

EDI COVID-19 ESSAY SERIES

September 2020

The threat to female adolescent development from covid-19

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About the covid-19 essay series

In response to the covid-19 global pandemic, the EDI programme commissioned a series of essays written by EDI researchers. The essays highlight the relevance of EDI research to the covid-19 crisis, in many cases referring to ongoing EDI research. They illustrate how an understanding of the relationship between institutions and economic development might help to gauge the impact of the crisis and to formulate a response. For more information, please visit: www.edi.opml.co.uk

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The Threat to Female Adolescent Development from Covid-19

Amrit Amirapu, Niaz Asadullah, and Zaki Wahhaj

Introduction

In developing countries with strongly patriarchal norms, the socio-economic opportunities and choices of adolescent girls and young women often lie in a contested area, subject to the influence of both traditional institutions and the modern state and its partners. While the patriarchal institutions may advocate traditional gender roles – manifested in the form of early childbirth, high fertility, and low rates of female economic participation outside of the home – the state and its partners can, potentially, expand opportunities for female education and training, and protect child and adolescent rights by enacting laws and strengthening law enforcement institutions. The tension between these two sets of institutions has long been apparent to policymakers and practitioners in developing countries. In recent months, however, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic is changing the balance between them in ways that, as yet, are not well-understood.

Experience of past pandemics confirms systematic loss of human capital among girls, particularly in locations without compensatory institutional provisions. Income shocks in the form of natural disasters and environmental crisis are also documented to disproportionately affect female adolescents. While the temporary disruptions caused by Covid-19 can have an enduring effect, the behavioral response of parents varies depending on the nature of underlying social institutions.

In this policy brief, we attempt to shed light on this emerging issue by investigating the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the practice of female early marriage. Our context is Bangladesh, a country with one of the highest rates of early marriage in the world but one that has also made a number of recent reforms to tackle the phenomenon. For our investigation, we make use of data collected between June 2018 and May 2019 as part of two EDI case studies on early marriage law in Bangladesh, as well as data on children's education and early marriages in Bangladesh collected in June 2020 with support from UK Aid. The key outcome measures used to examine the effects of COVID-19 are: self-reported measures of income loss, disruption to learning time, school enrolment status, intention to return to school after the lockdown, marital status and marriage offers.

From Covid-19 to Child Marriage

About one in three women marry before 18 in the developing world.¹ The adverse effects of this practice on the woman's educational outcomes, the health and education of her children, and the risk of domestic violence are well-documented.²

In most countries, there is a minimum age of marriage prescribed by the law.³ But, in countries with weak institutions, the law is frequently ignored and rarely enforced. By contrast, there is strong evidence, particularly for South Asia, that patriarchal norms, often in the form of pressure from the extended family and the wider community to marry following the onset of puberty, play an important role in the marriage timing of women.⁴

In this social setting, a pandemic – with the disruption in social and economic activities that it causes – can affect the lives of children and adolescents in multiple ways. For example, in social settings with a high incidence of early marriage, educational institutions provide a safe space for adolescent girls, and the social network support provided by teachers and classmates play a critical role in preventing early marriages. Therefore, while educational institutions remain closed during the pandemic, adolescent girls are likely to face heightened marriage pressures. There is also the added risk of increased pressure of domestic work, social isolation and the subsequent decline in mental health.

Economically impoverished regions, which often have strong migrant links with large cities both at home and abroad, may see young male migrants returning home for an extended period and searching for brides in the local marriage market during this period. Concurrently, the pandemic may exacerbate the state's already limited capacity to enforce laws against underage marriages by limiting the ability of law enforcement authorities to detect and respond to reports of such cases.⁵ In traditional rural settings, extended school closures and the need for additional support at home (to maintain necessary hygiene standards and provide care for the sick and elderly) may also affect parental aspirations regarding the education of these daughters, especially if school attendance by adolescent girls is a relatively new norm.⁶

¹ UNFPA (2012). *Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage*. United Nations Population Fund.

² World Bank and ICRW (2017). [Economic Impacts of Child Marriage: Global Synthesis Report](#). See also Field and Ambrus (2008), Sekhri and Debnath (2014), Chari et al. 2017, Amin et al. (2016), Asadullah and Wahhaj (2019), Sundar (forthcoming).

³ Pew Research Center (2016). Many Countries Allow Child Marriage. Pew Research Center Report. Available at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/12/manycountries-allow-child-marriage/>

⁴ See Field and Ambrus (2008) and Asadullah and Wahhaj (2019).

⁵ These potential effects are discussed in a (Bangla) news article in [Prothom Alo](#) on 21st June, 2020.

