Rural-Urban Differentials of Female Age at First Marriage in Bangladesh: Recent Evidence

S. M. Mostafa Kamal[*]

Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics, Islamic University, Kushtia-7003, Bangladesh

Md. Kamal Uddin

Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Islamic University, Kushtia-7003, Bangladesh

Md. Kamruzzaman

Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Stamford University, Bangladesh

Abstract:

In this paper an attempt has been made to examine the levels and differentials of female age at marriage and also identify the factors that influencing to be married "before" or "at the time or after" the legal age at of marriage of females in Bangladesh for rural and urban settings. For this purpose, the present study utilizes data extracted from nationally representative 2004 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey. The mean age at first marriage of Bangladeshi women was found to be 15.01 years. The study finds that, the mean age at marriage is lower by 0.72 years among the rural women (14.76 years) than their urban counterparts (15.48 years). The logistic regression analysis of the study apparently suggests that, the first age at marriage of the women for both rural and urban settings significantly varies with women's education, religion, childhood place of residence, education and occupation of husband, region of residence and socioeconomic status. Among the variables considered in the analysis, women's education has been found to have the most single strongest influence in the variation of mean age at marriage for both rural and urban settings.

Introduction:

Marriage marks the onset of socially acceptable time for childbearing in most of the Asian countries and is considered as a prime determinant of fertility where contraceptive use is relatively low. In Asia, age at first marriage has become the focus of attention of scholars and policy makers because early and universal marriages are believed to contribute to high fertility levels (Hirschman, 1985). It is well known fact that age at first marriage has a direct bearing on fertility (Davis and Blake, 1954). Earlier marriage raises the number of reproductive years spent within marriage and hence the exposure to the risk of childbearing (Bongaarts, 2005). In societies, where offspring procreation is -

---

[*] The author for correspondence: kamaliub@yahoo.com

occurred within only marital bond and illegitimate births are not socially acceptable, there female age at marriage plays an important role in population growth of a country. In such a society like Bangladesh, where childbearing prior to marriage is rare, delayed marriage and marital disruptions shorten the total reproductive period of women which contribute significantly to a decrease in fertility. Marital status is one of the most important factors relating to population composition. There are significant positive externalities to such a process –an increase in age at marriage and reduction in fertility rates and a consequent reduction in population growth (Maitra, 2004; Westoff and Ryder, 1977).

Marriage is universal in Bangladesh. The country has a long tradition of early marriage among females (Aziz and Maloney, 1985; Maloney and others, 1981). Early marriage and early childbearing are closely associated with the tradition of the country especially in rural Bangladesh. Despite the expansion of "free female education" up to secondary level in the rural areas, the incidents of adolescent marriage and childbearing are still prevailing. In rural Bangladesh, there are many social pressures to "marry of" pubescent girls (Aziz and Maloney, 1985). In rural areas, teen-age marriage for female adolescent is highly encouraged from traditional values. The illiterate parents make hurry to marry-off their girls after the onset of their menarche. Sometimes neighbours and relatives convince parents to marry off their adolescent daughters. Even, they criticize the parents and sometimes look for guilty in the girls. Besides, some parents think adolescents girls as a family burden. These often lead the parents of lower socioeconomic status to marry off their daughters during their teen-ages. In the Bangladeshi cultural context, younger females are in higher demand than older females as potential brides and they require less dowry as well (Islam and Mahmud, 1996).

Unlike the urban area, an unmarried rural girl passes a critical period during her adolescence. She is imposed a number of restrictions in her movements, dress and freedom to make her own choice. Her mobility in society is always kept in supervision. These restrictions imposed by her family often shorten the probability of higher education and end with marriage which concludes the potentiality of a girl. Unlike the Western societies, where marriage is not necessarily condition of offspring procreation, childbearing occurs almost within marriage in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, there has long been strong social pressure for the preservation of virginity until marriage, which is one of the cultural characteristics of the great majority of the people in the country irrespective of their religion and ethnicity. Sex outside marriage occurs seldomly since pre-marital sex is looked down upon harshly in Bangladeshi society (Maloney and others, 1981).

