

EXPLORING KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND BELIEFS ABOUT CHILD MARRIAGE IN BANGLADESH THROUGH A TRANSMEDIA ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION INITIATIVE

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Abstract

Despite widespread condemnation of child marriage in Bangladesh, the practice is still deeply ingrained in Bangladeshi society. Multiple initiatives have been developed to end child marriage, yet prevalence rates have only been decreasing slowly. In 2017, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), The Government of Bangladesh's Ministry of Children and Women's Affairs, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and other partners launched a transmedia campaign, *Icchedana*, to address social norms surrounding several issues surrounding the well-being of adolescent girls. Data were collected in 2017 and 2019. After conducting a literature review and identifying five determinants of child marriage (poverty, the practice of dowry, family honour, education, and violence against women and girls) in Bangladesh, we used questions that were specifically relevant to child marriage. Two questions from each level of the social-ecological model (SEM) were selected. The SEM was utilized in this paper because it acknowledges that change must occur at each level for change to occur. The findings show that having watched *Icchedana* was associated with positive attitudes towards ending child marriage in Bangladesh and provide insight into the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about child marriage in Bangladesh.

Keywords: entertainment-education, trans-media, child marriage, Bangladesh

Introduction

Despite national and international efforts to eradicate child marriage, child marriage is still commonplace in Bangladesh. Initiatives by the Government of Bangladesh and international organisations such as UNICEF, UNFPA Girls Not Brides, and several other organisations are underway. They have utilised strategies such as transmedia programmes (a narrative that extends beyond just one media platform), legal reform, policy advocacy, mobilisation of local government actors and local community-based child protection committees. One transmedia programme developed by UNICEF and UNFPA Bangladesh working under the global Programme on ECM and in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh, specifically the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), is *Icchedana* (On the Wings of Wishes). The first season of the programme consisted of 26 episodes and aired from 2018-2019. The programme portrayed four girls' lives as they faced and navigated the challenges and risks of being an adolescent girl in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2019). The television programme was preceded by the Dhol campaign, a campaign that included five public service announcements (PSAs) designed to remind audiences of the legal age of marriage in Bangladesh. The primary issue addressed in the programme was child marriage. However, other adolescent girls' issues were also included: child protection, education, gender, health & nutrition, and menstrual hygiene. While these were the primary six themes, the overarching goal of *Icchedana* was to equip adolescents, families, and the community with the necessary knowledge to shift perceptions about child marriage.

Programmes such as *Ichchedana* offer a promising opportunity to change perceptions about surrounding child marriage in Bangladesh. The purpose of this paper is to assess whether participants who were exposed to *Ichchedana* held less favourable views towards child marriage compared to participants that had not been exposed. Further, understanding how perceptions differed by demographic characteristics and levels of the social ecological model (SEM) and programme themes can inform future entertainment-education (EE) initiatives that aim to end child marriage in Bangladesh.

Child Marriage Around the Globe

Every year millions of girls under the age of 18 are forced into early marriages. Child marriage is defined as a marriage or union where one of the two involved persons is an adult (above the age of 18) and the other an adolescent (under the age of 18) (UNFPA, 2020). Despite the possibility of a marriage between a boy under 18 and a woman over 18, the overwhelming majority involve an underage girl and a man. Adolescence (defined as between the ages of 10 and 19) is a critical time in human development (Population Reference Bureau [PRB], 2014). During this period, physical, psychological, and social changes happen very rapidly, so it is crucial to acknowledge the importance of this time in adolescents' lives as they transition into adulthood (Blum et al., 2014). According to a 2020 report by UNICEF, 21% of women were married before 18 globally. In low-middle income countries (LMICs), one in three girls are married before the age of 18, and one in nine are married before the age of 15 (International Women's Health Coalition [IWHC]). Child marriage is a global phenomenon; however, the vast majority occur in LMICs, and 46% occur in South Asia (UNICEF, 2014).