⁶ Sajeda Amin elaborates on this potential mechanism in an opinion piece in Netra News on 9th April, 2020, titled "Bangladeshi women play crucial role in fight against Covid-19".

<https://storage.googleapis.com/netra/2020/bangladeshi-women-play-crucial-role-in-fight-against-covid-19-981.html>

The threat to female adolescent development in Bangladesh and other countries in the region from the Covid-19 pandemic through these channels have been voiced repeatedly by a range of stakeholder organisations since the start of the outbreak.⁷ But hard evidence regarding these effects remains sparse. We use data from the EDI projects on child marriage law, and a follow-up survey in Bangladesh conducted during the pandemic to assess which of these mechanisms are at play and to weigh their relative importance. Using insights from the EDI projects, we also discuss what types of policy responses are likely to be most effective in the current situation.

Covid-19: The Bangladesh Experience

The first Covid-19 cases in Bangladesh, involving two male migrants who had recently returned from Italy and a female relative, were confirmed on 3rd March, 2020.⁸ On 17th March, the government declared school closures till the end of the month.⁹ On 23rd March, the government declared a “nationwide holiday” for a period of 10 days, from 26th March to 4th April, ordering the closure of all non-essential businesses and advising people to stay at home and practise social distancing.¹⁰ The “lockdown” was subsequently extended in phases till 30 May when businesses were allowed to reopen.¹¹ However, Covid-19 cases had continued to rise exponentially during the lockdown reaching close to 40,000 by the end of the lockdown period.¹² A week later, the government decided to re-introduce lockdowns at a local level, targeting infection hotspots and clusters.¹³ Schools and other educational institutions remained shut during the months of June and July.

There are media reports on the rising number of cases of child marriage. However, we are aware of only one study on the incidence of child marriage during lockdown. The Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) telephone survey interviewed more than 57,000 women and children in 53 districts and reported 462 child marriages occurring in June (compared to a figure of 170 for May 2020). In an earlier survey conducted by Population Council in five rural districts of Bangladesh in April 2020, 22% of adolescent girls reported an increase in household chores during the lockdown. In a survey by BRAC’s gender justice and diversity programme during the pandemic, 91% of women reported an increase in domestic and care work compared to pre-pandemic levels. Two other rapid response studies have been conducted to understand the gendered response of Covid-19 in Bangladesh. These include a

⁷ See, for example, Girls Not Brides (2020), “Covid-19 and Child, Early and Forced Marriage: An Agenda for Action”. <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/resource-centre/covid-19-and-child-early-and-forced-marriage-an-agenda-for-action/>

⁸ Reuters, 8th March, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-bangladesh-idUSKBN20V0FS>

⁹ [The Business Standard](https://www.bss.com.bd/news/16-march-2020), 16th March, 2020.

¹⁰ The Daily Star, 23rd March, 2020. <https://www.thedailystar.net/coronavirus-deadly-new-threat/news/govt-offices-closed-march-26-april-4-cabinet-secretary-1884730>

¹¹ WHO Covid-19 Bangladesh Situation Reports. [https://www.who.int/bangladesh/emergencies/coronavirus-disease-\(covid-19\)-update/coronavirus-disease-\(covid-2019\)-bangladesh-situation-reports](https://www.who.int/bangladesh/emergencies/coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)-update/coronavirus-disease-(covid-2019)-bangladesh-situation-reports)

¹² The Economist, 6th June 2020. “Covid-19 in South Asia: A Deadly Tide”.

¹³ Xinhua, 6th June, 2020. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-06/06/c_139119553.htm

qualitative study in urban slums¹⁴ and a quantitative study of households with school-enrolled children in rural areas and urban slums.¹⁵ They do not report data on early marriage but, overall, the results suggest growing vulnerability of adolescent girls along multiple dimensions. Relatedly, a telephone-based survey of mothers with young children in a rural subdistrict close to Dhaka recorded an increase in depression and anxiety symptoms, as well as increases in the experience of emotional and physical violence during the lockdown.¹⁶

Lessons from the Past

A large literature shows that, when poor households in developing countries experience adverse economic shocks, women and girls are hit hardest, with limited risk-sharing among household members.¹⁷ Existing studies suggest that a fall in income may cause school dropout or a significant decline in consumption for specific household members.¹⁸