Despite such pressure, there has been a growing concern in recent years that early marriage which result early childbearing is seriously injurious to mothers' health.

According to 2004 BDHS data more than 40% of the female marriages took place before reaching the legal age at marriage of 18 years (NIPORT et al, 2005). The data also reveal that, more than half of all women age 20-49 enter marriage before their 15th birth day and although the median age at first marriage for women 20-49 has increased over time, there was a decrease from a median of 15.0 years at the time of the 1999-2000 BDHS to 14.8 years in 2004 BDHS. It was found that, in 1975, the majority of rural girls were married before 12 years (BFS, 1978). Using 1989 Bangladesh Fertility Survey (BFS) data Islam and Ahmed (1998) estimated mean age at marriage 14.3 years and 15.3 years for the women whose birth cohorts were 1943 and 1968-1972 respectively. Similarly, a number of studies and reports indicate that mean age at marriage of the females in Bangladesh is an increasing trend (NIPORT et al, 2005; Islam and Ahmed, 1998; Islam and Mahmud, 1996).

Quantitative information about nuptial events such as the proportion of unmarried, married, widowed, divorced and separated as well as timing of marriage portrays the prevailing marital situation of a society or cultural community. The marriage, which brings a vital change in individual life of a person, depends on the level of socioeconomic status and development of individual, familial and societal. Bangladesh, which is predominantly an agricultural country, has now more than 140 million populations constituted by Muslims (89.7%), Hindus (9.2%) and others (1.1%) (BBS, 2003). About 77% and 23% of the population live in rural and urban areas respectively. The vast majority of the rural population with remarkable low age at marriage particularly for females seems to be the main obstacle for substantial reduction of fertility. While studies on fertility and contraceptive behaviour are numerous, the marriage and related issues have yet to be the systematic research in Bangladesh. Thus, the study of female age at marriage in any population is of immense importance due to its strong association with social, economic and demographic change in the population. In view of this, considering the female age at first marriage as one of the major proximate determinants of fertility in the context of Bangladeshi culture, this paper attempts to study the levels and differentials of mean age at first marriage in rural and urban areas and also investigate the socioeconomic, demographic and cultural factors that affecting the female age at marriage in Bangladesh.

Data and Methodology:

The data for the present study have been extracted primarily from the 2004 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS). The survey was conducted during the period January to March, 2004 under the authority of the National Institute for Population Research and Training (NIPORT) of the Ministry of Health and Family

Welfare with financial support provided by U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) as part of the Global Demographic and Health Surveys. The detail descriptions of the methodology of data collection including sample size for the survey are available elsewhere (NIPORT et al, 2005).

The 2004 BDHS adopted a multistage cluster sampling based on the 2001 Bangladesh Census. The survey gathered information through a nationally representative sample of 11,400 ever married women aged 10-49 years from 10,500 households covering 361 clusters throughout Bangladesh, 122 in urban areas and 239 in the rural areas. Such a large data set provided a unique opportunity for the various aspects of female age at marriage and issues related to it. Among the ever married women, 7,536 (65.9%) were from rural areas and 3,904 (34.1%) were from urban areas. Both of the sample women are considered for present analysis. We used simple cross tabulation and a multivariate analysis namely binary logistic regression to assess the effects of the selected variables on age at first marriage of the rural and urban women in Bangladesh.

Results and discussions:

Marriage is the system of rudimental period of feasible childbearing in the country where the predominant peoples are Muslims. The Islam, which is the religion of Muslim people, does not permit childbearing outside of marriage. Hence timing of marriage has a significant influence in fertility and population composition. But adolescent childbearing caused by adolescent marriage is a health risk for both the mother and child. Childbearing at early ages are usually problematic, because they occur prior to the physical, biological and emotional maturity of a girl. The women having adolescent child birth generally suffers from various problems in the long run compared to the women married in later ages. There is an ordinance in Bangladesh for minimum age at marriage to be 18 for bride and 21 for groom but this rule is not properly followed especially in the rural areas and by the backward segments of population in terms of socioeconomic status. Generally, a wide variation in the differential of age at marriage is evident for rural and urban residential background. Figure 1 shows such a picture at a glance according to the percentage distribution of females by their age at first marriage and rural-urban residence. The figure indicates that the proportion of females married before the legal age of 18 years is higher by 8.1% in rural areas (87.6%) than urban areas (79.5%). It is also observed that, 39.0% of the rural females have been married before puberty (<14 years) while the corresponding figure of this rate among the urban women is 33.6%. In addition, it is also observed that among the females 93.4% of rural areas and 88.6% of urban areas have been got married in their teen-ages, indicate higher prevalent of adolescent marriage among rural females as compared to their urban counterparts.
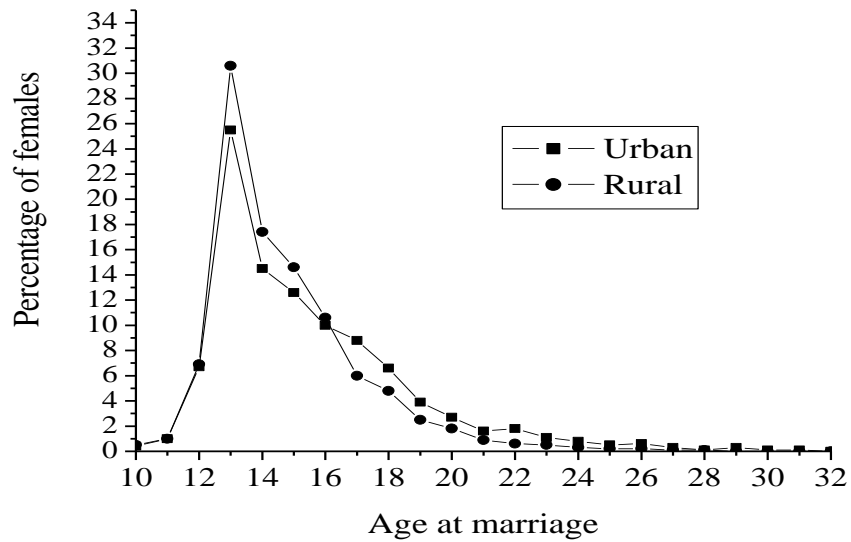
Fig-1: Percentage distribution of females of rural and urban areas by their age at marriage.

To asses the trend of increase in age at marriage if any, both birth cohort and marriage cohort approaches was analyzed and the results are presented in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively. The mean age at first marriage reported by rural women born before 1957 was found to be 14.03 years, which rose to a peak 15.19 years for the women who were born in 1977-1981. Since then there appears a decreasing trend in age at marriage of the rural women and reached at 13.74 years for the women whose birth cohort is 1987-1991. A same pattern of mean age at first marriage of the urban women is observed. The mean age at marriage for urban women was found 14.63 years for those who were born before 1957 and reached to the highest 15.91 years for the women who were born during

Table 1: Mean age at marriage of Bangladeshi women by their birth cohort and current place of residence

Birth cohort	Place of residence		National
	Rural	Urban	
<1957	14.03	14.63	14.22
1957-1961	14.21	15.01	14.48
1962-1966	14.72	15.51	14.99
1967-1971	14.86	15.84	15.22
1972-1976	14.98	15.84	15.30
1977-1981	15.19	15.91	15.44
1982-1986	14.96	15.29	15.06
1987-1991	13.74	13.78	13.75
Total	14.76	15.48	15.01

Rural-Urban Differentials of Female Age at First Marriage in Bangladesh: Recent Evidence

1977-1981 and decreased at 13.78 years for the age cohort 1987-1991. For national level, the mean age at marriage was found to be 15.01 years and this figure for rural and urban women has been recorded 14.76 years and 15.48 years respectively. The figures for mean age at marriage suggests that on an average, a rural and an urban Bangladeshi woman get marry 3.24 years and 2.52 years prior to the legal age at marriage of 18.0 years.

