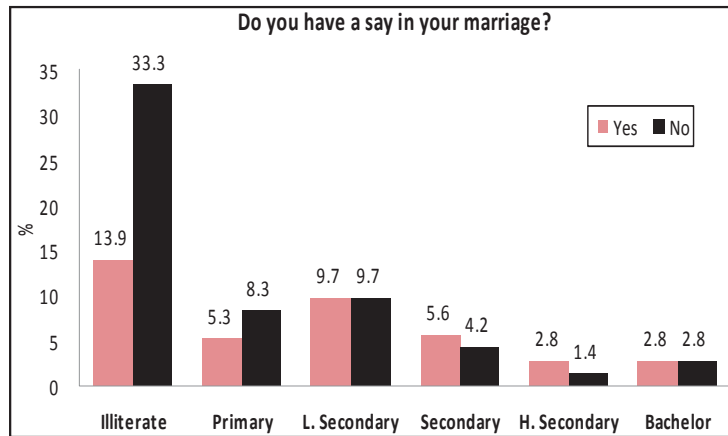


Figure 2: Education and Freedom in Mate Selection

school education of the father has powerful influence on the daughter's own education. It is noticed that the MAM is higher for those respondents whose fathers are literate compare to their illiterate counterparts. The MAM of the respondents with illiterate father is 17.5, with primary education is 18.8 years, with lower secondary is 20.8 years, with secondary is 19.4 years and with higher secondary and above is 23 years. From these data one can conclude that educated fathers encouraged marrying at higher age.

6.5 Marriage Pattern

Chiefly, three types of marriage are found in the village: arranged, love and elopement⁵. Arranged and elopement are the most common marriages and still have a strong hold in the society. Love and elopement marriage also mean expression of freedom in mate selection. Elopement is popular among low income families and practiced in all social classes. More than half of the marriages are arranged and the rests are elopement and love marriage. 86.4% of the respondents have done arranged marriage in the older cohort where as 42.9% and 45% respondents from the middle and younger birth cohort have done arranged marriage respectively. Elopement marriage is also found slightly in the older cohort because love marriage is uncommon during that period. They hesitated to act as it turns out weakening ties with parents and other relatives. The overwhelming majority of the marriages irrespective of birth cohort are found arranged by parents alone with the help of relatives and matchmakers. Recently the trend of decision making in the marriage collectively by parents and couples is ascending. In consideration of the changes in marriage pattern over time, the present study has found that there is a clear shift from arranged marriage to love and elopement marriages.

6.6 Mate Selection

The selection of the proper spouse is regarded as the duty of the senior family members rather than individual concern unlike in the western societies. Nepalese society has higher parental control over marriage. Marriage negotiations are not left entirely to the daughters. Even under the rapid social change, the parent's involvement in their children's mate selection continues. To know the freedom in marriage, the respondents were asked a question whether they had a say in their marriage or not. Majority of the respondents irrespective of birth cohort suggested that marriages were arranged by parents with the help of relatives and matchmakers. Respondents expressed that even they had an arranged marriage, they were consulted in their marriages and majority of the respondents expressed themselves as having fully approved of their parent's choice. Substantial minorities of women from older birth cohort reported being consulted in these decisions and had a say in their marriage. In the succeeded birth cohorts it can be seen that increasing education opportunities had provided as ample opportunities to acquaint with opposite sexes because the literate respondents exerted considerably freedom in the mate selection than their illiterate counterparts. Figure 2 presents the education level and the freedom in mate selection. It is observed that the higher education level of the respondents the more freedom in their mate selection.