Marriage of girls before 18 violates their human rights and has immediate and long-term consequences for their physical and mental health. Ninety percent of girls who give birth between the ages of 15 and 19 are married. Giving birth at such an early age significantly increases the chance of reproductive morbidities and maternal mortality. In LMICS, complications during childbirth are the leading cause of death in girls between 15 and 19 (GNB, 2014). Girls who give birth before the age of 15 are five times more likely to die during childbirth than girls aged 20 and above. Giving birth before the age of 18 puts girls at increased risk of other complications such as obstetric fistula. Sixty-five percent of all cases of obstetric fistula occur in girls under the age of 18. Early pregnancies not only put the mother at risk, but they put the child at risk as well. Children born to mothers under the age of 20 are also more likely to have below-average weight.

Child Marriage in Bangladesh

In 2017, Bangladesh had the fourth highest prevalence rate of child marriage in the world. 59% of Bangladeshi girls were married before 18, 22% were married before the age of 15, and 2% were married before 11 (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2020). In 2017 the Bangladeshi parliament updated the Child Marriage Restraint Act initially passed in 1929 (HRW, 2020), which sought to decrease child marriage prevalence by making birth certificates mandatory to obtain a marriage license. The Child Marriage Restraint Act also included a loophole where courts could approve child marriages under “special cases,” though no definition of the special case was defined (GNB, 2020). Despite efforts such as the Child Marriage Restraint Act and other national and international child marriage initiatives, child marriage is commonplace in certain parts of Bangladesh, particularly Western Bangladesh while prevalence is low in other parts of the country.

Determinants of Child Marriage in Bangladesh and The Social-Ecological Model (SEM)

The SEM is a useful framework to situate the practice of child marriage within a complex set of interconnected determinants that permeate each level of Bangladeshi society. SEM determinants are categorised based on five interconnected levels, the individual, interpersonal, organisational, community, and societal levels. The SEM addresses the importance of addressing determinants at all levels of society in effecting social and behavioural change. Embedded within each level are social and behaviour change theories that address different SEM levels (i.e., The Health Belief Model at the

individual level, Social Cognitive Theory at the Interpersonal level, Diffusion of Innovation at the community level, etc.). The SEM posits that addressing all five is necessary for a social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) campaign (Johns Hopkins University: Health Communication Community Collaborative, 2017).

Previous research has highlighted multiple determinants of child marriage around the globe, including those that are specific to the Bangladesh context. While many determinants drive child marriage in Bangladesh, this paper will focus on five critical determinants from existing literature (GNB, 2020). These five cut across the SEM and include poverty, the practice of dowry, family honour, lack of education, and violence against women and girls. These determinants fall into different levels of the social-ecological model, and while each presents a unique challenge, it is essential to note that they are all interconnected. Only addressing one without acknowledging how it influences another ignores the fact that a more holistic approach is needed to curtail child marriage.

Literature Review

Unmarried girls in Bangladesh are often considered an economic burden because their families cannot provide for them (GNB, 2020). Often, families cannot feed or support their children and view marriage as a way to provide for the rest of their family and their daughter by marrying her off to someone who can provide for her (HRW, 2020). The median age of marriage in low-income households is 15, while the median age of marriage in high-income households is 18 (GNB, 2020).

Connected to poverty is the practice of dowry. Despite being illegal since the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980, dowry is still widespread and ingrained in Bangladeshi society. Younger girls fetch lower dowries, so girls are often married off young at a young age, mainly if they come from lower-income families (Begum, 2014). Families also worry that the older a girl gets, usually around the time she reaches puberty, the more likely she will become to lose her virginity and her 'purity.' A girl's dowry skyrockets after she loses her virginity and affects another determinant of child marriage, family honour (Kamal et al., 2014,).

Families with older, unmarried girls are often stigmatised by society. In Bangladesh, a family's honour is intimately tied to their daughter's purity and marriage status. Seven out of ten people in Bangladesh believe that women earn their identity and social status through marriage (GNB, 2020). If a girl ages and remains unmarried or becomes pregnant out of wedlock it is not just a stain on the girl, it is considered a stain on the family. Child marriage is often considered a method of controlling a girl's pre-marital sexual status (GNB, 2020).