The experience of the recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa appears especially pertinent as the measures adopted by governments and local authorities during the epidemic were similar to those currently in use to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic: school closures, village lockdowns and travel bans, which curtailed economic activities and opportunities. There is anecdotal evidence of “spikes in child labor, neglect, sexual abuse and teenage pregnancies” in areas that were under lockdown during the Ebola outbreak.¹⁹ A recent study used variations in the extent of disruption across villages during the Ebola outbreak to estimate its effects on youth women and found that school enrolment rates among adolescent girls were 16 percentage points below their initial value (a mean enrolment rate of 32%) in the most disrupted villages long after schools had reopened.²⁰

Evidence regarding the effects of adverse shocks on marriage timing is less clear-cut. A recent study analysed the effects of droughts on the incidence of marriage timing in sub-Saharan

¹⁴ Rashid, Sabina Faiz, Bachera Aktar, Nadia Farnaz Wafa Alam, Samiha Ali, Farzana Mansoor Imran Hossain Mithu, Ateeb Ahmed, Abdul Awal (2020) IMPACT OF COVID-19: Lived Experiences of the Urban Poor in Slums during the Shutdown, BRAC JGSPH COVID-19 RAPID MINI-RESEARCH REPORTS, April 2020

¹⁵ Asadullah, M Niaz and Banerjee (2020) “Schooling, learning and COVID-19” Joint BIGD University Malaya research on COVID-19. https://bigd.bracu.ac.bd/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/COVID-19-Schooling-and-Learning_June-25-2020.pdf

¹⁶ Hamdani et al. (2020). “Immediate impact of stay-at-home orders to control COVID-19 transmission on socioeconomic conditions, food insecurity, mental health, and intimate partner violence in Bangladeshi women and their families: an interrupted time series”. *The Lancet Global Health*, August 25, 2020. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(20\)30366-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(20)30366-1)

¹⁷ See the literature review by Duflo (2012). “Women empowerment and economic development”. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 50(4), pp.1051-79.

¹⁸ See, for example, Jacoby and Skoufias (1995) and Dercon and Krishnan (2000).

¹⁹ UNICEF press release: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/covid-19-children-heightened-risk-abuse-neglect-exploitation-and-violence-amidst>

²⁰ Bandiera, O., Buehren, N., Goldstein, M.P., Rasul, I. and Smurra, A. (2019). “The Economic Lives of Young Women in the Time of Ebola: Lessons from an Empowerment Program”. The World Bank.

Africa and India and showed that droughts increased the risk of early marriage in brideprice regions but decreased it in regions where dowry is prevalent.²¹

There are limits to what we can learn about the potential consequences of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic from the existing literature because the nature of the shock may be fundamentally different from those previously investigated. This is because there is a deep level of uncertainty about its duration and the path to recovery. The limited capacity of the state to respond to a public health crisis on this scale introduces another dimension of uncertainty: whether the state, going forward, will be able to formulate and implement effective policies to ensure the health and safety of its citizens.²² From the perspective of an individual household, it may even be unclear whether it is an acute, temporary shock, or a permanent one. Our data and analysis captures household response at the early stages of the pandemic. But perceptions about the depth and duration of the shock, as well as confidence in the state's capacity, are likely to evolve over time and may have significant implications for behaviour even if there is limited change in material circumstances during that period.

Covid-19 Survey on Children's Education and Parental Aspirations

To shed light on how the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown is affecting children's education and parental expectations about their future, we conducted a telephone survey during the week of June 12-18, 2020 called [SChEMaC](#) (Survey on Children, Early Marriage and Covid-19), targeting 536 women located in 23 districts in Bangladesh. The targeted respondents included all women with one or more unmarried daughters aged 9-24 years who were included in the Child Marriage Law and Attitudes Survey ([CiMLAS](#)). The survey had a response rate of 93%.

SChEMaC, when combined with CiMLAS, constitutes a unique panel dataset with detailed information on marriages, engagements, and any marriage-related initiatives relating to the respondents' daughters since June 2018 through the Covid-19 pandemic from March to May 2020. The CiMLAS sample, in turn, is composed of all respondents aged 20-39 years as well as members of their extended families in 80 villages randomly selected from an earlier nationally representative survey of women in Bangladesh conducted in 2014 (the Women's Life Choices and Attitudes Survey or [WiLCAS](#)).

Economic and Health Effects

The survey respondents' answers to questions about the economic effects of the Covid-19 lockdown on their households indicate that for the majority it constitutes a severe economic

²¹ Corno, L., Hildebrandt, N. and Voena, A. (2020). Age of marriage, weather shocks, and the direction of marriage payments. *Econometrica*, 88(3), pp.879-915.

