

**UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF EARLY MARRIAGE  
AMONG RURAL COMMUNITY AND ITS IMPACTS ON  
PERPETUATING RURAL POVERTY: A CASE STUDY  
IN TRINCOMALEE, SRI LANKA**

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Degree of Master of Spatial Planning Management and Design

Department of Town and Country Planning

University of Moratuwa

Sri Lanka

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Thesis/Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## **Acknowledgement**

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr Rizvi Noordeen, my supervisor, for his invaluable guidance, continuous support, and encouragement throughout the course of this research. Their expertise, insights, and feedback greatly contributed to the quality of this work.

I am also thankful to University of Moratuwa, Department of Town and Country Planning for providing the necessary resources and environment to carry out this research successfully.

My heartfelt thanks go to all the participants and respondents from Trincomalee district whose cooperation made this study possible. Without their openness and willingness to share their experiences, this work would not have been achievable.

I would also like to thank my peers and colleagues who provided support and constructive comments during the research process.

Finally, I am forever indebted to my family and friends for their unwavering encouragement, patience, and emotional support throughout the duration of this thesis.

## **Abstract**

In rural areas of Sri Lanka, early marriages have been steadily increasing, significantly affecting the social, economic, and cultural dynamics of these communities. Against this backdrop, the research aims to understanding the role of early marriage among rural community and its impacts on perpetuate rural poverty. The study was conducted in the Trincomalee district. The main focuses of this research are to examine whether and how early marriage influences rural community and hence effects perpetuating rural poverty within the Sri Lankan context, investigates the socio-cultural and economic effects of early marriage on rural women, and analyzes how the effects stemming from early marriage contribute to the persistence and deepening of rural poverty, thereby offering a holistic view of the interconnection between early marriage, poverty and rural planning.

This study used a mixed method for data collection. 03 villages in Trincomalee were selected in the rural setting, including 100 questionnaires, 25 in-depth interviews, 06 focus group discussions, 07 key informant interview and field survey. The data were analyzed using tools such as SPSS and Excel.

The study finds that women who marry early in rural areas lose their human capital potential, social network, face unstable economic conditions, and are unable to meet their basic needs. They also experience intergenerational poverty, productivity and health risks, and struggle to access welfare social services, further hindering rural planning and development. In addition to these economic challenges, these women face various social and cultural obstacles.

Among the women who married early, 63% were found to be in severe poverty, 11% in dependency poverty, 21% in the middle-income group, and 5% were economically stable. This indicates that early marriage has exacerbated the poverty situation in rural communities, with only a few families managing to escape poverty through their efforts.

The research recommends increasing access to education in rural areas, improving economic opportunities, create vocational training programs tailored for rural girls to build their skills and economic independence, strictly enforcing laws and policies to prevent early marriage and its associated issues, providing sexual education to

adolescent, conduct community-based workshops for adolescents, parents, and community leaders to increase awareness of the consequences of early marriage and encourage collective community responsibility in preventing early marriage and supporting at-risk girls, ensuring the continuous implementation and monitoring of existing policies and programs.

**Key words:** Early marriage, rural poverty, rural community

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Description</b>
LMICs	Low- and middle-income countries
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
NCPA	National Child Protection Authority
UN	United Nation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
DS	Divisional Secretariat
SP	Superintendent of Police
FGDs	Focus Group Discussion
KII	Key Informant Interview

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