

The cost of child marriage over the life cycle: Evidence from Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Tunisia

Education and Labor Markets

10 November 2021



Shared Prosperity **Dignified Life**



Section 1

Education

Education

- ▶ The life cycle framework allows for understanding household decision-making, and why parents' may decide to educate girls less than boys.
- ▶ Parents who prefer marrying girls are often less inclined towards education.
- ▶ Research on Syrian refugees in Egypt found that, if girls are underperforming in school or uninterested in education, they are perceived to be better off getting married, whereas girls who showed a serious desire for education were retained in school and their marriage was postponed (Elnakib et al., 2021).

Education

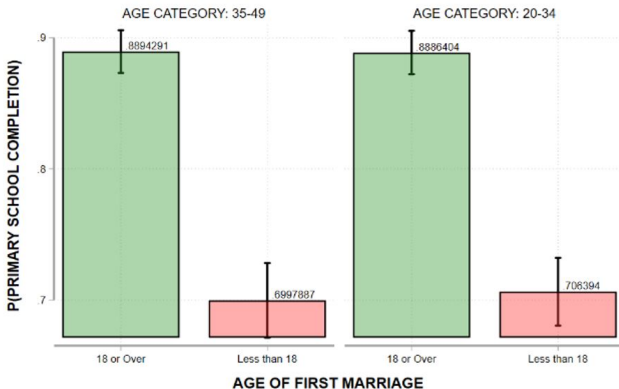
- ▶ Low investments, in turn, become a cause and consequence of child marriage, affecting all life cycle outcomes and perpetuating poverty traps.
- ▶ Evidence from literature indicates that the elimination of child marriage can help increase girls' literacy and their educational attainment.
- ▶ Moreover, girls' educational attainment appears to be the most powerful protective factor against child marriage.
- ▶ The primary reason for drop-out may not be marriage or pregnancy, yet limited viable education opportunities may result in child marriage.

Education

- ▶ If the rate of returns to education for girls is low, they may be not be expected to perform activities outside the home, meaning that parental investments in their education will be low relative to boys (Borjas, 2004).
- ▶ On the other hand, girls may be asked to quit schooling because they are married or pregnant.
- ▶ While child marriage has a direct impact on education as the girls quit studying completely, it also has many indirect effects on other aspects of life.

