

FACTORS DRIVING ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY in Bangladesh

Findings from a research study



Resilience through Information on SRHR & Empowerment



Adolescent pregnancy in Bangladesh

- Bangladesh sees the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy in South Asia.
- The study explored the socio-cultural context influencing the reproductive outcomes, experiences and decision-making ability of young women (15-19 years) who were recently pregnant.
- **Research areas:** The study was conducted in Barisal, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Cumilla and Dhaka in Bangladesh.
- **Methods:** Data were collected through 51 interviews with (recently) pregnant female clients of health clinics, family members, health-care providers and managers.



I had taken methods [pills]. But my mother-in-law found the pills and threw them away. (Young woman, 17 years old, Dhaka)

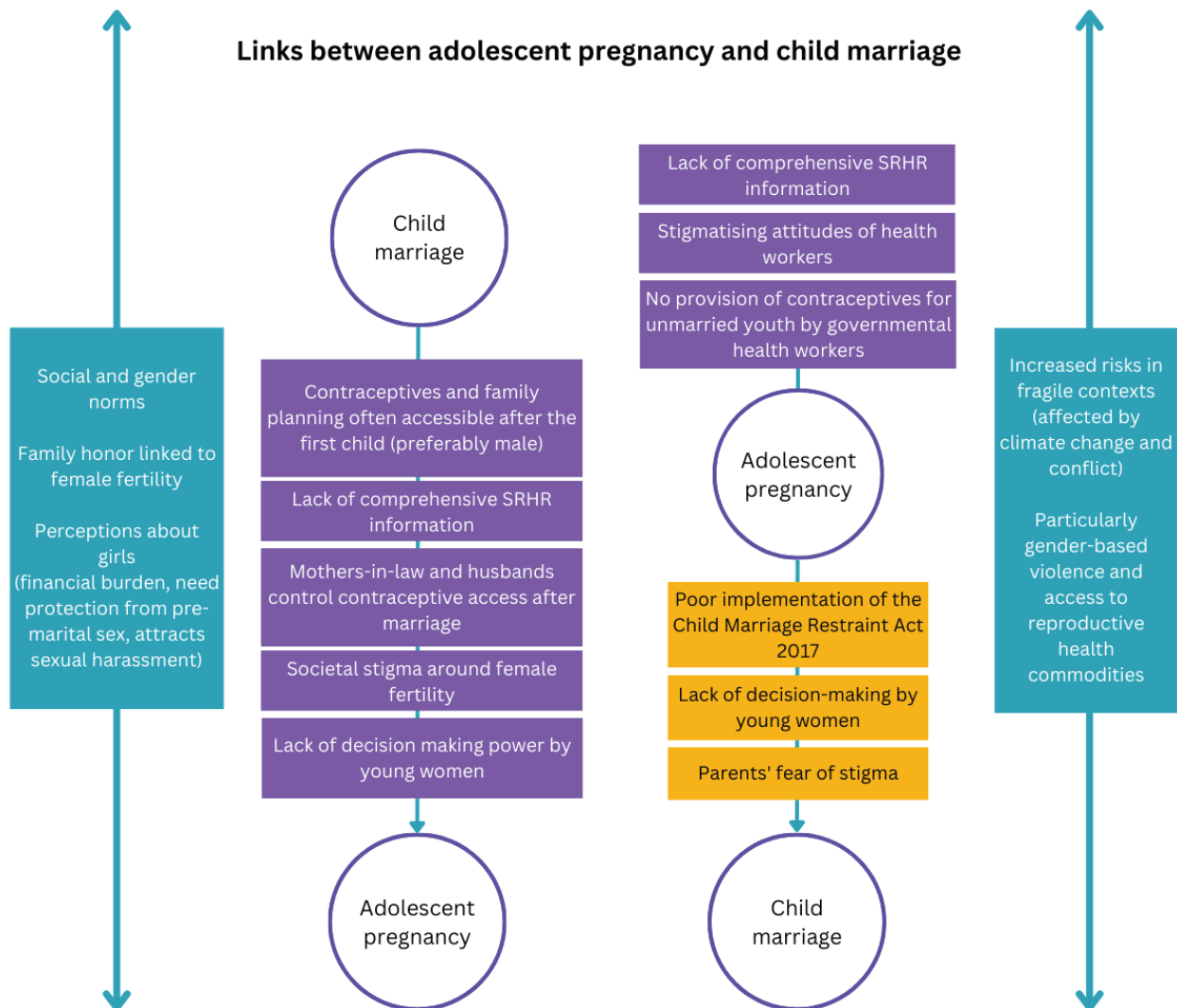
It is difficult to ask [about family planning methods]. If I would ask anyone about it prior to my marriage, it would be disgraceful for me. If I did ask my cousins or sisters-in-law, they would think I'd become promiscuous. That's why I didn't go to anyone. (Young woman, 17 years old, Cox's Bazar)

Findings

- There is widespread awareness of government advice to delay childbearing until age 20.
- However, social norms around adolescent and female sexuality and related gender roles influence young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).
- There is an inter-generational gap between parents/in-laws and young people that prevents them from discussing SRHR issues.
- There is widespread stigma and fear of being infertile, which pressurises young women to reproduce soon after marriage.
- Young women lack decision-making power given the patriarchal set up and the dominant role of mothers-in-law.
- There is a lack of (accurate) knowledge of contraceptives among young women and their family members.
- There continues to be formal and informal barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services.

Links between child marriage and adolescent pregnancy

Links between adolescent pregnancy and child marriage



Recommendations

- Conduct community and intergenerational dialogues
- Promote delivery of quality SRHR education [offline and online] with teacher support groups
- Conduct contraceptive counselling at family-level
- Facilitate regular value clarification with health workers
- Train health workers on adopting youth-friendly health services
- Incorporate follow-up systems in schools to check on students who have dropped out
- Champion and support the work of marriage registrars who are against child marriage
- Engage and sensitise boys and men via community-based activities

It's all my fault [referring to an accidental pregnancy]. It happened only because I misunderstood the processes...In our time we didn't study anything...I don't know whether it is a part of the curriculum or not. But in our times, it wasn't. (Husband, 25 years old, Barisal)

Chatterjee, O., Kakal, T., Hossain, B. M. [2022]. "My mother-in-law forbade me to take pills": Factors driving adolescent pregnancies among young women clients from health clinics in Bangladesh. Amsterdam: KIT Royal Tropical Institute.

Read more at: https://www.kit.nl/publication/my-mother-in-law-forbade-me-to-take-pills/?alt_nav=5182

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