

## ABSTRACT

### DETERMINANTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF EARLY MARRIAGE AMONG ADOLESCENT WOMEN IN THE RURAL NORTHEAST OF THAILAND

by

Jintana Pornpilaipun

This research examined determinants of the early marriage of rural Thai adolescent women aged 15-19 in the northeastern part of Thailand and its economic, social and demographic consequences. The data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The quantitative data were collected from 850 rural Thai women aged 15-19 in the Northeast. The study consisted of two parts. The data for the first part which dealt with determinants of early marriage were elicited from 577 adolescent women aged 15-19-- 280 single adolescent women and 277 married ones. The data for the second part was concerned with consequences of early marriage were gathered from 570 married women-- 277 women aged 15-19 and 293 women aged 20-29. The qualitative data were collected by discussion with 5 focus groups-- 3 married adolescent groups and 2 single adolescent groups.

The Logistic Regression Analysis was employed to analyze the determinants and the  $X^2$  - test and/or F- test was used to compare the consequences of early marriage between and among the sample groups. The information from focus group discussion was analyzed qualitatively.

It was found that the determinants of early marriage ranking from the most important to the least were sexual orientation, number of family members, household

income, parity, education and house ownership respectively. The factors that had no influence on the early marriage of rural Thai adolescent women were occupation, child-rearing pattern, personality, possession of some types of household belongings, educational orientation, career orientation and future orientation.

The consequences of the early marriage could be summarized as follows :

**Economic consequences.** No significant difference was found in occupation and household income between the married adolescent women aged 15-19 and the married women aged 20-29. However, a significant difference was found in house ownership between the married adolescent group and the two groups of women aged 20-29 who were married at different ages. In addition, the types of household belongings possessed by the married adolescent group were different from the two groups of women aged 20-29.

When the two groups of women aged 20-29 who were married at different ages were compared, no significant difference was found only in occupation. On the contrary, the two groups were found to be significantly different in household income, house ownership and possession of some types of household belongings.

**Social and demographic consequences.** It was found that the married adolescent women had lower education, fewer number of children ever born, less knowledge of birth control methods than the two groups of married women aged 20-29, but the former group's number of dead children and birth control practice were not different from the latter group. But when the two groups of women aged 20-29 who were first married at different ages were compared, they were found to be significantly different in only education and the number of children ever born. In other words, the

women who were married young had lower education, but the larger number of children ever born.

Regarding the health consequences of the mother and the child and the youngest-child rearing, it was found that the proportion of the adolescent mothers who sought clinic pre-natal care, raised their own children and realized the usefulness of breast feeding was lower than that of older mothers. There was no significant difference between the two groups in child delivery at health institutions, normality of delivery, delivery on schedule, breast feeding, mother health after delivery and child health at present. The difference was found only in their present health. When the two groups of women aged 20-29 who had different ages at first marriage were compared, the proportion of those married at younger ages who sought clinic pre-natal care and gave birth to babies at hospitals or health centers was lower than that of the women married at older ages. However, no significant difference was found between the two groups in delivery on schedule, birth weight, raising children by themselves, breast feeding, knowledge of the usefulness of breast milk and mother and child health. Most babies in all the groups had normal birth weight. Among the mothers with low birth weight babies, it was found that the adolescent mothers outnumbered the older mothers who were married young. Finally, no significant difference was found among the three groups in happiness in family life and marriage life. Most were happy at an average level.

The qualitative study revealed that there were several factors that caused the adolescent women to be married at young ages. They were, for instance, pre-marital sexual intercourse, availability of mates, fun-seeking, economic and family problems. Some adolescent women remained single because they were studying and others did so because they wanted to be economically secure first. It was found that the early

marriage of female adolescents in the rural society in the Northeast of Thailand had no impact on their social and economic status, gainful employment, further education, happiness in marriage life and family life, child-rearing and health as well as their children's, but adversely affected their freedom in finding jobs elsewhere and traveling.