
Marriage Market and an Effect on Girls' School Dropout in Bangladesh

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Abstract: *This study pursues to investigate how cultural features of marriage market affect as barrier for girls' schooling attainment in Bangladesh. As the existences of female hypergamy, educated women prefer equal or more higher educated grooms than them in marriage-matching pattern, however qualified grooms require higher amount of dowry from brides' family in marriage market. Consequently, highly educated girls' impose higher amount of dowry payment to their marry. However, dowry is an economic transfer from brides' family to grooms' family in Bangladesh. Therefore to find out the underlying factors of girls' school dropout behavior this study has been created a conceptual framework on the mechanism of hypergamy and dowry to illustrate how girls' schooling continuations increase the amount of dowry in marriage market. Study considered parents' dowry payment and hypergamic intention to daughters' marry since girls' marriage time and schooling decision controlled by parents in general. Analyses in logistic regression model in this study confirm that parent's dowry payment expectation and their hypergamic intention both are negatively predict girls school dropout outcome in Bangladesh.*

Keywords: School dropout, Dowry, hypergamy, marriage market

1. Introduction

The global review of marriage and education trends in contemporary developing societies Liyd (2005) identifies that Bangladesh is the only country in which marriage is a significant reason for girls' dropout of school. However despite this situation research is not much available why parents prefer girls' marry off early instead of schooling continuation. To find out this underlying factors this study emphasis on the cultural background of marriage market of Bangladesh. In this respect the primary objective of this study is to investigate how institutional background of marriage market affects on girls' school dropout behavior in Bangladesh. The custom of dowry is a common practice in

the marriage market of south Asia including Bangladesh. The payment of dowry flows from brides' family to grooms family as a groom price instead of bride price which puts economic burden to brides' families. In the respect of economic transfer in marriage market Esteve-volart (2004) demonstrated that in Bangladesh marriage transfers 62% of average annual household gross income from brides' household to grooms' household.

In Bangladesh, the traditional custom of payment of bride price by a groom's family at marriage was observed until the 1960s. Since then, a transformation has taken place in the spread of the dowry system as a customary practice, proliferating from the upper and middle classes to low-income families, particularly after 1980. Traditionally, too, the dowry was provided by the bride's family to ensure her future well-being, but increasingly the process of giving and receiving a dowry has become a commercial transaction which negates the personhood of a woman and creates hardship for parents (Huda, 2006). It has been said that from the time a daughter is born, parents are concerned with the problem of providing a dowry and that the dowry has become the most important problem facing families. Families that cannot afford to provide substantial dowries are said to be forcing daughters to marry elderly men or married men to reduce dowry payments (Hayward, 2000).

In addition to the dowry, female hypergamy is yet another important feature in the marriage market of Bangladesh. Female hypergamy is the norm in where women should marry men with equal or higher education and age or status than her. Consequently, This study can argue that the intention of this hypergamic attitude leads to increase the amount of dowry since highly educated women require highly educated men than her however much of previous studies confirm the amount of dowry is positively associated with grooms' qualification. In this situation parents are concern of economic transfer of dowry from one family to another in the virilocal society of Bangladesh in where daughters leave their individual parental household and move into grooms' household. In this society parents may

feel that an investment in their daughters' education is not a sound use of resources (Raynor, 2005).

South Asia is atypical due to the cultural practices of hypergamy which limit the pool of grooms available at the highest levels (Anderson, 2003). In this view, women are a net economic burden to the household (Boserup, 1970; Rajaraman, 1983) when dowry predominates to gain the highest level grooms in South Asia relative to other parts of the world. Parents are not equally desired for quality grooms since more hypergamic attitude for girls require more dowry payment for quality grooms in marriage market when higher quality grooms require higher amount of dowry in marriage matching pattern (Amin 2001). Therefore it is obviously true that family with lower class background may choose a groom who has similar less education as like as their daughter, because a better-educated groom would demand higher dowry that they cannot afford. From this to find out the underlying factors for girls' school dropout study was attempt to investigate how parents' dowry payment intention and their hypergamic intention affect on their daughters' early school leaving behavior in Bangladesh.