Marriage cohort data demonstrate a sign of increase in age at marriage for both rural and urban women. The mean age for the rural women who got married during 1965-1969 was recorded 12.71 years and for those who were married in the period 2000-2004 was found as 15.95 years. The corresponding figures for urban women were observed 12.89 years and 15.48 years respectively. A close inspection to data suggests that, the pace of increase in age at first marriage is comparatively higher among urban women than that of the rural women. In national level, the mean age at marriage was found 12.76 years for the marriage cohort 1965-1969 and after 35-year interval this figure rose to 16.32 years who were married during 2000-2004. A sharp trend of increase in age at marriage obtained through marriage cohort indicates to be continued in the future. The both birth cohort and marriage cohort data indicate higher mean age at marriage of the urban females than their rural counterparts.

Table 2:   Mean age at marriage of Bangladeshi women by their marriage cohort and current place of residence

Marriage cohort	Place of residence		National
	Rural	Urban	
1965-1969	12.71	12.89	12.76
1970-1974	13.57	13.75	13.62
1975-1979	14.05	14.39	14.16
1980-1984	14.39	14.93	14.58
1985-1989	14.64	15.11	14.80
1990-1994	14.88	15.72	15.17
1995-1999	15.23	16.18	15.56
2000-2004	15.95	17.03	16.32
Total	14.76	15.48	15.01

Table 3 represents the differentials of mean age at marriage of ever married rural and urban women of Bangladesh by selected socioeconomic backgrounds. The differences of mean age at marriage reveal that with few exceptions the mean age at marriage of urban women is higher than rural women for all categories of the selected variables under consideration. On an average, the urban females get marry 0.72 years later than their rural sisters. The observations presented in Table 3 suggest that, in national level a girl having SSC or higher education marries exactly 2.0 years later than her illiterate counterpart. This

Table 3: Mean age at marriage (MAM) of the women of Bangladesh by place of residence and selected background characteristics

Background characteristics	N	Mean age at first marriage			Difference of MAM = (4)-(3)
		Rural (N=7,532)	Urban (N=3,903)	Total (N=11,440)	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Respondent's education					
Illiterate	4,419	14.3	14.2	14.3	-0.1
Primary	3,381	14.5	14.7	14.6	0.2
Secondary+	3,640	15.9	16.9	16.3	1.0
Religion					
Islam	10,182	14.6	15.3	14.9	0.7
Non-Islam	1,253	15.7	16.8	16.0	1.1
Childhood residence					
Rural	9,794	14.7	15.1	14.8	0.4
Urban	1,646	15.8	16.3	16.2	0.5
Husband's education					
Illiterate	4,124	14.2	14.2	14.2	0.0
Primary	2,903	14.7	14.7	14.7	0.0
Secondary+	4,403	15.5	16.5	15.9	1.0
Husband's occupation					
Agricultural	3,255	14.4	14.3	14.3	-0.1
Labourer	3,755	14.8	15.1	14.9	0.3
Business	2,638	14.9	15.8	15.3	0.7
Service	1,293	15.8	16.7	16.2	0.9
Others	499	15.1	15.2	15.1	0.1
Region					
Barisal	1,360	14.9	15.4	15.0	0.5
Chittagong	2,069	15.2	16.0	15.5	0.8
Dhaka	2,589	14.6	15.6	15.0	1.0
Khulna	1,708	14.4	15.2	14.6	0.8
Rajshahi	2,564	14.3	14.9	14.5	0.6
Sylhet	1,150	15.7	15.9	15.8	0.2
Wealth index					
Poorest	2,048	14.3	14.3	14.3	0.0
Poorer	2,058	14.4	14.4	14.4	0.0
Middle	2,147	14.7	14.4	14.7	-0.3
Richer	2,276	15.1	14.9	15.1	-0.2
Richest	2,911	15.7	16.3	16.1	0.6
Total	11,440	14.8	15.5	15.0	0.7

difference is higher in urban than rural females. It is also evident that, a girl of rural area having the primary or secondary or higher education, get married more than one year earlier than her urban counterpart.