6.7 Education, Economic Level and Age at Marriage

Education is one of the prominent factors to alter the age at marriage. It is found that respondent's increased schooling has a significant effect on the increase in age at first marriage. Figure 3 indicates that the respondent with

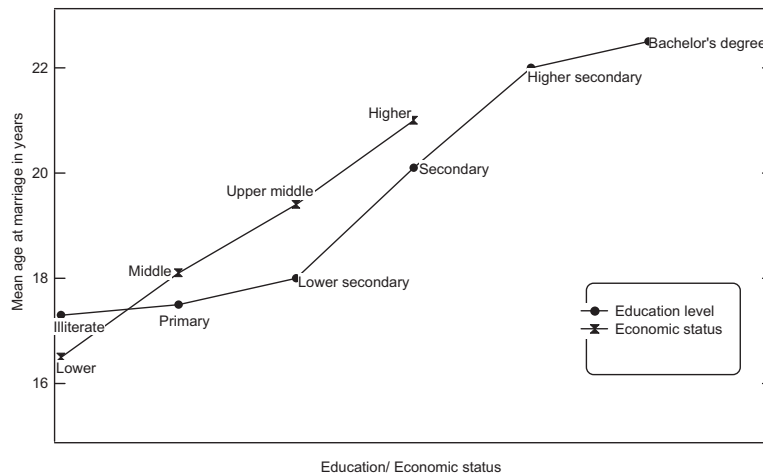


Figure 3: Respondent's MAM vs Education/Economic Status

no education married at 17.3 years, primary education at 17.5 years, lower secondary level at 18 years, secondary in 20.1 years, higher secondary in 22 years and bachelor level in 22.5 years. From these data one can say that respondent's primary and lower secondary level of education has only a minor effect on marrying at late age. However, the effect is stronger for the women who have higher education. In general, higher studies play an important role for marrying at later ages.

Likewise economic status of an individual has influenced the age at marriage in several ways. Generally, higher economical status would be associated with a better occupation, higher education and training, which in turn delays the entry in marriage. Furthermore, wealthier families prefer alliances with their equal or higher status than themselves for the sake of prestige which may also lead to later marriage. The respondents from the upper economic class families are found connected with the advanced network of mass media and have achieved higher education from the nearby cities. As a result, the mean age at marriage for higher socioeconomic status have higher than that of lower and middle economic status. As presented in the Figure 3, the MAM of respondents from the higher, upper middle, middle and lower economical status families is calculated as 21, 19.4, 18.1 and 16.5 years respectively. It is clear that the more socioeconomically well off, the more female education is encouraged. Hence the higher level of educational achievement leads to the later marriage and freedom in mate selection.

7. Results and Discussions

This research has examined women's current pattern

of marriage timing and changes in the age at marriage in Thaiba village. In recent years, age of women at marriage is rising and so is the proportion of never married women. Socio-economic development such as spread of education, economic development, impact of mass media, invasion of satellite television etc. all have affected the way people look at marriage and family.

Findings confirm that age at marriage has been increasing moderately. The average age at marriage is increased from 17.1 years of the older birth cohort to 18.3 years of the middle birth cohort and 19.6 years of the younger birth cohort. Early marriage is not viewed desirable by most of the respondents. The respondents who married before 20 years old thought that they married early and did so according to parent's will. The great majority believe that the best age for a girl to marry is in the range of 22-25 years.

Attitude towards marriage and family seem to have become less traditional as the society is being educated. Exposure to school provide girls with western ideology which include wanting to have greater autonomy in marriage. There is only one recently built higher secondary school in the village. Most of the respondents had attained higher secondary and above level of education from nearby cities. This context led the village people interacting with modern values, exposing to more diverse life styles and weakening social control against upholding the traditional norms. The mean age at marriage of women by large is significantly higher among those women who belong to higher socio-economic status and completed secondary and above level of education. Parents belong to higher socio-economic status on average perform their daughter's marriage comparatively at higher ages and given freedom