²² As an example, measures recently announced by the Bangladesh government to ensure health and safety within schools when they reopen have, according to news reports, triggered scepticism and confusion among parents. The Daily Star, 9th September 2020. <http://103.16.74.140/frontpage/news/plan-reopen-primary-schools-health-guidelines-finalised-kids-1958157>

shock. More than 90% of the respondents reported at least some loss in income since the start of the lockdown; 62.4% reported that the household income had declined by more than 50% as a result. About two-thirds of the respondents reported that at least one household member – who would have been working under normal conditions – had been unable to work since the beginning of the lockdown. A quarter of the households experienced a loss of remittance from outside the household. About 28% of the respondents indicated that there had been food shortages – defined as household members being forced to cut back food consumption or skip meals – as a result of the lockdown; among them, about four in five reported that this happened every week, albeit not a daily occurrence. About 15% of respondents also report that one or more household members had symptoms of respiratory illness (such as fever, sore throat, dry cough, shortness of breath, breathing difficulty) since the beginning of the lockdown.

Children's Education

Table 1 provides summary statistics on the education of children aged 9-14 (both boys and girls) of the SChEMaC respondents. At the start of the lockdown in Bangladesh, 90.5% of boys and 92.3% of girls were enrolled in school. About 70% of children were receiving some kind of study support at home (according to the mother) with no significant difference between boys and girls. When asked what type of study support their children were receiving at home during the lockdown, the most frequent answers were tutoring by a family member (41.1% for boys, 40.7% for girls), extra time for self-study (38.1% for boys, 41.8% for girls), and the use of the services of a paid tutor (14.1% for boys, 12.6% for girls). The use of internet, mobile phone and distance-learning programmes on television were reported in fewer than 2% of cases.²³ Differences across genders were not statistically significant in any of these cases.

We observe a sharp drop in children's reported study time by, on average, about an hour and a quarter per day following the imposition of the lockdown. The size of the drop is the same for boys and girls: from about 214 minutes to 137 minutes for boys, and from 196 minutes to 120 minutes for girls. Although the drop is the same, there is a persistent gender differential in daily study time that is statistically significant at the 5% level during the lockdown.

As shown in Table 2, the drop in study time is larger for children whose families have experienced a more severe negative income shock: children in households reporting a greater than 50% reduction in income enjoy 44 fewer minutes of study time than children in households with a lesser reduction in income (significant at the 1% level). This suggests that study time is affected not just by school closures but also the negative economic shock triggered by the pandemic. The pathway for this effect is unclear. While we do not have data on child labour, it is unlikely that child labour would have increased in response to an income

²³ The fact that the respondent was the parent and not the child may have led to under-reporting of the use of new technologies for learning purposes.

shock because of the limited scope of employment during the lockdown. On the other hand, income loss can potentially lead to increased stress within the household and adversely affect study within the home. This mechanism appears plausible given the evidence that lockdown in Bangladesh led to increased symptoms of anxiety, depression and experience of intimate partner violence (see footnote 16).

In answer to a question whether the child will return to school when schools reopen, the answer is almost invariably positive (only 2 out of 481 responses are negative).

Marriage Patterns

The combined dataset (SChEMaC together with CiMLAS) allows a detailed comparison of marriage patterns during the lockdown in Bangladesh (from 26th March to the beginning of the survey on 12th June, 2020) compared to earlier periods, although statistical inference is made difficult by the small number of marriage episodes.

Telephone interviews conducted in May 2019 showed that 35.7% of the respondents' daughters aged 15-19 years were married (114 out of 319); while the corresponding figure in June 2020 (two and half months into the Covid-19 lockdown) was 30.4% (100 out of 329). The difference between the two proportions is not statistically significant (p-value of 0.1488). In both years, the mother reports an active groom search for the daughter in fewer than 1% of cases.

Between 26th March and 12th June 2020, the SChEMaC respondents reported just 3 daughters being married off. By comparison, there were 9 marriages during the same period in 2019. For the pre-lockdown period 1st January to 25th March, the patterns are reversed: there were 16 marriages during this period in 2020 compared to 7 marriages during the corresponding period in 2019. The difference between the proportion of girls married during 1st January to 25th March, 2019 and the corresponding figure for 26th March to 12th June, 2019 is not statistically significant. But the difference in the proportions married during the same periods in 2020 is significant at the 1% level. The proportions married in each period are depicted in Figure 1.

Information on responses to marriage offers in the combined dataset also provide some evidence that the lockdown has affected marriage patterns. Responses to the telephone interviews conducted in May 2019 indicated that 3.45% of daughters aged 15-19 years had a pending offer of marriage, i.e. an offer to which the parents had not responded yet. The corresponding proportion in June 2020 had more than doubled to 7.29%.

