



## Teenage Marriage and High School Dropout among Poor Girls: A Narrative Review for Family Pathways in Bangladesh

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### Abstract

Despite past research demonstrating a strong link between teenage marriage and high school dropout for teenage girls, mechanisms underlying the relation are not well-understood. Drawing from family life-course perspective and its growing literature, this narrative review found teenage girls' marriage most likely to occur in the poor families was strongly linked to their early high school dropout, via early family formation, role transition, and school risk behavior. Longitudinal mediating research is needed to understand teenage marriage and high school dropout via early family formation, role transition & high school risk behavior among poor teenage girls in Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** Teenage marriage, high school dropout, family formation, family role transition, high school risk behavior.

## Introduction

Early marriage for legitimate sexual relation, reproduction, child development, mutual support and adaptation (Dyer, 1983; Goode, 1963; Murdock, 1960; Uddin, 2009b, 2015) is a historical and socio-cultural issue across the developing and less-developed societies. Growing literature during the past several decades reveals that girls' early marriage occurs from 5% to 70% across the societies, depending on the demographic structure, socio-economic development, religion, and social system in which they live (United Nations, 1988, 1990; United Nations Children's Fund, 2001). Research demonstrates that early marriage rates are the highest in Africa and South Asia where 30% of the girls between the ages 10 and 15 years are married. This type of marriage is moderately high in Central America, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean where 20-25% of the girls aged 15-18 years are married (Smith, 1980; Singh & Samara, 1998), but only 4% of the eligible persons are married in North America, East Asia, and Western Europe (Blossfeld 1995; Goldscheider et al. 2000). The higher rates of early marriage occur in Niger (77%), Chad (71%), Bangladesh (65%), Mozambique (57%), Nicaragua and India (54%), Yemen (48% and 10-40% in the other countries (Heaton, 1996; United Nations Children's Fund, 2001; United Nations, 2000; Westoff, 1992). Does early marriage relate to high school dropout? Growing literature during



the past several decades suggests that high school dropout is significantly associated with teenage marriage for girls than boys across the societies and cultures, including Bangladesh (Holcamp, 2009; Lloyd, 2005; Mansory, 2007; Shahidul, 2012, 2014; Uddin, 2015). Sekine & Hodgkin (2017) examined the process of girls' high school dropout and found that the risks of school dropout associated with early marriage heighten after the girls complete their fifth or sixth grade. The risks of dropping out peak in the seventh and eighth grades and remain noteworthy in the ninth and tenth grades. How? Although past research demonstrating strong and significant association between teenage marriage and high school dropout for girls than for boys, mechanisms underlying the relations are not well-understood.

Family life course perspective (Glick, 1947, 1955; Rodgers, 1964; Duvall, 1988) than *Multifaceted Pathways Model* (Ekstrom et al. 1986), *Participation-Identification Model* (Finn, 1989), and *Four Possible Pathways Model* (Evans & DiBenedetto, 1990) may be imperative to understand how teenage marriage influences high school dropout for girls than for boys because later processes are more individualistic and psychological. Family life course (FLC) perspective suggests that early marriage and its subsequent events occurring over time are more likely to lead girls than boys to drop out from high school. The FLC perspective and extant literature describe that teenage marriage of girls than boys influences their early family formation (e.g., family residence transition after marriage, early marital sexuality and pregnancy, childbearing and rearing & family responsibility) that in turn increase their more high school risk behaviors (e.g., class absence, poor reading; exam exit, poor GPA, grade retention & fail) that ultimately affect high school dropout. These family processes and school context behaviors that are most likely to affect girls than boys' high school dropout occur in the developing and under-developed societies, including Bangladesh (Subramony, 2011; Uddin, 2015).

Understanding mechanisms and pathways of teenage marriage and high school dropout is important to prevent both early marriage and high school dropout. Based on FLC approach and its sister theory, such as family role transition present study reviews extant literature to explore mechanisms and pathways to understand and analyze relations between teenage marriage and high school dropout for girls, implying for girls' high school dropout prevention and educational promotion. In so doing, we review family process framework (e.g., family life course perspective and family role transition) to identify mechanisms and pathways for understanding relation between teenage marriage and high school dropout in the developing and less-developed societies, including Bangladesh. Lastly, we drawing on FLC perspective and family role transition theory suggests a new family process framework (e.g., mechanisms & pathways) for further longitudinal research and its implications for the prevention high school dropout and improvement of girls' education.



