

Q. Why in India there is still very high prevalence of child marriage? What are the possible solutions to counter this menace? (15 marks)

Reasons and solutions of child marriage in India

Introduction

Child marriage prevalence is generally defined as the percentage of women 20-24 years old who were married or in union before age 18. India is estimated to have over 24 million child brides. 40% of the world's 60 million child marriages take place in India according to the National Family Health Survey. India has the 14th highest rate of child marriage in the world, according to the International Center for Research on Women.

According to DLHS data, around 48% of married women in the 20-24 year age group got married before 18 in rural areas, compared with 29% in urban areas.

Body:

The major reasons for still high prevalence of child marriage include:

- **Poverty:** Lack of resources and prevalence of dowry system leads to early marriage of girl child.
- **Insecurity:** belief that girls need to marry early for safety and protection, and apprehensions about the risk to family honour or economic burden.
- **Political and financial reasons:** embedded in a set of beliefs about the status of women and girls, and their role as wives and mothers.
- **Lack of education:** Some parents consider the age period of 15-18 as unproductive, especially for girls, so they start finding a match for their child during this age period.
- **Patriarchy and gender inequalities:** Another cause include the preference for sons which result in more than the preferred number of daughter
- **Inadequate implementation of the law:** Lack of awareness and complains lead to poor implementation of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006.

The various steps that need to be taken to prevent child marriage include:

- **EDUCATING GIRLS :** Education plays a critical role in keeping girls safe

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from child marriage. In fact, the longer a girl stays in school, the less likely she is to be married before age 18 and have children during her teenage years.

In addition, education ensures girls acquire the skills and knowledge to find employment and a means to support their families. This can help break the cycle of poverty and prevent child marriages that occur as a result of extreme poverty and/or financial gain.

- **EMPOWERING GIRLS:** Every girl has the right to decide her own future, but not every girl knows this – that's why empowering girls is so crucial to ending child marriage. When girls are confident in their abilities, armed with knowledge of their rights and supported by peer groups of other empowered girls, they are able to stand up and say "NO" to injustices like child marriage. Empowered girls are able to re-shape perspectives and challenge conventional norms of what it means to be a girl.
- **RALLYING THE WIDER COMMUNITY TO STAND UP FOR GIRLS' RIGHTS:** Parents and community leaders are often responsible for deciding when and whom a girl marries.
- **PROVIDING GIRLS AND THEIR FAMILIES WITH INCOME OPPORTUNITIES :** Providing families with livelihood opportunities like [microfinance loans](#) is an effective way to prevent child marriages that occur as a result of financial need. When families have increased economic opportunities, they're less likely to perceive their daughters as economic burdens. This is especially true if a girl is in school gaining valuable skills that will help generate income in the future.
- **Better implementation of available laws**

Conclusion: Government is working through various initiatives such as Beti Bachao Beti padhao, Sukanya samridhi Yojana, Kasturba Balika Vidyalayas etc. to counter child marriages. There is need for greater citizen participation and attitudinal change so people realize that girls are not a burden but an asset and do not marry them off at early ages.