Education is yet another determinant of child marriage (Greene & Stiefvater, 2019). In Bangladesh, girls who are not in school are four times more likely to be forced into a child marriage than girls in school (Reliefweb, 2020). Not being in school is also correlated with living in rural areas where education is lacking, and poverty is high. Despite free education in Bangladesh, parents often cannot afford fees for uniforms, exams, stationary, and other costs (HRW, 2020).

The incidence of violence against women and girls in Bangladesh, most notably sexual harassment, has grown in recent years. The number of rapes increased from 940 in 2010 to 1,855 in 2019 (Hasan, 2019). Girls between the ages of 7 and 18 are at increased risk of being victims of sexual harassment from a marginalised or low-income community. Child marriage is often perceived as a protective mechanism to prevent rape, sexual harassment, and kidnapping (GNB, 2020).

Underpinning all these determinants is gender inequality that pervades Bangladeshi society. Girls are undervalued when compared to boys. Boys are viewed as future heads of the household who will provide for their parents in old age, while girls are often considered a burden. A 2006 study by an NGO called "Promoting Human Rights in Bangladesh" found that 93% of Bangladeshi families viewed sons as a blessing and girls as a problem (Aker, 2015). Addressing any determinant of child marriage

in isolation is unlikely to affect permanent change. A comprehensive approach that addresses multiple determinants of child marriage is needed to reduce child marriage prevalence in Bangladesh.

Entertainment Education

Entertainment-Education (EE) is a communications strategy used to guide communication messages that seek to entertain and educate by influencing beliefs, attitudes, behavioural intentions, and social norms (Singhal & Rogers, 2004). EE is grounded in the idea that showing people healthy or positive behaviours is more effective than merely telling them about them. Characters in EE programmes exhibit positive behaviours and are created to be relatable to the audience. The belief is that creating relatable characters that demonstrate positive behaviours will increase the chances that a person adopts that behaviour in their own life (Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programmes [JHUCCP], n.d.). Starting as primarily a media strategy, EE programmes have evolved into a comprehensive theory-driven and evidence-based strategy (Singhal, Wang, Rogers, Rice, & Atkin, 2013). EE utilizes many different channels, just a few of which are television, radio, theatre, music, live performances, video games, and social media (Brown, 2017). An example of a recent transmedia EE programme is *East Los High* which aired for five seasons between 2013-2017. *East Los High* promoted adolescent sexual and reproductive health in a rapidly growing Latino youth population in the United States (Wang, Singhal, 2013). A few elements of *East Los High* that set it apart from other EE programmes were extended scenes to deeper character involvement and issue engagement, the vlogs (video blog) of a character that chronicled and allowed viewers to follow the dilemmas and options that accompanied her teen pregnancy, and comic strips that highlighted critical social topics in a trendy and engaging manner (Wang, Singhal, Quist, Sachdev, & Liu, 2019). *East Los High* also had Facebook and Twitter accounts where viewers could access additional materials that reinforced the show's messages or provided new ones (Wang & Singhal, 2016). Transmedia EE programmes such as *East Los High* can be particularly successful by allowing people to engage with the programme in multiple ways through whatever platform they can access (Jenkins, 2007). Additionally, transmedia programmes (and EE programmes in general) have also been an effective strategy for reaching hard-to-reach or vulnerable populations with messages about positive behaviours and social change (Singhal & Rogers, 2004) and break from traditional methods of viewership by acknowledging dramatic shifts in the technological landscape by taking advantage of digital technologies and increasing interactivity (Sangalang, Quintero Johnson, & Ciancio, 2013).

Icchedana

The *Icchedana* transmedia programme included engagement across multiple platforms and was grounded in several key SBCC concepts. There were three main components of the overall *Icchedana* initiative, the first was transmedia (broadcasting *Icchedana* on television, radio, and social media, folk), community engagement and social mobilisation, and advocacy and capacity building (Sengupta, Sood, Kapil, & Sultana, 2020). The community engagement component consisted primarily of interpersonal communication strategies such as engaging key stakeholders (religious leaders, fathers). The transmedia component consisted of the previously mentioned television programme and Dhol campaign. The *Icchedana* initiative also engaged local and national policymakers to produce change in the legal system and build the capacity of these systems to facilitate and sustain the change that is necessary to reduce the prevalence of child marriage.