2. Literature review

This study is guided based the theories that explain the relationship between the cultural practice of dowry in marriage market and girls' educational attainment which can be largely framed as economic approach and cultural approach of discouragement for parents to their daughters' schooling in Bangladesh. However both approaches play as economic burden for parents to girls' schooling continuation. Arends-Kuenning and Amin (2001) argue that educated grooms demand higher dowry and some parents intend to limit their daughters' education before they complete secondary school because they are concerned that they will not be able to pay dowry for an educated groom. Imam (2006) argue that it is very difficult to marry off well-educated girls because educated grooms are very expensive and demands higher dowry. Sajeda, (2004) demonstrate that young brides typically attain higher status husbands with lower dowries in Bangladesh and Parent motives for

marrying daughters at young ages are often strongly related to economic burden on their parents' household in Bangladesh (Lotifa, 2004).

The literature has been informative in many ways about how education affects the marriage market dynamics or the price paid for grooms. Rao (1993b) and Behrman et al. (1999) suggest that education substitute of dowry, while edlund and Hallman (2000) provide evidence to support the argument that education complements dowry, thus reducing the amounts paid. On the other hand Rao (1993) also argued that groom price with the higher rates demanded for educated men seen as a reflection of their higher value in the marriage market. Study also found that families of better educated women paid higher dowry amounts than families of less educated women (National education survey of Bangladesh 2005). For or an educated women the amount paid is substantially higher than the price paid for less-educated women. By contrast, a higher proportion of girls with no education the amount of paid dowry generally small (Survey in three district of Bangladesh 2001).

Much theoretical and empirical research shows that dowry either prevents investment in schooling, or forces the practice of early marriage for girls in developing country. In economic explanations parental investments in children's education are made on the basis of expected returns from education and returns from and cost of schooling vary significantly by sex especially in the case of developing countries (Simeen and Sajeda Amin 2006, *Research in Sociology of Education*, p.72). Parents may also consider returns to education in terms of cost averted to the cost-benefit trade-off in the marriage market for their daughters after schooling attainment. In this respect, the peculiarity of marriage market plays an important role in the extend of investment in girls schooling in Bangladesh when the costs of delayed marriage for girls take higher dowry and greater insecurity (Amin & Suran, 2004).

Therefore in developing countries like Bangladesh girls' schooling attainment massively allied with two issues one is parents how much dowry expect to pay to daughters'

marriage and another one is parents how much educated grooms expect in the marriage- mating pattern to their daughters' marry since for educated daughters it needs more or equal educated grooms to her marry however amount of dowry determined with the qualification of grooms. Though literatures have been informative in many ways about how dowry disadvantage for girls well being but there has not been much systematic empirical inquiry about how parents dowry payment and their hypergamic intention affect on girls' early school leaving (dropout) behavior in Bangladesh.

3. Mechanism of the female hypergamy and dowry:

The conceptual framework of the mechanism of hypergamy and dowry make a clear concept how dowry increase steeply with women's education as the norm of female hypergamy in marriage market of Bangladesh. In literatures there is a disagreement whether education for women reduce amount of dowry in marriage market. In this regard author of this study argue that if the norm of female hypergamy exists in a society and amount of dowry determined by the qualification of grooms, women's education does not reduce the amount of dowry since more educated women require more educated men which emerge as higher amount of dowry. Following framework makes much clear concept regarding this matter.

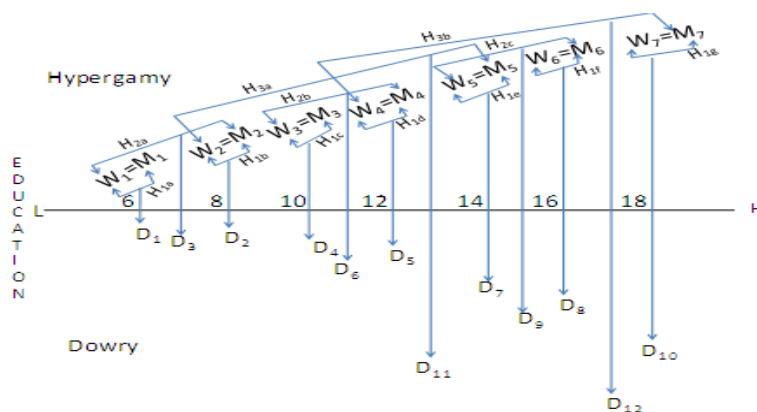


Figure 1. Conceptual framework on mechanism of hypergamy and dowry (Source: Author)