## Defining key concepts

### ***Teenage Marriage***

The first term “*teenage marriage*” used in this study refers to the union of two adolescents who are joined in marriage, in age ranging from 13 years to 19 years. In several studies, United Nations (1988, 1990) and United Nations Children’s Fund (2001) have defined teenage marriage as the timing of first marriage, especially before legal marital age prescribed for both man and woman in a given country when the prospective bride and groom are not physically, socially, and psychologically matured enough to bear sexual, reproductive, and social responsibilities to the marital and family life. In the measurement of *teenage marriage* for both husband and wife to access in marital life and form a family, most of the researchers defined the terms as timing norms based on either state’s legal or religious or social customary laws and measured in years, applying self-report, interview and survey method to collect reliable and valid data. The present study defined and measured the term „*teenage marriage*” as the timing norms and measured in years based on the local community’s customary social norms and its practices in rural villages, although the minimum legal age at first marriage for both male (21 years) and female (18 years) in Bangladesh is assigned.

### ***High School Dropout***

The term “*high school dropout*” defines in many ways (e.g., ‘early school leaving’, ‘not in education, employment or training, ‘school completion’) and varies in definitions across the societies (Lamb, Markussen, Teese, Sandberg & Polesel 2011). For example, in the United States and Canada, the term refers to young people who leave school without gaining high school diploma (Lamb et al. 2011). In Australia, dropout means leaving school before year 12 (the final year of secondary school). In the United Kingdom and Scotland, there is no concept of school completion or graduation at the compulsory school level. When the students reach the end of compulsory school at the age of 16, the duration and content of education vary widely. There is no standard by which we can judge whether or not a student completes compulsory secondary education (Raffe, 2010). The National Center for Education Statistics (1994) defines a dropout as a person who has not graduated from high school and is not currently enrolled in full-time higher secondary education. In other studies, Manlove (1998) has defined dropout as excessive absences, indicating as more than 15, 20 or 30 days of unexcused absence. In defining dropout, Barnet, Arroyo, Devoe & Duggan (2004) use two methods: 1) they categorize students as a dropout if her school recodes documented a withdrawal date and 2) if she was present at school in a given academic year fewer than 20 days of the 180-day school year (e.g., unexcused absence of more than 88% of the school year), she was classified as dropped out. Laird, DeBell & Chapman (2006) and Rumberger



(2011) define dropout into three categories: 1) event dropout rate, 2) status dropout rate and 3) cohort dropout rate. The definition of the dropout classification is as follows:

- 1) *The event dropout rate* defines as the percentage of persons or a specified given group (such as students of a particular age enrolled in high school) in a population who drop out of school over a particular time period, which is often a period of a single year.
- 2) *The status dropout rate* defines and measures as the percentage in a population or sub-population who are enrolled in a high school program, but did not pass high school program or do not hold a high school diploma.
- 3) The cohort dropout rate refers to the rate of dropping out within an age or grade cohort over a specified period of time, such as the percentage of students in grade 8 who had not attained a high school diploma by the age of 20.

## **Family process approaches to high school dropout**

### ***Family Life Course Perspective***

The family life course perspective (also known as a family life cycle or family life span) developed in the early 1900s is a popular theoretical framework that emphasizes the timing and sequencing of multiple life event transitions in the family that have positive or negative effects on individual persons (Norton 1980). Since then, family economists, sociologists, psychologists, and demographers have felt that a model depicting distinguishable life stages through which all families more or less pass would be a useful device for interpreting and explaining data on the timing and sequencing of multiple life event transitions across the groups, including age, sex, religion, ethnicity, and region (Amato & Kane, 2011). Loomis (1936), the main proponent of the family life-course framework, first used the construct as a research tool. Later, prominent family researchers, such as Glick (1947, 1955), Rodgers (1964) and Duvall (1988) have proposed and used different construct and schemas on the number of life stages to analyze FLCA. Most of the models devised by the renowned family researchers, however, attempt to identify marriage, divorce, separation, pregnancy, childbearing, childrearing, death of a partner, family role, and children present or absent in the family as major transition points within the life cycle, life span or life course of a family. Based on the construct they recognize that different transitions of the life events have different meanings, predictors, and consequences, depending on when the life events occur (Amato et al. 2011). For example, first marriages at age 12 and age 30 are qualitatively different events that have different consequences on human life. Similarly, early pregnancy, childbearing, childrearing and engagement in family responsibility and late pregnancy, childbearing, childrearing and engagement in family responsibility also have different effects on persons' educational, social, economic and political life.