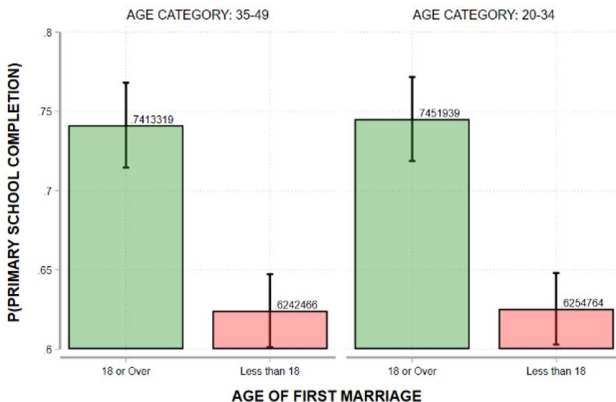
Education - Egypt

Marginal average effect – Primary Attainment



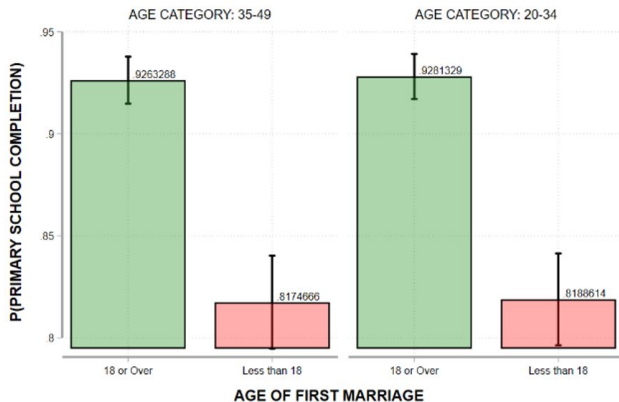
Education - Iraq

Marginal average effect – Primary Attainment



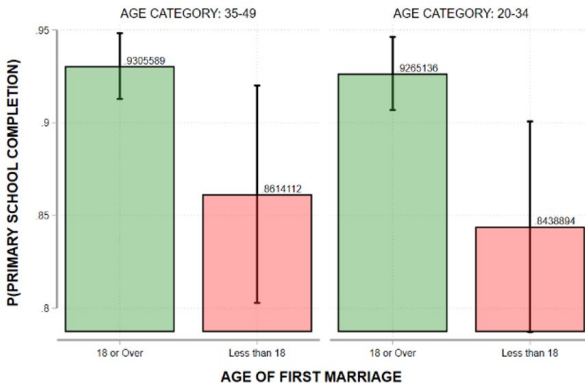
Education - Jordan

Marginal average effect – Primary Attainment



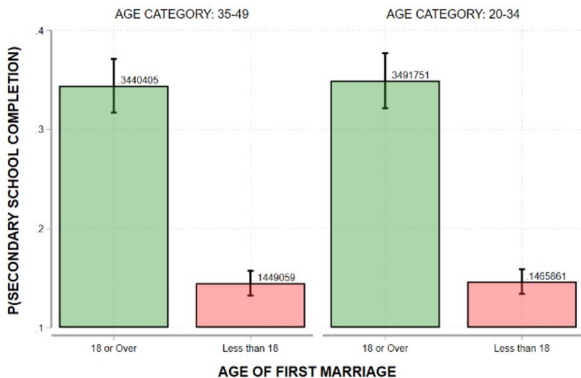
Education - Tunisia

Marginal average effect – Primary Attainment



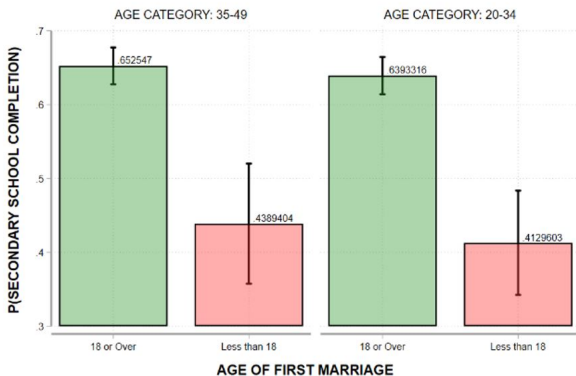
Education - Iraq

Marginal average effect – Secondary Attainment



Education - Tunisia

Marginal average effect – Secondary Attainment



Section 2

Labor Market

Labor Market

- ▶ Child marriage has an impact on labor force participation through multiple channels – lower education attainment, a lack of bargaining power within and outside the house, and a higher rate of unpaid work due to increased lifetime fertility (Klasen and Pieters, 2015).
- ▶ First of all, early marriage limits access to education for married girls, which not only reduces their probability of joining the labor force, but, if they manage to work, they often end up in the informal sector in low paying jobs (Grown et al., 2005).

Labor Market

- ▶ Secondary schooling is associated with higher labor force participation (Cameron et al., 2001; Mammen and Paxson, 2000).
- ▶ Thus, young girls who do not attain higher education lack marketable skills to secure positions in the formal labor market and, as a result, remain confined to home-based or informal work with inferior working conditions and low monetary returns.
- ▶ In addition, child marriage may reduce labor force participation due to increased fertility, and higher unpaid care work.
- ▶ Socio-cultural norms further reduce the opportunity cost of married girls (Parsons et al., 2015).

Labor Market

- ▶ In many Arab States, women's formal labor market participation is limited; however, they do perform the bulk of care work and household work.
- ▶ Even when women work outside the home their occupations are often informal/low paying jobs.
- ▶ For married girls this is particularly pertinent, as both normative roles and expectations about their role in the household compounds with the fact they have limited education, and thus limited active labor market options.