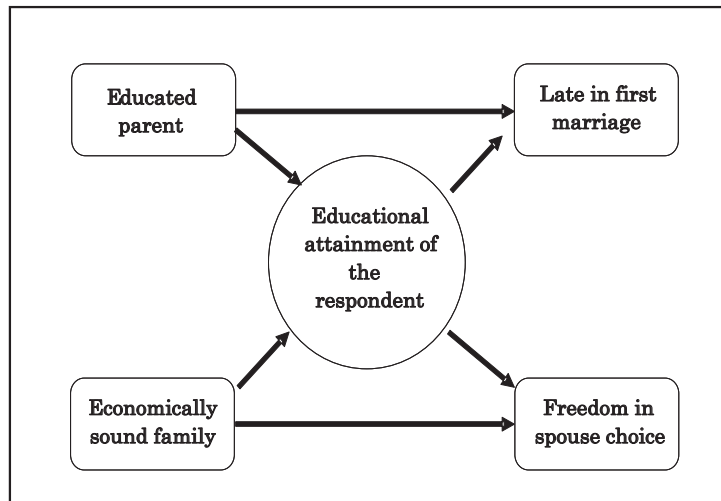


Figure4: Schematic diagram for interpretation

in spouse selection. Obviously it can be concluded that with the increase of educational level, the aspiration of getting equal or higher educated mate may also prolong the search for a suitable match and thus delayed marriage.

Education not only mechanically reflected delay in marriage but it also implied the tempting prospect of some financial return from subsequent employment as well as leading pride in this achievement. Besides parents began to see children's education not only as a medium of climbing the social ladder but also as a means of their own social progression. Likewise, daughter of well educated father are exposing to the outside environment and have a voice in choosing their husband and marrying later. It is found that parent's education had played a vital role in the enhancement of the educational status of the respondents. Consequently, none of the respondents with primary level educated father are illiterate.

In decision making process, parents play an important role in the marriage of their children. In most cases, marriages still are arranged by the parents with the help of elder family members. However, their children are often consulted in advance. Recently, parents are giving more freedom to children to choose their marriage partner. They are conceding that personal choice is the best method of spouse selection. The present study has noticed that even though the parents are becoming more liberal in the mate selection, children's attitude towards arranged marriages have not observed change appreciably.

Education of the girls is the main factor which allowed rapid change in regards to age at marriage and spouse selection. In addition to this, mass media also influenced changing peoples' mind favorable to the modernity.

Mass media such as radio, television, cinema in Nepal overwhelmingly represent western world views including positive view in love marriage. At the same time the more influential are the Indian films and T.V. dramas where most of the films had portrayed issues relating marriage and its breach i.e. individual choice going against the family norms. The government also has been providing information and education to popularize concept on increasing later marriage through radio and televisions. In this study also all the respondents have radio, television in their house and most of them spend their spare time by watching television. Thus mass media has seen a major effect to change the attitude in illiterate respondents. Evidently, illiterate parents are also becoming more liberal in mate selection and giving freedom to their daughters.

8. Conclusion

This research has explored change in attitude towards marriage and family by emphasizing on education, age at marriage and freedom in spouse selection. From the present study, it can be said that there has been a distinct change in attitude towards marriage and family. Moreover, it has reflected a gradual rise in the age at marriage, freedom in mate selection, favor of love marriage and decision making power in marriage. It can be similarly argued that the more socioeconomically well off, the more female education is encouraged. Hence, the higher level of educational achievement leads to the later marriage and freedom in mate selection.

The results found in this study are in consistent with the fact that parent's socio-economical and educational status

has positive impact on daughter's education and education in turn positively affect women's age at marriage and freedom in spouse selection.

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Footnotes

¹ Punya means merit which accumulates as a result of good deeds, acts or thoughts and that carries over to later in life or to a person's next birth.

² UNICEF (2005), *Early Marriage; A harmful traditional practice, a statistical exploration*

³ Malhotra, A. (1997), *Gender and timing of Marriage: Rural-Urban Differences*, *Journal of Marriage and Family* 59:434-450.

⁴ Muluki Ain is the civil code of Nepal.

⁵ Elopement in other word runaway marriage also means love marriage, which occurs when the self chosen partners don't get familial approval.