The FLCA broadly assumes that early transition in married life has detrimental effects on physical growth, psychological development (e.g., emotional & cognitive), social relations



and decision-making in the formal and informal organizations (Amato et al. 2011; Duvall, 1971; Glick, 1947 & 1955; Norton, 1980; Rodgers, 1964). Based on the broader assumption, educational researchers contend that early marriage or teenage transition into marital life has more negative effects on women's than men's health, cognitive development, social maturity, educational attainment, status attainment, empowerment, violence against women, and poverty in later life. Later, some educational researchers formulate that teenage marriage is significantly linked to school risk behaviors (e.g., poor class attendance, poor GPA, exam exit & dropout). Researchers argue that when someone marries earlier, especially in school life, engage more in family life and detach from regular class attendance, learning, and examination over the months or years, she or he achieves a poor GPA or fails in the examination attended and ultimately drop out from school.

### **Family Role Transition Theory**

Gender division of family role is the aggregations of shared, ordered, and reciprocally expected behavior of men and women who occupy certain statuses within the family (Uddin, 2015). A central perspective to understand teenage marriage and school behavior risks (e.g., dropout) in traditional agricultural society is the *gendered division of family labor* (also specialization & trading), a structural model formulated by sociologists (Oppenheimer 1970, 1988, 1997; Parsons, 1954) and new home economists (Becker 1981). Both sociologists and home economists see that highly differentiated gender division of family role has a pervasive effect on girls' education than boys' education in a preindustrial or agricultural society. The central premise of the structural model suggests that strict gender specialization of family labor intended to maintain gender inequality and stabilize marriage relationships is more likely to affect girls than boys to disengage in education in the preindustrial<sup>1</sup> or agricultural societies.

According to the structural model, the general tendency for men to specialize in productive works and for women in household activity (e.g., household chores, childbearing/caring). These sex-role segregations between men and women within and outside the family, as Parsons (1954) argues, lead women to acquire less education than men. Becker (1981) argues that a major benefit of such rigid gender division of labor by sex is mutual dependency: Women depend more on men for their material support and very existence, but men on women for household chores and childbearing or caring. A female with her economic dependency selects relatively older, competent and higher educated male as a marital partner because with these qualities her male partner is able to provide economic support, including social security.

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<sup>1</sup>This view differs from Hajnal's (1965). According to Hajnal (1965), some demographic research conducted in preindustrial northwestern Europe shows that although women married at earlier age than men, women married in their late 20s.





## Identifying Mechanisms and Pathways

### *Teenage Pregnancy*

Teen pregnancy, also known as adolescent pregnancy associated with teen marriage and unprotected sexual intercourse is pregnancy in females under the age of 20. A female can be pregnant from unprotected sexual intercourse after she has begun to ovulate, which can be before her first menstrual period (menarche), but it usually occurs after the onset of her periods in well-nourished females, menarche usually takes place around the age of 12 or 13 (World Health Organization, 2004). Pregnant teens face many problems related to pregnancy as are other women. Under the age of 15 they are less likely to physically mature enough to sustain a healthy pregnancy or to give birth (Mayor, 2004). Other studies show that teenagers also face high risks of low birth weight, premature labor, anemia, and preeclampsia due to their immature biological age (Abalkhail, 1995). Despite these risks and other preventive measures (e. g., educational intervention, birth control), a million of teen females becomes pregnant within and outside marital bonds across the societies. Worldwide data show that teenage pregnancy rates<sup>2</sup> range from 143 per 1000 in sub-Saharan African countries to 2.9 per 1000 in South Korea. According to UNFPA, in every region of the world girls who are come from poor, poorly educated families, or living in urban slums, or rural areas are at greater risk of becoming pregnant than those who are come from wealthier, well-educated and urban families. This report also shows that 95% of the world's births of adolescents aged 15-19 occur in developing countries. Save the Children found that annually, 13 million children are born to women under aged 20 worldwide, more than 90% in developing countries (UNFPA, 2013). Another account shows that in developing countries 7.3 million females under the age of 18 give birth each year (Mayor, 2004).