Labor Market

- ▶ Assaad et al. (2017) identify marriage as the most important barrier for female labor force participation in the Arab region, as women face difficulties reconciling domestic responsibilities within marriage with work opportunities readily available for them in the labor market.
- ▶ While women are increasingly educated across all States in the region, these socio-cultural norms prevent the region from utilizing fully its human capital potential (Assaad et al., 2017; World Bank, 2004, 2010 and 2013).

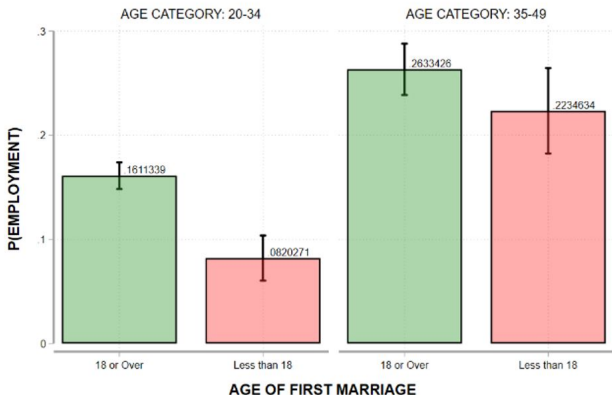
Labor Market

Goldin (2006) identifies three important factors in women's labor force participation:

- ▶ **Horizon:** whether, at the time of human capital investment, a woman perceives that her lifetime labor force involvement will be long and continuous or intermittent and brief
- ▶ **Identity:** whether a woman finds individuality in her job, occupation, profession, or career
- ▶ **Decision-making:** whether labor force decisions are made fully jointly, if a woman is married or in a long-term relationship, or whether the woman is a “secondary worker” who optimizes her time allocation by taking her husband's labor market decisions as given to her

Labor Market - Egypt

Marginal average effect – Employment (20-49)



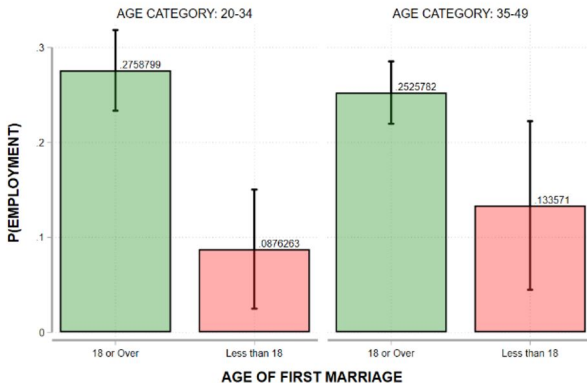
Labor Market - Jordan

Marginal average effect – Employment (20-49)



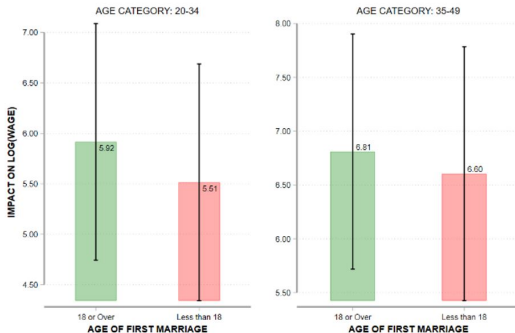
Labor Market - Tunisia

Marginal average effect – Employment (20-49)



Labor Market - Egypt

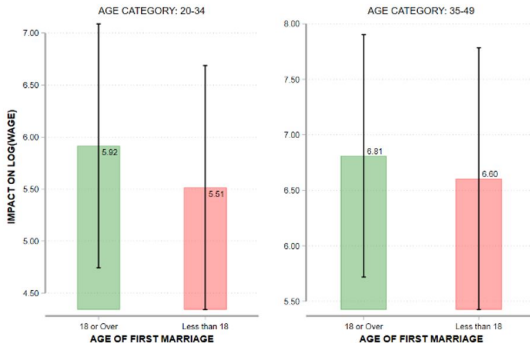
Marginal average effect – Log Real Monthly Wage (20-49)