Methods

Sampling

A non-probability purposive sample design was used to select four rural and two urban districts. These districts were selected because of their high prevalence of child marriage. Within these districts, two rural upazillas (sub-districts) and one urban upazilla were chosen using random probabilistic sampling.

Multi-stage sampling was used to select the households that met the inclusion criteria. There were four inclusion criteria for households to be included in the sample:

1. A parent of each gender and at least one adolescent of each gender between the ages of 10 and 19 must be present (if more than one gender were present, the oldest would be interviewed).
2. Households must own a television.
3. Households must watch Bangladesh Television (BTV) three or more times a week.
4. At least one person in the household must own a cellular phone.

This sample includes responses from 3,905 participants from 1,102 households that met the eligibility criteria collected in late 2019. The data utilised in the subsequent analyses are from interviews with each of the 3,905 participants.

Measurement

All data were collected using a questionnaire. The questionnaire began with questions that captured socio-demographics (respondent type, marital status, and age) and socioeconomics (occupation, income, level of education), and the respondents' media habits. The questionnaire also included six sections, child marriage, protection, education, nutrition & health, gender, and menstrual hygiene. The information was collected on four domains, including knowledge, attitudes, practice/behaviour, social norms.

Exposure was defined as whether a participant had watched *Icchedana* and served as the primary predictor variable. Control variables included respondent type (father, mother, adolescent boy, and adolescent girl), occupation, which was collapsed from 16 categories to four (unemployed, employed, student, and housewife). Additional control variables included whether a person lived in a rural or urban district of Bangladesh, level of education, which was collapsed from 17 levels to six (no education, in primary school, in secondary school, completed secondary school, completed higher secondary school), age, which was categorised by quartiles (10-15, 16-31, 32-41, 42-78) and income in Bangladeshi taka, which was also categorised by quartiles (0-3,999, 4,000-9,999, 10,000-19,999, and 20,000-280,000).

The dependent variables were measured using mean values from multiple items from the ECMQ. These items corresponded with the five previously mentioned determinants, two from each level of the SEM. Each item in the ECMQ relates to child marriage. We chose ten that measured the five determinants we identified in our literature review related to child marriage. While all data were collected at the individual level, they included reflection by individuals around determinants that function across the levels. For example, we chose items associated with personal approval of child marriage at the individual level, questions around the importance of education at the organisational level and beliefs about poverty such as "Marrying off adolescent girls reduces the financial burden of their families," at the societal level. Two items were selected as a proxy for each of the five levels. The combined mean values of two items at each of the five levels served as the dependent variables. Each of the ten items was computed on a 5-point Likert scale were all ten items (see Table 3) used in subsequent analyses were 5-point Likert scale items, questions 2,5, and 6 were positively worded (ex. "I approve of women being equal participants as men in the decision-making process") and questions 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, and 10 negatively (ex. "I approve of Child Marriage"). The negatively worded items were reverse coded and used to develop indices for each item, level of the SEM and create an overall normative score cutting across all five levels of the SEM. Lower scores represented support for child marriage, and higher scores represented opposition towards child marriage.

Data Analysis

All analyses were performed using Stata 15.1/SE (Stata Press, StataCorp, College Station, TX) at the 5% significance level. For the descriptive analyses, frequency and percentage were used to describe the categorical variables, mean, and standard deviation (SD) were used to describe continuous variables. For the bivariate analyses, chi-squares tests were conducted for categorical variables to determine if there was a statistically significant association between participants' demographics and whether or not they had watched *Icchedana*. Kruskal-Wallis H tests were conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant association between items from the ECMQ and whether or not participants had watched *Icchedana*. Multiple linear regression was conducted to determine if relationships remained after including demographic and socioeconomic variables as controls.