Teen girls who become pregnant are less likely to complete high school or college. For those who manage to stay in school, teenage pregnancy raises major obstacles to academic achievement and substantially exacerbates the challenges of completing high school and going to college. Children born to teen mothers are more likely to become teen mothers themselves (Hoffman 2006; Maynard 1996). Based on family life cycle and its sister's theory of family formation (FF) comprehensive literature reviewed suggests that high school risk behaviors (e.g., school absence, exam exit, poor class performance, school dropout) are significantly associated with teenage pregnancy or repeated teen pregnancy with short duration and its related time duration and complexity (Hoffman, 2006; Levine & Painter, 2003; Manlove, 1998), as are mentioned above. For example, Eloundou-Enyegue & Strokes (2004) have found that teenage pregnancy of girls compared to boys is related to high school dropout that is a major cause of gender difference in high school attainment. This study

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<sup>2</sup>In reporting teenage pregnancy rates, the number of pregnancies per 1000 females aged 15 to 19 when the pregnancy ends are generally used.



argues that as teenage girls than boys face pregnancy and its related complications at this age, their school absence, exam exit and dropout rates are higher than the teen boys. In some settings, schoolgirl pregnancy has been found to be a common cause of school dropout. Eloundou-Enyegue (2004) found that pregnancy accounted for 13% of girls' dropout in grade 6 (last year of primary school, and 33% of dropout in grade 7 (first year of secondary school) in Cameroon. But using Demographic and Health Survey Data from five francophone West African countries, Lloyd & Mensch (2006, 2008) found that teenage marriage and pregnancy together explained up to 20% of school dropouts. Schoolgirl pregnancy accounted for only 5% to 10% of girls' departures from school. In a study in Chile, using instrumental variables to account for the endogeneity of schooling and pregnancy Kruger et al. (2009) found that motherhood reduced the probability of attending and completing high school were 24% to 37% in the setting. A 2006 study of adolescents living in the Kibera slums of Nairobi by Erulkar & Matheka (2007) found that among girls who were out of school, 14% reported that they left school due to marriage and 9% reported that they left school due to pregnancy. Basch (2011) investigates the relations between teen pregnancy and the achievement gap among urban minority youth in the U.S.A. Using secondary data and literature review Basch has found that birth rates of non-Hispanic Black women aged 15-17 years are more than three times (36.1 per 1000 women) higher than the non-Hispanic White women (11.8 per 1000 women). Compared with women who delay marriage and childbearing until age 30, teen mothers' education is estimated 2 years shorter. They are less likely to complete high school and have 14-29% lower odds of attending college. The findings from southern Malawi by Kelly et al. (2014) indicate that as much as one-quarter of high school dropouts may be due to pregnancy.

Increased risks of high school behaviors and its dropout are perhaps the several paths by which teen pregnancy influences educational outcomes among teen girls than boys. Although the high school dropout problem are influenced by the school, family and community factors, in their review of the National Education Longitudinal Study, Levine & Painter (1988) has found that about one-half of the observed effects of pregnancy on dropout remain after statistical adjustment of environmental disadvantages (e.g., poverty, negative attitude toward education, less social support). Manlove (2006) also found similar results. Of the 433,000 teen births of unmarried teens, only one-half of the school dropouts significantly related to teenage pregnancy and its related complexity remains a very important contributor to reduced levels of high school attainment. Using cross-sectional data from high school 4768 girls in Nigeria, Envuladuet. al. (2016) found that 46% of the girls are forced into marriage by their parents and 20.3% get married at an early age because they have no money to go to school. Most of the respondents who married early become pregnant after a short duration of their marriage and 54.4% of them experience a



complication during pregnancy, excessive bleeding (14%) and anemia (13%) during delivery and obstructed/prolonged labor (10%). About 82.4% of the girls studied are absent from schooling associated with their pregnancy and its related complications are ultimately dropout from school.

### ***Teenage Childbearing***

Assuming from FLC theory several research studies have found that early marriage and its subsequent life events, such as pregnancy and childbearing are also linked to school absence, poor grades and high school dropout among married girls than unmarried girls across the societies (Moore & Waite, 1977; Mott & Marsiglio, 1985). Although the relationship between early pregnancy and childbearing and high school risk behavior is well-documented in the previous research, there is surprisingly little research on how early pregnancy and frequent childbearing after marriage mediate the relationship between early marriage and high school absence, low GPA and high school dropout. For example, Card & Wise (1978) found that teenage mothers ultimately obtain less education than do women who have late pregnancy and delay childbearing. In a longitudinal survey study, Mott & Marsiglio (1985) selected 4,696 women aged 20-26 and repeatedly interviewed the respondents over the years (from 1979 to 1987) and found that teenagers who become early pregnant and give birth while in high school or soon after leaving school are far less likely to eventually graduate from high school than are women who delay pregnancy and childbearing until their 20s. Chandler et al. (1994) and Marini et al. (1989) have found a negative association between early family formation and later adult status attainment. Using data of the National Survey of Families and Households, Glass & Jacobs (2005) have found that a pattern of earlier marriage and childbearing among women raised in conservative religious households has detrimental effects on high school educational attainment. They have found that the women who have truncated their educational attainment in order to facilitate early family formation, the same pattern of lower educational attainment would be found, given the incompatibility of full-time school attendance with supporting an independent household and/or raising children. Using nationally representative data, Fitzgerald & Glass (2008) assess whether the timing of life course transitions (e.g., marriage, pregnancy, childbirth etc.) can explain the lower educational attainment of women who rose in conservative Protestant (CP) households. They found that early family formation affects the educational attainment of the women in the CP households, after adjustment for control variables. Kiernan (1986) and Kalmuss & Namerow (1994) found that women who marry in their teens tend to have more children earlier than those who marry later. Especially, Kiernan in the study period found that 23% of the women who marry in their teens give birth to five or more children, while 8% for those who marry later in life. Kalmuss & Namerow (1994) found that married teen mothers are 40% more likely to have a second