In this framework education level of women (W) and men (M) have been considered from 6 years to 18 years and dowry referred as D_1 to D_{12} from lower to higher in amount to get the account how dowry increase with the advancement of women education in Bangladesh. The amount of dowry determined into two phases, one is equally hypergamic pairs and another one is unequally hypergamic pairs. When marriage happened between the equally educated pairs such as W_1 and M_1 , W_2 and M_2 , W_3 and M_3 , W_4 and M_4 , W_5 and M_5 , W_6 and M_6 , and W_7 and M_7 referred as equally hypergamic pairs which mentioned as alphabetically H_{1a} to H_{1g} . Alongside, when marriage happened between the unequally educated pairs such as W_1 and M_2 , W_2 and M_5 , W_3 and M_4 , W_4 and M_7 , W_5 and M_6 referred as unequally hypergamic pairs which mentioned as H_{2a} , H_{2b} , H_{2c} , H_{3a} and H_3 in this framework. This framework shows some mechanism of hypergamy and dowry when marriage happened in equally or unequally educated groups these are:

- If the education level increases for men, the amount of dowry also increases in marriage market. For instance in this framework when education level increase for M_1 to M_7 from 6 years to 18 years dowry also increase from D_1 to D_{12} respectively. (In this regard Arends -Kuenning and Amin, 2001 and Imam, 2006 also argued that amount of dowry determined by the quality of grooms).
- When women's education level increase, the amount of dowry also increase since women require equal or higher level educated men than her to marry as the norm of hypergamy in marriage market. For instance in this framework when education level increase for W_1 to W_7 dowry also increase from D_1 to D_{12} respectively to her marry.
- Amount of dowry is lower in equally educated pairs than unequally educated pairs. For instance dowries are lower in H_{1a} to H_{1g} respectively than H_{2a} , H_{2b} , H_{2c} , H_{3a} and H_3 .
- More distance the men's education level from women's' education dowry also becomes steeply higher. It means if women become more hypergamous the amount

of dowry also increase more. For instance amount of dowry is higher in H_{3a} and H_3 then H_{2a} , H_{2b} , and H_{2c}

● Although amount of dowry is lower in equally educated pair groups than unequally educated pairs however dowry also becomes higher when the education levels increase in equally educated pairs. For instance dowries steeply increase from H_{1a} to H_{1g} from D_1 to D_2 , D_4 to D_5 , D_7 to D_8 and D_8 to D_{10} for H_{1a} to H_{1g} respectively.

Hence the mechanisms of hypergamy and dowry in marriage market make a clear concept that further educated girls' require further amount of dowry to her marry and daughters' educational attainment allied with parents' dowry payment intention when parents control the time of marriage decision of daughters. In other word for daughters' schooling attainment parents need to be highly desired for educated grooms or hypergamic however which is allied with dowry payment. On the other hand despite the existence of highly hypergamic intention in parents, parents also may feel pressure to make pair for higher educated daughters with higher status grooms if parents experience lower status in society since people have a tendency to marry within their social group or to marry a person who is close to them (Mare et, al.1991). In this regard Eckland (1968) argued that marriage choice is characterized by homogamy. From this view line this study intended to analyze two hypotheses these are: (1) Parents' higher amount of dowry payment expectation decrease girls' dropout rate and (2) Parents' higher hypergamic intention decrease girls' dropout rate.

4. Methods

Data collection

Data was collected by conducting the interview with questionnaires of parents of girl students in secondary school level in one the town zone of the sub-district namely Pirgonj in Bangladesh. A town zone of sub district was purposely chosen as study area to obtain the more

homogenous respondents in the study on the concentration of students' family background characteristics especially parental economic resource and employment status. There are 5 secondary schools in the town zone at Pirgonj and all the schools been conducted to get the family background characteristics of girl students. This study has been used answers of 168 girls' parents in where 69% (116) respondents were non-dropout girls' parents and 31% (52) were dropout girls' parents. Parents were been asked the questionnaire "how much dowry they want to pay" and "how much educated grooms they expect" to their daughters' marry.