Results

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 highlight important demographic characteristics of participants in the sample. Participants' mean age was 29.96 years (SD = 14.64), while the mean monthly income of participants was 4097.62 Bangladeshi Taka (SD = 7787.06). For respondent type, mothers made up the largest percentage of participants representing 27.35% (N = 1,061) of the sample, while adolescent girls made up the smallest percentage with 22.64% (N= 884). For occupation, there were more students with 1,649 (42.23%) followed by 1,130 participants (28.93%) who reported some form of employment and 1,030 (26.38%) housewives. Most participants resided in rural areas, 73.14% (N = 2,856). Most participants that were in school were in secondary school, 62.74% (N = 2,450) while 912 (23.36%) were in secondary school or higher. Of note, 13.60% (N = 531) participants had no education. Finally, 66.03% (N = 1,168) had access to a mobile phone.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Respondent Type (N=3905)	N (%)
Mother	1,061 (27.35%)
Father	1,010 (25.86%)
Adolescent Girl	884 (22.64%)
Adolescent Boy	983 (25.17%)
Occupation	
Unemployed	164 (1.99%)
Employed	2,387 (28.89%)
Student	3,693 (44.70%)
Housewife	2,017 (24.42%)
Rural/Urban	
Rural	2,856 (73.14%)
Urban	1,049 (26.86%)
Education	
No Education	543 (13.91%)
In Primary School	1,035 (26.50%)
In Secondary School	1,415 (36.24%)
Completed Secondary School	796 (20.38%)
Some Higher Education	116 (2.97%)
Age	
10-15	875 (22.41%)
16-31	1,052 (26.94%)
31-41	913 (23.38%)
42-78	1,065 (27.27%)
Income	
0-3,999	1,602 (19.39%)
4,000-9,999	2,035 (24.63%)
10,000-19,999	2,553 (30.90%)
20,000-280,000	2,071 (25.07%)

Table 2 stratifies the demographic characteristics in Table 1 by whether or not participants reported having watched *Icchedana* either spontaneously or through probing and assesses whether these associations are statistically significant. The mean age of *Icchedana* viewers was 28.43 (SD = 13.66), slightly younger than participants who had not seen an episode, 30.33 years (SD = 14.84), and reported

earning 3682.53 (SD = 7959.86) Bangladeshi Taka (about 44.19 USD) per month compared to non-viewers who reported earning 4196.14 (SD = 7743.50) (about 50.35 USD). 28.84% of adolescent girls (N=174), which was the largest percentage followed by Mothers, 27.64% (N = 207). Fathers comprised the smallest percentage of viewers, 20.69% (N = 155). For occupation, almost half, 47.26% (N = 354) had watched *Icchedana* compared to 41.13% (N = 41.13%). Some form of employment was negatively associated with watching *Icchedana*, 24.03% of participants had watched at least one episode while 30.10% (N = 950) had not. More participants residing in rural areas had watched *Icchedana*, 77.17% (N = 578), than participants in rural areas that had not, 72.18% (N = 2,278). 14.70% (N = 464) of non-viewers had no education compared 8.95% of participants who had seen an episode. For the most part, viewership increased with the level of education. Finally, having access to a mobile phone was positively associated with having seen *Icchedana*, 73.87% (N = 229) of viewers had access to a mobile phone while 64.36% (N = 939) if non-viewers had access to one.

Table 2: Characteristics of Viewers and Non-Viewers of *Icchedana*

	Did Not Watch <i>Icchedana</i> (N=3156)	Watched <i>Icchedana</i> (N=749)	P-Value
	N (%)	N (%)	
Respondent Type			0.001
Mother	854 (27.06%)	207 (27.64%)	
Father	822 (26.05%)	155 (20.69%)	
Adolescent Girl	710 (22.50%)	174 (28.44%)	
Adolescent Boy	770 (24.40%)	213 (23.23%)	
Occupation			0.004
Housewife	832 (26.32%)	198 (26.44%)	
Employed	950 (30.10%)	180 (24.03%)	
Unemployed/Retired	37 (1.17%)	5 (0.67%)	
Student	1,298 (41.13%)	354 (47.26%)	
Other	39 (1.24%)	12 (1.60%)	
Rural/Urban			0.006
Rural	2,278 (72.18%)	578 (77.17%)	
Urban	878 (27.82%)	171 (22.83%)	
Education			<0.001
No Education	474 (15.02%)	69 (9.21%)	
In Primary School	878 (27.82%)	157 (10.96%)	
In Secondary School	1,111 (35.20%)	304 (40.59%)	
Completed Secondary School	599 (18.98%)	197 (26.30%)	
Some Higher Education	94 (2.98%)	22 (2.94%)	
Age			<0.001
10-15	714 (22.62%)	161 (21.50%)	
16-31	814 (25.79%)	238 (31.78%)	
32-41	731 (23.16%)	182 (24.30%)	
42-78	897 (28.42%)	168 (22.43%)	
Income			0.035
0-3,999	571 (18.09%)	154 (20.56%)	
4,000-9,999	773 (24.49%)	209 (27.90%)	
10,000-14,999	609 (19.30%)	126 (16.82%)	
15,000-280,000	1,203 (38.12%)	260 (34.71%)	