birth within 24 months of their first birth compared with unmarried teen mothers. Berglas et al. (2003) observed that poor school performance is the vital cause of high school dropout. According to them, young women who become teen parents tend to have lower GPA, more school absences, and more difficulties with school work. Most studies have concluded that early childbearing of high school-going girls compared to delay childbearing of the girls does increase high school risk behavior, including dropout. Using modified status attainment model with a family life-course perspective, Upchurch & McCarthy (1990) examine the relations between the timing of a first birth, high school dropout and high school completion in the U. S. A. They used data from National Longitudinal Youth Survey 1979-1986 and data analysis with event-history techniques have found that having a baby does not predict dropping out of high school. The women who have a baby while still enroll and remain in school are more likely to graduate as women do not. Among high school dropouts, however, having a baby reduces the chances of eventual graduation.

There are, of course, many background factors such as family poverty, low SES, family structure, disadvantaged neighborhood, school quality, future aspirations and educational motivation that may lead to increased risks of teenage pregnancy, teenage childbearing and high school dropout (Hofferth & Moore, 1979; Marini, 1984; Rindfuss et al. 1980). Some research (see, Ashcraft & Lang, 2006; Fletcher & Wolfe, 2008; Lee, 2010) suggests that differences in high school risk behaviors (e.g., poor class attendance, poor grade, lack of homework completion, exam exit, high school dropout) between those who do and don't have teenage births are attributable to teenage pregnancy and childbearing and likely to drop out from high school. Several studies (Covington et al., 2011; Fletcher & Wolfe, 2012) using extensive statistical controls for differences in both observed and unobserved characteristics between teen girls who do and don't have a birth or births still find a statistically significant association between teenage childbearing and high school dropout. Likely, recent literature focusing on the outcomes for teenage fatherhood finds that teen childbearing also has a significant, negative influence on their high school educational attainment.

### ***Teenage Child Caring and Raring***

Early birth and parenting can be a life-altering experience. Regardless of socio demographic status early motherhood uniformly places demands on teen mothers that were not existent prior to the birth of a child. When school-aged girls become mothers, new responsibilities related to child caring and raring can be overwhelming. The teen mothers who lack supports from their husband's parents or her own parents, their child care and schooling responsibilities may be challenging at a time. Relevant literature suggests that teenage students with dependent children drop out from high school, because of the heavy burdens of child care responsibility when children are under five years old. Studying representative



sample, Brosh, Weigel & Evans (2007) have found that only 10% of mothers between the ages of 15-17 graduated from high school on time, but 67% of the mothers never graduated from high school. Using data from the National Education Longitudinal Study, Melhado (2007) has found that teen parents have a total of 11.9 years of education compared to those who have averaged 13.9 years of education without children. Melhado argues that having access to appropriate resources can reduce this educational gap between parents with or without children.