The relationship between religion and female age at marriage demonstrates that mean age at marriage is 1.1 years higher among non-Muslim women than the vast

majority Muslim women in Bangladesh. This difference is comparatively higher in urban than rural areas. The childhood residence of respondent shows an average difference of 1.4 years higher among females who resided in urban areas than rural areas in their childhood. But this variation is also pronounced among urban females than their rural counterparts. Husband's education seems to have some influence on female age at first marriage. Education for both husband and wife shows positive association with age at marriage. The higher the education level, the higher is the age at marriage. Despite the fact, a rural girl is married-off 1.0 year earlier than an urban girl whose husband completed SSC or higher classes, but the mean age at marriage for rural and urban women were found the same for two other categories of education for husbands.

The age of marriage varies with the occupation of husband. For both rural and urban women mean age at marriage was recorded highest for the women whose husbands are service holder and the lowest whose husbands are engaged in agriculture. The findings indicate lower age at marriage for urban women than their rural sisters whose husbands' occupation is related to agriculture. The other categories of occupation show higher mean age at marriage for urban females than that of rural females. A wide variation is observed in regional differentials of age at marriage because of heterogeneous socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents throughout the country. The mean age at marriage was recorded highest for the women of Sylhet division (15.8 years), followed by Chittagong division (15.5 years), Barisal and Dhaka divisions (15.0 years), Khulna division (14.6 years) and Rajshahi division (14.5 years). The corresponding figure was found the same for rural areas of six divisions of the country. But the highest mean age at marriage for urban females was found the highest in Chittagong division (16.0 years) and lowest in Rajshahi division (14.9 years). The females of Rajshahi and Khulna division are lagging behind the age at marriage of the other divisions.

The socioeconomic status of the households, measured by the type of house and luxurious goods which are used in daily life as proxies of income, on an average shows substantial variations in mean age at marriage of rural and urban women. The age at marriage increases with the socioeconomic status of family in rural areas but it is more pronounced in urban areas only for those who bears higher and highest economic status. Surprisingly, the mean age at marriage was found lower among the females of urban areas compared to their rural counterparts for the middle class and richer class family's women.

In assessing the significance of the independent variables on the dependent variable "age at first marriage" we employed binary logistic regression to meet the objectives of the study. In doing so, we dichotomized the dependent variable by assigning the value "0" for age at marriage being below 18 years and the value "1" for age being 18

years and above as the legal age at marriage for females in Bangladesh is 18 years. The results of the analysis identify a number of variables that have significant effect on age at first marriage of rural and urban women in Bangladesh.

The regression estimates of the analysis shows that respondent's education is the most significant predictor that influence the age at marriage for both rural and urban females. The odds ratios indicate that a rural and an urban female who completed secondary or higher education are 2.39 and 3.39 times more likely to get marry after age 17 years than a female who have no education. In national level, the risk of probability of marriage after age 17 years is higher among the females who completed secondary or higher education than a female who is illiterate. The analysis further shows that, husband's education, which was not found as strong as the respondent's education, has significant positive effect on age at marriage. The women for both rural and urban areas, whose husbands are illiterate or have some primary education, are more likely to have been married little earlier than those women with secondary or higher educated husbands.

The odds for the variable "religion" show higher significant influence on female age at first marriage for both places of residences. The odds ratios reveal that the non-Muslim women of rural and urban areas are 1.63 and 2.07 times more likely to have been married at age 18 or above years as compared to the Muslim women. The place of childhood residence also bears a statistical significant relationship with age at marriage. The rural and urban women resided in the urban areas in their childhood, tend to have more or less 1.50 times higher to be married after age 17 than the women whose childhood residence was in rural areas.

The age at marriage of the women of both areas significantly varies with husband's occupation. The women whose husbands are engaged in agriculture are more likely to be married earlier than those whose husbands are engaged in non-agricultural occupation. The risk of this probability is more pronounced for urban women than those of rural areas. From the analysis of the logistic regression it appears that, with other covariates controlled, regional differentials in low age at marriage are also significant. The signs of regression coefficients in Table 4 suggest that, with reference to females of both rural and urban areas of Barisal division, the females of Chittagong, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions are more likely to have been married at older ages while the females of Khulna and Rajshahi divisions tend to have been married at younger ages. The result is consistent with that obtained by Islam and Mahmud (1996). The logistic regression analysis suggests that the occurrences of higher age at marriage among rural women who live in Chittagong, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions are 1.68, 1.09 and 3.15 times higher respectively, than that of the women who live in Barisal division. Besides, the rural women of Rajshahi are more likely-