Note: (a) Significance was set at P=.05. P-values obtained from chi-square tests for categorical values and t tests for continuous variables, (b) Significant P-values are bolded (c) One Bangladeshi Taka = 0.012 USD

Table 3 reports the mean average response of 10 5-point Likert items from the End Child Marriage Questionnaire. Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A higher score reflected higher disapproval of child marriage. Two questions from the questionnaire from each SEM level were selected to understand individual perceptions of ecological determinants in Bangladesh. Mean scores for the individual-level questions were calculated, as was a score for each level of the SEM and an overall score. We found that mean scores for the two individual-level questions on self-approval varied significantly among those exposed and not exposed, with those who had watched *Icchedana* reporting a higher level of approval. A similar pattern was found for perceptions around interpersonal determinants with mean scores higher among those who had watched *Icchedana* reporting lower levels of approval for child marriage. It is also worth noting that the most significant

difference in mean scores was found at the interpersonal level. Individual perceptions of organisational level determinants were the only one where a mean score was higher among those who had not watched *Ichchedana* though the results were not statistically significant. For question 5 (girls who finish HSC level education can still get married to a good groom), the mean score was .02 higher for participants who had watched *Ichchedana* (P=0.900) while the mean score for question 6 (Educating girls is an equal investment as educating boys) was .01 lower (P=0.405). On perceptions of community level determinants, mean scores were higher for both questions on community approval as they were at the societal level. Mean scores for the two individual-level questions on societal approval were also higher among those exposed. The most significant mean difference for a particular question was also found at the societal level. For question 9 (it is more beneficial to have sons as they will earn in the future), the mean score for participants that had watched *Ichchedana* was 3.56 and 3.29 for those that had not.

Table 3: Mean Likert Response by Survey Question

Question	Did Not Watch <i>Ichchedana</i> (N = 3156)	Watched <i>Ichchedana</i> (N = 749)	P-Value
Level of Social-Ecological Model			
Individual			
1. I approve of Child Marriage	4.40	4.51	0.001
2. I approve of women being equal participants as men in decision making process.	4.13	4.25	0.018
Total	8.54	8.73	< 0.001
Interpersonal			
3. It is more beneficial to have sons as they are less likely to hurt the family honour	3.38	3.61	<0.001
4. "Marrying off an adolescent girl is a solution to protect her from sexual harassment"	3.95	4.08	0.001
Total	7.33	7.69	< 0.001
Organisational			
5. Girls who finish HSC level education can still get married to a good groom	4.03	4.01	0.900
6. Educating girls is an equal investment as educating boys	4.39	4.40	0.405
Total	8.42	8.41	0.770
Community			
7. "Letting adolescent girls attend school can lead them to get involved in love affairs"-What is your opinion on that?	3.31	3.45	0.004
8. "Marring girls off when they are young is one of the solutions to get rid of paying a large dowry"-What is your opinion on that?	4.15	4.28	<0.001
Total	7.46	7.72	< 0.001
Societal			
9. It is more beneficial to have sons as they will earn in the future	3.29	3.56	<0.0001
10. Marrying off adolescent girls reduces financial burden of their families	4.23	4.31	0.005
Total	7.52	7.87	< 0.001
Overall	39.27	40.43	< 0.001
Note: (a) Significance was set at P=.05. P-values obtained from chi-square tests, (b) Significant P-Values are bolded (c) Likert values used for averages: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Agree, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree			