### ***Family Responsibility***

Family life course and gender division of family labor perspective draw attention to the ways in which past life events (such as marriage, pregnancy & child-bearing) and its sequences shape women's family role transitions, especially family responsibility (Sweet & Moen, 2006). Although boys' decision to continue high schooling or returning to schooling shapes by family cultural tradition (masculine role, especially income earner role), teenage girls' to continue schooling after marriage and its subsequent events are closely tied to family demands and responsibility, including household chores, husband's parental care and child-rearing (Bem, 1993; Bay, 1999; Carr & Sheridan, 2001; Pascall & Cox, 1993). For example, Maynard & Pearsall (1994) found that women were more likely to negotiate with their entire family to continue or postpone their current education and further to enroll in the next class, depending on their current age, developmental needs of their dependent children and family responsibility assigned on them. Gorard et al. (2001) have described that women decide to postpone their further education, because of their "enforced altruism." Likely, Mohny & Anderson (1988) have found that women compared to men postpone to schooling, because of more external factors, especially family responsibilities and less likely to personal motivational factors. Further research suggests that women than men to continue their schooling face family conflicts in meeting familial demands and responsibilities (Ballmer & Cozby, 1981; Gilbert et al. 1980; Home, 1998; Scala, 1996). For example, Scala has found that a higher percentage of women than men encounter problems with family or time pressures when they continue their education to return to education. In their comparative study Gilbert et al. have found that more women than men after marriage face family demands (as the source of the role conflict while attending school, whereas more men than women attribute role conflict to self-beliefs and interpersonal dissatisfactions. Although men with traditional family responsibilities may experience particular pressure to fulfill the traditional expectations of the masculine gender role, women with their traditional family responsibilities may face heavy burdens that affect not only high school risk behavior but also drop out from high school (Uddin, 2009a).



## Bangladesh Context

Over the several decades, previous research has shown that teenage marriage is also a historical and socio-cultural issue in Bangladesh. In order to prevent teenage marriage and its negative social consequences, legal protection (e.g., *Child Marriage Restrain Act, 1929* in British period, *Muslim Family Law Ordinance, 1961* in Pakistan regime and *Child Marriage Restrain Act, 1984* in which minimum legal age 18 years for female and 21 years for male was enacted) and also several social measures (e.g., stipend and food for girls' education, security for girls, an occupational quota for women, health and reproductive facilities, and community awareness building) have been taken across the government regimes in this country. Despite legal and social measures taken a great deal of descriptive and analytical studies indicates that teenage marriage and its negative social consequences are rapidly increasing in the rural poor families. Some research reports reveal that rural adolescents with poor family, parental low socio-economic status and traditional social values related to family pattern, patriarchal residence, preservation of girl's virginity before marriage, dowry system, early marriage custom, and ascriptive gender status (Islam & Ahmed, 1998) than the urban adolescents with high socioeconomic status and modern/individualistic values (Ahmed, 1996; Roy, 2008) are the most likely to marry at early aged 15 -20 years for male and 10-15 years for female. The recent research report has shown 71 percent of the rural people and 62 percent of the urban ones are married at the age when they are just adolescents (Mitra, Ali, Islam, Cross, & Saha, 1994).

High school education in Bangladesh begins at class 6 and end at class ten. Despite legal protection of teenage girls from early marriage and increased educational opportunities for the girls (e.g., schools' infrastructural development, stipend for girl education, food for education, free supply of books, low distance between home and school, security and toilet facility for girls' at school etc.), education of girls than boys over the past several years remain neglected in Bangladesh. Although Bangladesh has increased gender parity in enrollment (97.9%) and completion (79.6%) at the primary, high school risk behavior and its related dropout rates in secondary school level are still substantially higher for teenage girls than for teenage boys. The BANBEIS has reported that high school dropout rates for girls were 86.30% in 1999, 86% in 2001 and 80% in 2005. Based on the BANBEIS report 2006, some research mentions that grade promotion rates of girls than boys in the early high school classes (class six to eight) are higher but begin to decline in class nine when their dropout rates occur frequently (Shahidul 2014). Other literature reveals that high school dropout of girls who come from poor families begins at class six, accelerates at class seven to eight and again decelerates at class nine to X (Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, BANBEIS 2015). It has been recorded that although school dropout begins at primary class level, there lies a difference between the students registered



for PSC examination and the number of students sit for this examination. After getting the results published, the students fail also drop out but a few of them restart their studies. A study of ten high schools in rural Bangladesh by Ahmed, Rahman & Pal (2010) analyze and present data on dropout rate from class six to ten. Using survey methodology the study follows students at the classes for two academic cycles in 2007 & 2008 to estimate the dropout rate and behind its reasons over the cycle. The findings of the research reveal that a trend of school dropout starts at a slower pace ranging 9-10% at class six, rising slowly to class nine and ending with a “bang” of around 60-70% at class ten.