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Labor Market - Jordan

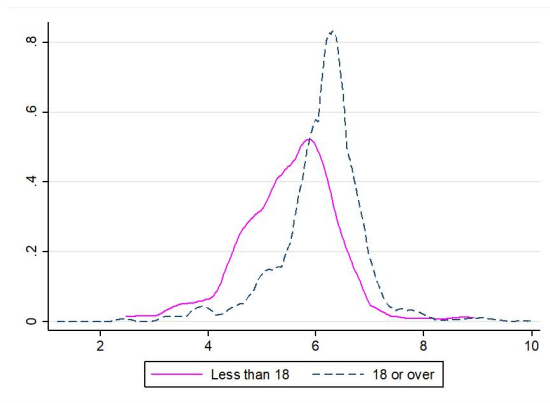
Marginal average effect – Log Real Monthly Wage (20-49)



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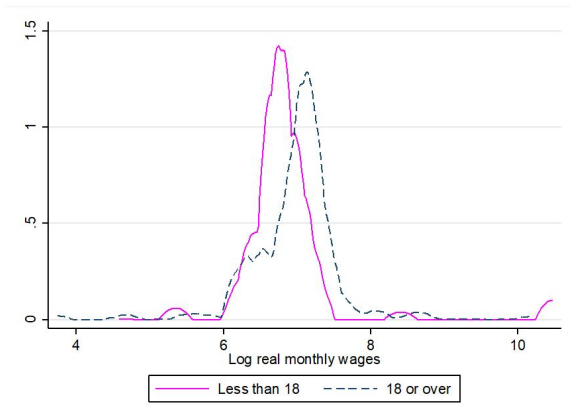
Labor Market - Egypt

Kernel Density – Log Real Monthly Wage (20-49)



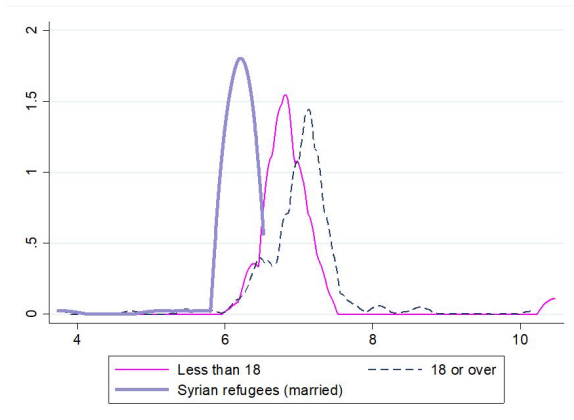
Labor Market - Jordan

Kernel Density – Log Real Monthly Wage (20-49)



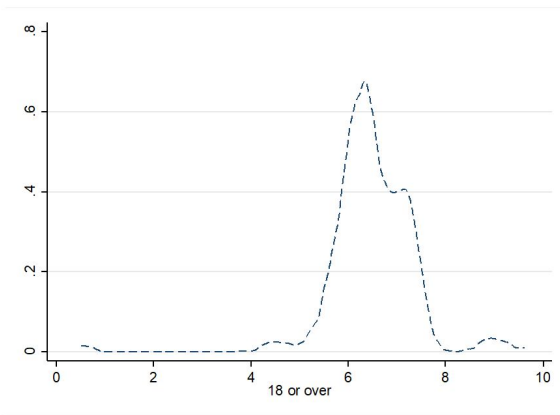
Labor Market - Jordan - Syrian Refugees

Kernel Density – Log Real Monthly Wage (20-49)



