
Tobian and his team of researchers looked at data from two randomised controlled trials, to evaluate whether rates of HSV-2 and HPV infections were lower in men who had circumcision compared to men who did not. They found that circumcised men had significantly lower rates of HSV-2 and HPV infections.


This very interesting and yet alarming article gives us an insight into the health consequences of the still prevalent child marriages in India. Defined as marriage before 18 years of age, child marriage has serious health consequences for both the young women and their children. India has maintained laws against child marriage since 1929. However, the legal age for marriage was increased from 12 to 18 years in 1975.

In this study, participants were selected from the India National Family Health Survey-3 (November 2005–August 2006). A national representative household-based sample was obtained and a uniform sampling design was used across all states. From a staggering sample of 1,438,355 women, a 95% response was obtained.

The results obtained are eye opening. More than two-fifths of women aged 20–44 years were married before the age of 18 years. Almost half of these women were married before 16 years, of which one-ninth were married before 13 years. Poor, less well-educated girls from the rural areas of Central or Eastern areas of the country were more vulnerable to this practice.

This practice is associated with poor contraceptive uptake and hence increased incidence of unwanted and terminated pregnancies. There is also increased incidence of repeat childbirth within 24 months. A marked association between child marriage and female sterilisation has been shown. Sterilisation reduces condom use in couples, thereby increasing risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

The recommendations from this study conclude that through government health care initiatives, India should establish reduction of child marriage as an essential element to build on the existing priorities of family planning, and maternal and child health. However, in drawing their conclusions, the authors admit that since their data were based on self-report, they are vulnerable to social desirability and recall biases.