According to Statistics of Education Ministry and public examinations, it has been recorded, for example, that 22,72,289 students took part in the JSC and JDC examinations in 2015. Out of them, 2082000 passed and 1,74,207 failed. Moreover, more than 1 lakh students registered but they did not fill up the examination forms. Thus about 2,75,000 students dropped out in the year. In the same year, 16,95467 students registered in class nine. Out of the 16,51523 students who appeared in the SSC examination and passed 14,52605 students. Those who passed, 131099 students admitted in the higher secondary class, but 3,94364 students dropped out from the school. That is more than 26% of students drop out. According to BANBEIS, the dropout rate in 2014-2015 was 40.29% in SSC examination. According to BANBEIS report 2016, the enrollment of students in secondary level in 2016 was 67.84%, of which girls were 73.10% and boys were 63.85%, but dropout rates for girls (42.19%) were higher than that of boys (33.80%) at secondary school level. Why and how do the girls than the boys substantially drop out from high school in Bangladesh?

### ***The Suggestive Framework***

The aforementioned theories and its relevant literature review, including from Bangladesh show that early teenage marriage influences early family formation and early role transition in family development (Ahmed, 1996) and likely increase high school risks and ultimate dropout from high school. Drawing on insight from the FLC perspective, family role transition and relevant literature we suggest a new family process framework (see, Figure 1). This theoretical framework describes how teenage marriage (used as an exogenous factor) influences *family formation* (e.g., measure as the duration of residence transition after marriage, number of sexual frequency, pregnancy, & child bearing) *role transition to* childcare, childrearing, elderly care, household chores or family responsibility presented in the second phase) influence *high school risk behaviors* (e.g., school absence, lack of reading practice, exam exit, poor GPA, grade retention) presented in the third phase in the theoretical model) that in turn affect girls than boys their *high school dropout* (outcome measure as when dropout from sixth grade to tenth grade in high school education) in a given context and time. The following section describes specifies how teenage marriage is subsequently linked to family formation and role transition to family and that in turn affects

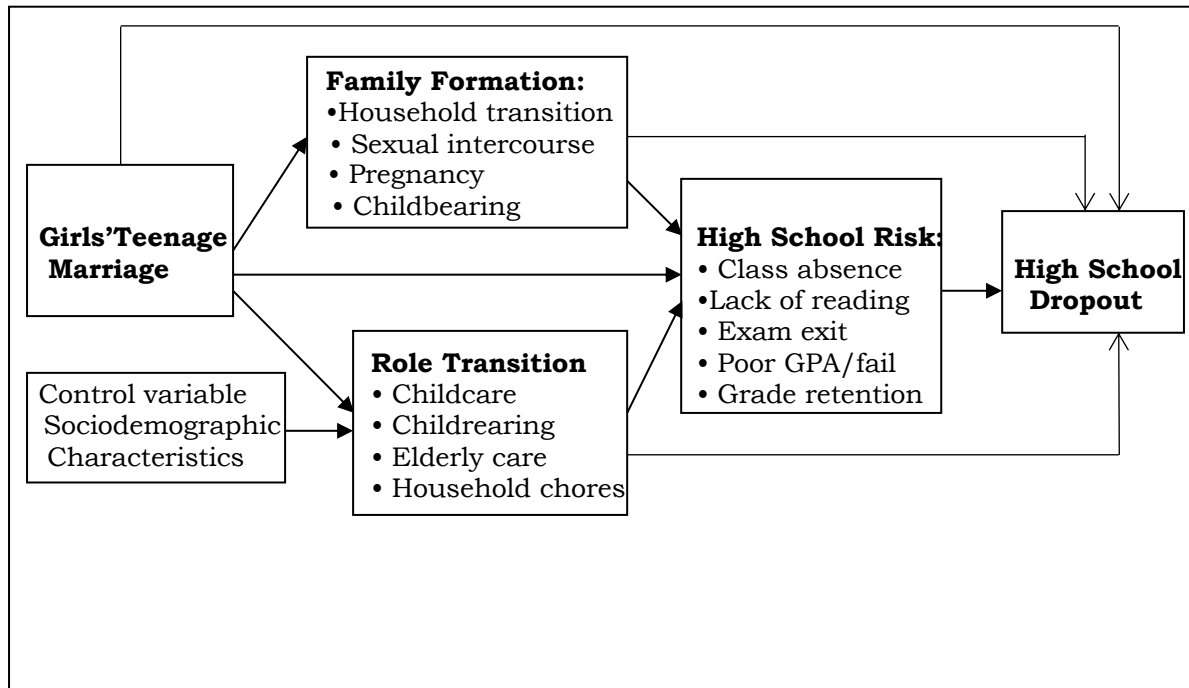


high school dropout for girls. The application of mechanisms and pathways of the framework in the Bangladesh context is given below.