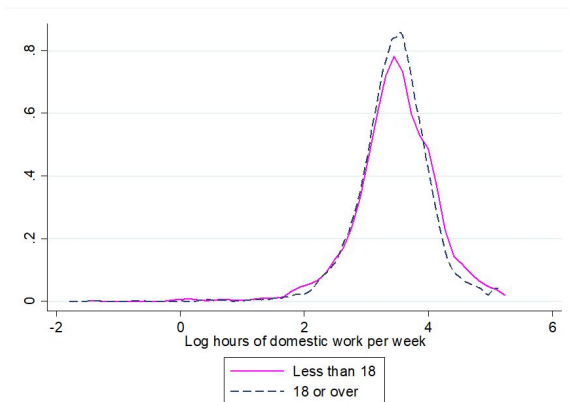
Labor Market - Tunisia

Kernel Density – Log Real Monthly Wage (20-49)



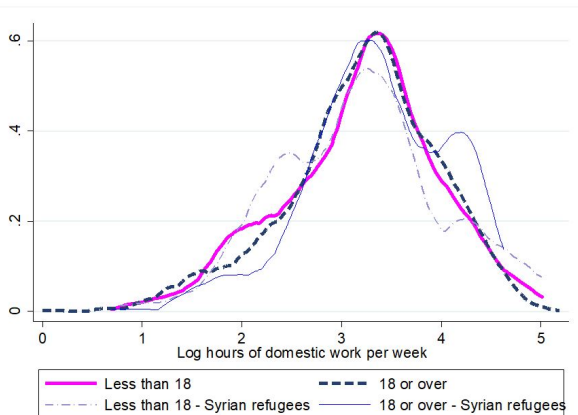
Labor Market - Egypt

Marginal average effect
Distribution of Log hours of domestic work per week (20-49)



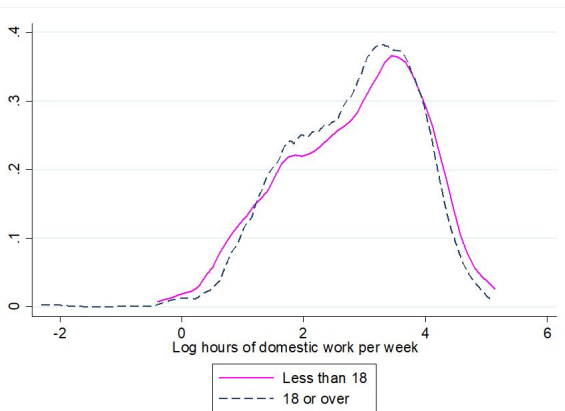
Labor Market - Jordan

Marginal average effect
Distribution of Log hours of domestic work per week (20-49)



Labor Market - Tunisia

Marginal average effect
 Distribution of Log hours of domestic work per week (20-49)



Section 3

Conclusions

Conclusions

- ▶ Child marriage shapes lifetime outcomes, with detrimental effects at all stages of life.
- ▶ The costing of child marriage should start by understanding the human development repercussions that child marriage has over the life cycle of women.
- ▶ Child marriage unambiguously affects women in all aspects of life with costs that carry from one stage of life to the next.

Conclusions

- ▶ These costs are borne directly by women and girls who marry before the age of 18, and indirectly by their children; however, these costs also extend to their families, communities and society at large.
- ▶ The social costs of child marriage are the aggregate individual costs arising as a consequence of child marriage.

Conclusions

- ▶ Because married girls are forced to transit directly from childhood to adulthood, they are likely to experience deprivation at all stages of life, deprivations that can be carried out from one generation to the next.

Conclusions

- ▶ Each stage of life of women and girls is affected by marriage and is costly at the individual and a societal level.
- ▶ This report highlights the individual costs of child marriage and sets the stage to estimate the far-reaching effects at the national, regional and global levels in the forms of lost earnings and intergenerational transmission of disadvantage.

Conclusions

- ▶ In Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Tunisia, we find consistently large costs of child marriage on: fertility (the average number of live births and use of modern contraception), education, and the probability of employment, and small moderate effects on earnings, and the health of the children born to these young mothers.
- ▶ Moreover, marriage appears to have a direct impact on decision-making and the prevalence of domestic violence.
- ▶ While the estimates vary by country, they show constantly that the timing of marriage appears to directly conflict with the ability of girls to lead healthy and productive lives.