Table 4: Logistic regression coefficients (β) and odds ratios ($\exp\beta$) showing the likelihood of legal age at first marriage of rural and urban women in Bangladesh

Background characteristics	Place of residence				National	
	Rural		Urban			
	Coeff. (β)	Odds ratio	Coeff. (β)	Odds ratio	Coeff. (β)	Odds ratio
Respondent's education						
(Illiterate)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Primary	-0.001	0.999	0.204	1.226	0.062	1.064
Secondary+	0.872***	2.392	1.221***	3.390	1.011***	2.748
Religion						
(Islam)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Non-Islam	0.485***	1.625	0.728***	2.071	0.584***	1.793
Childhood residence						
(Rural)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Urban	0.414***	1.513	0.408***	1.503	0.433***	1.542
Husband's education						
(Illiterate)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Primary	0.101	1.106	0.015	1.015	0.078	1.081
Secondary+	0.440***	1.552	0.458***	1.581	0.460***	1.583
Husband's occupation						
(Agricultural)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Labourer	0.264***	1.303	0.349*	1.417	0.241***	1.273
Business	0.055	1.057	0.351*	1.420	0.152*	1.164
Service	0.759***	2.136	0.876***	2.402	0.752***	2.120
Others	0.269*	1.309	0.084	1.088	0.174	1.190
Region						
(Barisal)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Chittagong	0.517***	1.676	0.503***	1.654	0.514***	1.672
Dhaka	0.086	1.090	0.160	1.174	0.134	1.143
Khulna	-0.340**	0.712	-0.134	0.875	-0.257**	0.774
Rajshahi	-0.109	0.897	-0.199	0.820	-0.141	0.868
Sylhet	1.148***	3.151	0.694***	2.003	1.007***	2.738
Wealth index						
(Poorest)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Poorer	-0.213	0.808	-0.174	0.840	-0.227*	0.797
Middle	0.114	1.121	-0.349	0.705	-0.025	0.976
Richer	0.241*	1.273	-0.011	0.990	0.129	1.138
Richest	0.288**	1.334	0.311	1.365	0.350***	1.419
Constant	-3.086***	0.046	-3.314***	0.036	-3.122***	0.044
-2Loglikelihood	5016.94***		3355.86***		8408.60***	
Chi-square	592.60***		601.634***		1289.25***	

Note: The reference categories are in the parentheses. *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05 and * p<0.10.

to be married little later than the rural women of Khulna division. In addition, a similar pattern for marriage by "below legal age" and "at or above legal age" was obtained for urban women of different divisions. It is noted that, the odds for rural women of Sylhet division was estimated 3.15 and the corresponding figure for urban women was estimated 2.00 as compared to the rural and urban women of Barisal division. The regional differentiation of female age at marriage may be partly due to industrialization, urbanization and education, which did not progress evenly in all regions. For example, Chittagong division is the largest commercial and industrial area while Dhaka is more urbanized and industrial area. Barisal, Khulna and Rajshahi divisions are mainly agricultural and less urbanized while a large number of people of Sylhet division are migrated in abroad.

The analysis further suggests that, wealth index shows significant effect on age at marriage. In rural areas, women having the highest socioeconomic status are 1.33 times more likely to be married at older ages than the poorest women. The corresponding odds for poorer, middle and richer women were estimated to be 0.81, 1.12 and 1.27 respectively. However, it is interesting to point out that, in urban area, only the women having richest wealth are 1.37 times more likely to have been married at older ages as compared to the poorest women. The occurrence of early marriage between the poorest and richer class women in urban areas was almost same while the incidents of early marriage was comparatively lower among poorer and middle class women.