Previous literature reveals that although teenage marriage is significantly related high school dropout, mechanisms and pathways of teenage marriage are understudied across developing and poor countries. The majority of past research has shown that the characteristics of family formation (i.e., household residence transition after marriage in patriarchal community, number of sexual frequency, pregnancy and live births) are more likely to affect girls than boys in poor and low socioeconomic status families (Uddin, 2007). Research demonstrates that when newly married couples are fit to any types of the household of residence pattern (i.e.; patrilocal, bilocal or neolocal) for permanent or temporary living, they engage in sexual intercourse (Uddin 2007, 2009a). Other things being equal (i.e., pregnancy intention, non-use of birth control method, good physical health), a married girl becomes pregnant related to sexual intercourse (Aziz & Maloney, 1985). The vast majority of research shows that the married girls living the poor and low SES families become pregnant within a year and deliver a baby. If the first issue is a girl child, the married girl immediately becomes pregnant within the next year. The process of frequent pregnancy is going on until a teenage mother bears a son (Aziz & Maloney, 1985; Uddin, 2007). As a result, a teenage mother bears one or more children within five years. Past research suggests that family formation process of teenage married girls such as these increases high school risk behaviors (i.e., absence in-class participation, changes in regular reading habit, poor class performance, exam exit, poorer GPA). Research shows that the more times the girls become pregnant and bear live births the more possibilities she has chances to detach from high school education process (Ahmed, Rahman, & Pal, 2010).

Another condition such as role transition after marriage also influences teenage married girls in high school risks (Aziz & Maloney, 1985; Uddin, 2009b). Research shows that after marriage teenage girls are involved in family responsibilities (i.e., cooking, washing, household chores, childrearing and childcare). The more and more teenage married girls involve in family responsibilities, the more possibilities they have high school risks. In turn, the high school risks affect high school dropout (Ahmed et al. 2010). Research conducted in developing and less developed societies, including Bangladesh, shows that poverty and low SES are more likely to affect teenage married girls for high school risks that in turn influence high school dropout. Amin (2019) found that teenage marriage via family formation, role transition and high school risk behavior was significantly related to high school dropout among chronic poor girls than relative poor ones in Rajshahi District of Bangladesh.





**Figure 1:** A conceptual framework for girls' teenage marriage and high school risk behaviors affecting their high school dropout

## Methodological and Social Implication

### Methodological Implication

Theories and literature review suggest that teenage marriage and its subsequent events, such as family formation, family responsibility and high school risk behavior and high school dropout are correlated with each other (Cole & Maxwell, 2003; Morgan, 2013). But researcher indicates that correlation is not causation (Morgan, 2013). Although the strength of the association among the variables is one of the criteria to make an overall judgment about a causal relationship, data from the cross-sectional survey do not indicate causality. It needs the direction of influence over time. Are girls pulled out from high school to be married or are they married at a young age because they drop out from high school. The causality between teenage marriage and high school dropout may go both ways. The pathways of the life events, from a decision of teenage marriage to high school leaving, are complex and multifaceted. Researchers argue that the educational prospects of teenage girls depend on their parents' decision whether to stay in high school or get married. That means decisions by parents or guardians about the early marriage and timing of leaving high school are often concomitant. This makes it technically difficult to elucidate the causal order of teen marriage of girls and high school dropouts. Although the link between teenage marriage and high school dropout deserves greater attention in our theoretical model in Figure 1, there is little empirical evidence on the pathways of family formation process and girls' role transition to family that increase the greater risks of high dropout process. We,



therefore, suggest that the theoretical model in Figure 1 should go through rigorous investigation with longitudinal data collected from individual, group and community unit within a country. In addition, longitudinal research also may be conducted at international level. In doing so, socio demographic variables should control to understand how the variables depicted in the model are bi-directionally related to each other.

### **Social Policy Implication**

Despite increasing educational opportunities (e.g., schools' infrastructural development, stipend for girl education, food for education, free supply of books, low distance between home and school, security and toilet facility for girls' at school etc.), girls' high school education is neglected across the under-developed societies and cultures, including Bangladesh. Some research shows that although the enrollment rate between girl and boy at high school level is more or less the same, high school completion rate is lower but high school dropout rate of the girls is higher than the boys across the high school classes (class 5 to 10). Unlike developed societies, the governments in the developing and less-developed societies should revise social policy to prevent teenage marriage and its subsequent events, such as early family formation and thus prevent girls' high school dropout across the developing and less-developed societies, including Bangladesh (Uddin, Hossain, & Islam, 2017).

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