Multiple linear regression was calculated to measure individual perceptions on the five selected SEM level determinants based on exposure to *Ichchedana* after controlling for respondent type, occupation, region, education, age, and income (P < 0.001, R² = 0.091). On average, participants who watched *Ichchedana* scored 0.87 points higher than participants that had not indicating lower levels of approval of child marriage (P < 0.001). Compared to fathers, adolescent girls scored higher (1.22), though this was not statistically significant (P = 0.14). Students scored 1.29 points higher than participants that were unemployed and was the only statistically significant category for occupation. Participants living in a rural area scored 0.91 lower on average than participants that lived in urban areas (P < 0.001). Education was a significant positive predictor of higher disapproval of child marriage. Participants in primary school scored 0.68 points higher (P = 0.016) than those with no education. Scores were higher for participants that were in secondary school (1.91, P < 0.001), had completed secondary school (2.34, P < 0.001), and had some higher education (3.45, P < 0.001). Age was a significant positive predictor of perceptions towards child marriage as well, an increase in age results

in lower disapproval of child marriage ($P = 0.018$). Lastly, for income, higher disapproval of child marriage increased until a participant reached 20,000 Bangladeshi taka, at which point positive they decreased on average.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis

Variable	b	SE	P-Value	95% CI
Have you Watched <i>Icchedana</i> ?				
No		Reference		
Yes	0.867	0.208	<0.001	.46 – 1.28
Respondent Type				
Father		Reference		
Mother	-.150	.528	0.777	-1.18 - .886
Adolescent Boy	-.692	.805	0.389	-2.27 - .885
Adolescent Girl	1.22	.823	0.138	-.39 – 2.83
Occupation				
Unemployed		Reference		
Employed	.373	.572	0.515	-.749 - 1.50
Student	1.29	.587	0.028	.143 - 2.44
Housewife	.342	.678	0.614	-.987 – 1.67
Region				
Urban		Reference		
Rural	-.913	.193	<0.001	-1.29 - -.534
Education				
No Education		Reference		
In Primary School	.677	.279	0.016	.128 – 1.22
In Secondary School	1.91	.287	<0.001	1.35 – 2.48
Completed Secondary School	2.34	.338	<0.001	1.68 – 3.00
Some Higher Education	3.45	.532	<0.001	2.41 – 4.49
Age				
10-15		Reference		
16-31	.689	.290	0.018	.120 – 1.26
31-41	1.73	.740	0.020	.277 – 3.18
42-78	1.46	.765	0.057	-.045 – 2.96
Income				
0-9,999		Reference		
10,000 - 14,999	-.430	.250	0.085	-.920 – 0.59
15,000 - 19,999	-1.41	.270	<0.001	-1.94 – -.879
20,000-280,000	.472	.242	0.051	-.001 - .947

Note: (a) Significance was set at $P=.05$, (b) Significant P-Values are bolded, (c) One Bangladeshi Taka = 0.012 USD

Discussion

Shifts in perceptions around normative practices such as child marriage require multi-level interventions across the different levels of the SEM. At the same time, EE programmes such as *Icchedana* offer a promising opportunity to shift perceptions towards child marriage by entertaining and educating viewers simultaneously (Singhal & Rogers, 2004). Through engaging and persuasive storytelling and developing characters that viewers can relate to, a person can be transported into a narrative world where they challenge their own beliefs, opinions, and attitudes. EE programmes can often reach more segments of a population than traditional didactic approaches to behaviour change with their broad reach. This was apparent with *Icchedana*. Of the 749 participants who had watched the programme, 20.67% were fathers who are most often responsible for when and whom to marry their daughters (GNB, 2020). Additionally, 51.55% of viewers were students, many of whom will be getting married and become parents in the future. Lilleston, Goldman, Verma & McCleary-Sills (2017) note that people are socialized into specific norms starting at a young age, so engaging students and challenging the underlying mechanisms that drive child marriage practice is essential. Additionally, participants between the ages of 10-15 on average scored lower than other age groups providing more evidence of the importance of addressing specific norms at an early age.