Definition and measure of variables

Dropout and non dropout

Dropout status measured as dummy in where dropout = 1, and non dropout = 0 indicated in this study. Girls whose had been got enrollment in grade 8 but not appeared in grade 10 considered as dropout. This study considered grade 8 as first enrollment grade since previous studies show that girls begin dropout higher after this grade in Bangladesh. On the other hand girls those were still in grade 10 considered as non dropout students.

Intention of hypergamy

Hypergamic intention of parents been measured by measuring the desire of parents how educated grooms they expect for daughters' marriage. In this regard parents had been asked questionnaires "how much educated grooms do you expect to marry your daughters".

Expectation of dowry payment

In this regard parents had been asked questionnaires "How much dowry do you expect to pay to your daughters' marry".

Analytic Method

This study conducted Logistic regression model to measure how parental dowry payment expectation and their hypergamic intention affect on dropout outcome for girls.

This study conducted logistic regression analysis this is because the dependent outcome of this study is dichotomy outcome.

5. Results and discussion:

Table. Logistic Regression Model on Girls School dropout

Dependent variable = Dropout	β (SE)	95% C.I. for EXP (B)		
		EXP (B)	Lower	Upper
Constant	5.33*** (1.12)			
Fathers' dowry payment expectation	- 0.26*** (0.11)	0.76	0.48	1.15
Fathers' Hypergamic intention	- 0.62** (0.32)	0.38	0.71	1.33
Parents' income	-0.55** (0.41)	0.52	0.83	2.31
Parents' education	- 1.36 *** (0.38)	0.43	0.34	1.5

$P^{**} < .01, P^{***} < .001. \chi^2 = 77.33, P < .001.$

$R^2 = .23$ (Hosmer & Lemeshow), $.35$ (Cox & Snell), $.42$ (Nagelkerke).

Results in model show that parents' dowry payment expectation negatively predict girls' dropout outcome and the coefficient is statistically significant ($P < .001$). Thus when parents expect to pay higher amount of dowry to daughters' marry it decrease the dropout rate of daughters which support the hypothesis one. On the one hand the coefficient of parents' hypergmic intention also significantly ($P < .001$) negatively predict dropout outcome for girls. Thus when parents intend to expect higher educated grooms to daughters' marry it decrease the dropout rate of daughters which support the hypothesis two of this study. Though

parents do not expect less educated grooms than daughters' education to form marriage pattern as the existence of female hypergamy, however parents may just exceed the minimum level of daughters' education to reduce the amount of dowry. This minimization may occur when the amount of dowry determined by the grooms' educational level in marriage market (Anderson, 2007). This is because parents try to maximize the level of grooms' education in marriage matching with the lower level of daughters' education to reduce the amount of dowry which produce early marriage instead continuation of schooling.

Parents' dowry payment expectation determined with their socioeconomic status while dowry is an economic transfer from one family to another. In this regard Becker (1981), explain the existence of the dowry as pecuniary transfer. In same time Becker also argued that parents' attitude toward dowry payment expectation vary with family economic resource and parents' class background. On the one hand Amin (2001) argued that parents are not equally hypergamous. There are several reasons why parents' hypergamic intention and expectation of dowry payment differ with their socioeconomic status. According to status homogeneity theory parents with higher status typically prefer grooms with their similar status to daughters marry. In this regard Milner (1988) in his status alliance theory clearly demonstrated that associating with higher status people tends to increase one's status, while associating with those of lower status tends to reduce one's status. Thus, lower status people usually try to raise their association with that higher status, while higher status people carefully limit and regulate their association with those of lower status. These contradictory interests tend to result in social associations between those who are roughly equal in status that is with strong tendency toward status homogeneity. In this situation intention of hypergamy (expectation for educated grooms) differently affect on background status in marriage mating pattern since status breaking down is rather than difficult for parents who suffer lower status. Consequently it is difficult to gain a higher status groom for parents to daughters' marry who suffer lower status in the society since grooms with higher status require higher

amount of dowry and also similar status background of owns. Therefore cultural practice of dowry payment and the existence of female hypergamic intention in marriage market affect as barrier for girls educational development which are important to reduce girls school dropout problem in Bangladesh.

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