

Young People's Entry into Wedlock: Evidence from Urban Uttar Pradesh

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This article explores the process by which young adults shape their early stages of adult life. The analysis is carried out for a society which is traditional in nature and under the wave of contemporary societal changes. The young people's transition into marriage is analyzed to examine whether the practice of early marriage still prevails in the traditional society or is governed by the law of normative sequencing of life cycle, that is education, employment, and marriage. Using age-wise retrospective primary data, the determinants of marriage timing are also analysed here.

I Introduction

Transition to adulthood is a critical stage of human development during which young people leave behind their childhood and take up the new roles and responsibilities of adult life. It is a period of social, psychological, economic and biological transition for the young, which poses emotional challenges and involves important life cycle decisions. The emerging technological, cultural, demographic, educational, and environmental changes are so insidious and globally ingrained that they reach to the smallest rural communities, crossing several geographical boundaries, carrying with them both the transformative force of markets, technology, democracy, and also the risk of marginalization (Lloyd 2005).

The entry into wedlock is a sub-component of adulthood which captures different events of the life cycle, such as schooling, entry into the labour force, and marriage in the age range of 18-34 years. According to Census 2001, more than one-third of the country's population falls in this age group. Not only does this cohort represent India's future socio-economic and political realms, but its experiences can largely determine India's achievement towards her ambition of population stabilization as well as the extent to which the nation will be able to harness its demographic dividend. Although today's youth are healthier, more urbanized and better educated than earlier generation's, but social and economic vulnerabilities persist (IIPS and Population Council 2008). With the changing demographic profile of many developing countries, there is growing concern about how global forces are altering the young peoples' transition into adulthood.

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