The findings show that participants exposed to *Icchedana* had lower disapproval of child marriage than participants who had not, though we are careful to make any causal claims because of other potential confounding factors. Additionally, though the program was available on other channels and formats such as YouTube and various social media platforms exposure was low. The mean number

of episodes watched was 4.56. This study provided insight into how individual perceptions around the determinants of child marriage that operate at different levels of the SEM varied by viewers and non-viewers. Except for the organisational level – education as a determinant of child marriage – scores were higher at each level. Though educational attainment from an organisational perspective was not statistically significant, education in and of itself was a key confounder. This suggests that even if individuals oppose child marriage as a practice, cultural norms still exist that discourage girls from completing higher secondary school and that educating boys is more beneficial than educating girls.

The answers to questions were highly skewed and elicited higher scores than others. High scores to questions such as “I approve of child marriage” may partially be the result of social desirability bias. Some answers provided more skewed responses than others. Answers to questions from the organisational level provided interesting findings but were not statistically significant. Overall, the difference in scores between exposed and unexposed participants was only 1.16, a minimal difference.

Youth who are in school, who have completed secondary school, or have some higher education report the highest disapproval of child marriage. Scores increased with the level of education. However, despite rapid urbanization the vast majority of Bangladeshi’s live in rural areas and have relatively low education levels, there is much work that needs to be done. Interventions to change perceptions about child Marriage need to be tailored to vulnerable populations.

The population exposed to *Ichchedana* is younger and more educated, therefore the show’s effectiveness at the population level to address individual perceptions around child marriage determinants may be inflated. However, it is important to keep in mind that the primary audience for *Ichchedana* were Bangladeshi adolescents and youth who were currently in school.

Limitations

Despite the strengths of this study, there were several limitations. While many questions were asked before and after *Ichchedana* aired, several questions were added to improve the quality of the ECMQ. Hence, we were unable to make use of the panel data. Many of the questions that measured perceptions about child marriage were only after the programme aired. Additionally, since the predictor variable (whether or not participants had watched *Ichchedana*) is based on exposure alone and not participation in and involvement with the variety of interventions addressing child marriage we are cautious not to draw any spurious causal conclusions. We also acknowledge that treating exposure as dichotomous limits the strength of the findings. Another key limitation is that *Ichchedana* tackled a range of child protection issues, specifically pertaining to gendered roles and practices in Bangladesh. This paper only focusses on the questions associated with perceptions of child marriage related determinants. Impact of additional determinants and perceptions of other gender norms could be an important factor to consider when examining perceptions around child marriage behaviours.

Participants who watched *Ichchedana* may not have seen enough episodes to attribute any change in perceptions towards child marriage to the programme. Changes in perceptions towards deeply ingrained traditional practice often take time (Bicchieri & Mercier, 2014). Substantial change is unlikely to be seen in evaluation data from a programme that had only aired for one season. A second season of *Ichchedana* that consists of 52 episodes is set to be aired. Future research should evaluate the effect of longer-term exposure to *Ichchedana*. Several sociodemographic variables (including age and income) were operationalised as categorical instead of continuous due to the highly skewed nature of the data. Categorising these variables into quartiles evenly divides the sample but could affect the strength or direction of the beta coefficients in the multiple linear regression model. Additionally, since the districts were selected purposively to make sure areas where prevalence of child marriage was high this was not a true random sample. Finally, even though child marriage was one of the underlying issues the show addressed, it was one of several issues. Because of this, we cannot gauge the overall impact of the show, just how it affected knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about child marriage in Bangladesh.

Conclusion

Entertainment Education initiatives have the potential to address child marriage at all five levels of the SEM. Past transmedia initiatives such as Soul City in South Africa have utilized the SEM showed an empirical change in domestic violence, one of the show's focal points (Perlman, Usdin, & Button, 2013). Despite international initiatives to reduce child marriage practice, Bangladesh still had the fourth-highest prevalence rate in the world in 2017 (HRW, 2020). Despite the limitations previously mentioned, this study identified characteristics of participants that can inform EE initiatives and initiatives in other sectors and levels of the SEM that can shift perceptions about child marriage in Bangladesh.

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Exploring Knowledge, Attitudes, and Beliefs About Child Marriage in Bangladesh Through a Transmedia Entertainment-Education Initiative

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