Conclusion and policy implication:

In the present study an attempt has been made to examine the levels and differentials of female age at marriage in rural and urban areas and also to identify the determinants of socioeconomic factors that influencing to have been married in the early of legal age at marriage for females in Bangladesh. The findings of the study reveal that the mean age of ever married women of Bangladesh as a whole is 15.01 years. The study further shows that the mean age at marriage of the rural women is lower among the rural women (14.76 years) than the urban women (15.48 years) with a difference of 0.72 years. The mean age at first marriage has been increased by 3.56 years in the country during the period 1965-2004 from 12.76 years to 16.32 years. The results of the analysis reveal that although the average age at marriage has been increased in both rural and urban settings but the pace among the females of urban area is higher as compared to their rural counterparts. Despite the increase of mean age at marriage, the graphical representation of females by their exact age at marriage for both rural and urban areas replicates that the proportion of early marriage is conspicuously higher in rural women than urban women in Bangladesh.

The differentials of mean age at marriage made by the selected socioeconomic variables show that, age at marriage of the women is relatively higher among higher educated and among non-Muslim, among the women whose childhood residence was in urban areas, among those women whose husbands are higher educated and engaged in business and service, among women of Sylhet and Chittagong divisions and whose socioeconomic status is highest. The multivariate analysis of the study suggests that, the age at marriage of the women for both rural and urban settings significantly varies with women's education, religion, childhood place of residence, education and occupation of husband, region of residence and socioeconomic status. Among the variables considered in the analysis, women's education has been found to have the most single strongest influence in the variation of mean age at marriage for both rural and urban females.

The aforesaid results and discussion of the present study hold implication for policy that could be useful in formulating ways to increase the age at marriage and further decrease in fertility in Bangladesh. In order to enhance further the age at marriage and to substantial reduction of early marriage, the parents and community should be made more aware regarding negative health, social and economic consequences of early marriage and teen-age motherhood. The obligatory vital registration system for birth, death, migration and particularly of marriage may be fruitful to reduce marriage before legal age at marriage for both bride and bridegroom. In that case, the concerned persons such as guardians of bride and bridegrooms and marriage partners could not be able to hide from view the couples' actual age to marriage registrar. The ward commissioner of metropolitan or member of Union Parishad could be involved in monitoring the marriage registration. In this connection, an enthusiastic mass media campaign should be strengthened regarding mandatory marriage registration and consequences of early marriage and adolescent childbearing. The Government should also take needful actions to expand female education and effective strategic plan to reduce drop out across the countryside and employment opportunities should be created for women to enhance their participation in economic activities.

The proper execution of the aforementioned recommendations could be helpful to increase the age at marriage for males and females in Bangladesh, which can ultimately reduce maternal and infant mortality and also the fertility in both rural and urban settings of Bangladesh.

References:

Aziz, K. M. A. and C. Maloney (1985): Life Stage, Gender and Fertility in Bangladesh. International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research (ICDDRB), Dhaka.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (2003): *Population Census 2001, National Report (Provisional)*. Ministry of Planning, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Fertility Survey (BFS) (1978): *Bangladesh Fertility Survey, First Country report*. Ministry of Health and Population Control, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Davis, Kingsley and Judith Blake (1956): Social structure and Fertility: An Analytical Framework. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 4(3): 211-235.

Hirschman, Charles (1985): Premarital Socioeconomic Roles and the timing of Family Formation: A Comparative Study of 5 Asian Societies. *Demography*, 22(1): 35-59.

Islam, M. M. and M. Mahmud (1996): Marriage Patterns and Some Issues Related to Adolescent Marriage in Bangladesh. *Asia Pacific Population Journal*, 11(3): 27-42.

Islam, M. N. and A. U. Ahmed (1998): Age at First Marriage and Its Determinants in Bangladesh. *Asia Pacific Population Journal*, 13(2): 73.

Maitra, Pushkar (2004): Effects of Socioeconomic Characteristics on Age at First Marriage and Total Fertility in Nepal. *J.Health Popul Nutr*. 22(1):84-96.

Maloney, C., A. K. M. Aziz and P. C. Sarker (1981): Beliefs and Fertility in Bangladesh. International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research (ICDDRB), Dhaka.

NIPORT (2005): Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2004. National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT), Dhaka; Mitra and Associates, Dhaka and ORC Macro, Maryland.

Westoff, C. F and N. B. Ryder (1977): *The Contraceptive Revolution*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.