In cases where marriage offers were refused, respondents were asked about the reason. For marriage offers received and declined during the Covid-19 lockdown, the explanation provided in one out of six cases was that the parents could not afford pay the dowry demand.

The other reasons were that the daughter did not want to marry (one in three) and that the daughter wasn't old enough (22%). In comparison, for marriage offers received and declined between June 2018 and May 2019, 52% were rejected because the daughter did not want to marry, and 23% because the daughter was not old enough. None of the respondents had mentioned the amount of dowry demanded as the reason for declining the offer in 2019.

Discussion

The telephone survey we conducted in June 2020 provides a snapshot of how households with adolescent girls and pre-adolescent children were coping with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in rural Bangladesh. The majority of children (in the age group 9-14 years) were receiving some form of support for studying at home during the lockdown (help from a paid tutor, from an adult household member, extra time for independent study, etc.) but average study times showed substantial declines for both boys and girls. Notably, girls had significantly less study time than boys during the lockdown. This gender disparity was not reflected in the mother's expectations about the future education of her children: apart from a small number of exceptions, most children – boys and girls – were expected to return to school when schools reopen.

For older daughters (aged 15-24 years), we asked detailed marriage-related questions. The patterns show a sharp decline in marriages during the lockdown period, compared to the same period the previous year. The responses to other marriage-related questions provide some indication as to the reason. Adolescent girls aged 15-19 had more than twice as many pending marriage offers – i.e. offers to which they, or their parents, were yet to reply – in June 2020 compared to roughly the same point the previous year. This suggests that families were taking longer to respond to marriage offers during the lockdown. During the lockdown we also see a new reason being provided for refusing marriage offers – inability to pay the dowry – absent from the explanations provided the previous year. This piece of evidence is consistent with the mechanism highlighted by Corno et al. (2020)²⁴ that adverse economic shocks lead to a decline in the incidence of early marriage in dowry-practising regions.

In addition to the decline in marriages during the lockdown period, we also find a surprising *increase* in marriages during the period directly preceding the lockdown (1st January to 25th March), as compared to the corresponding period the previous year. One potential explanation for this increase is that households were becoming aware of the developing pandemic early in 2020 (perhaps due to the ties provided by Bangladeshi migrants working in China), and decided to hold marriages quickly before the circumstances became more adverse. If this hypothesis is true, it would demonstrate a remarkable degree of flexibility and opportunistic behaviour on the part of parents in arranging marriages. While remarkable, such opportunistic behaviour might not be entirely unexpected – indeed it would echo some

²⁴ See previous footnote for full reference details.

of the findings from our earlier EDI case study. This case study documented that, when certain respondents were informed about an increase in the penalties associated with arranging child marriages, they were subsequently *more likely* to arrange marriages for their underage daughters. Our favoured hypothesis for this phenomenon is that parents interpret the information as a signal that the costs of arranging a child marriage are more likely to increase in the near future and thus double their efforts to ensure that any potential marriages occur as soon as possible – before enforcement in practice catches up to the change in the formal law. As social distancing rules are relaxed in Bangladesh, a similar window of opportunity may open up for those willing to marry or facilitate the marriage of underage girls, if the state fails to provide adequate resources to monitor underage marriages and enforce the existing law prohibiting child marriages.

The evidence that dowry demands are increasingly becoming a constraint for families planning to marry off their daughters suggests that another mechanism may enter in play. It is well-documented that the dowry demand increases with the age of the bride.²⁵ As the pandemic exacerbates financial pressures on poor households, parents who otherwise would have waited till their daughters were older, may marry them off at a young age to save on dowry-related expenses.

For these reasons, although we do not observe a spike in early marriages in our data, we anticipate that the country is potentially entering a period with heightened risk of early marriage.

Policy Responses

Given this context, are there specific types of institutional responses that can mitigate the threats posed by Covid-19 to female adolescent development? Even in normal times, formal institutions in South Asia aimed at protecting child rights and gender rights do not function well and the pandemic is overstressing existing state capacity in unprecedented ways.

The high rate of female (school) enrolment in our sample at the start of the lockdown confirms the progress achieved in schooling girls in the last few decades. The majority of our sample children also intend to return to school when they reopen. However, there is a significant loss of instructional time owing to school closures. Although there was no evidence of girls receiving less assistance from parents towards home study, we noted a small gender differential in daily study time during the lockdown. Delays in school reopening may widen the gender gap in the loss of instructional time. Most NGO-run programs for adolescent empowerment also remains suspended. The absence of safe spaces offered by schools introduces an additional threat to female adolescent development while educational

²⁵ See, for example, Field and Ambrus (2008), Amin and Bhajracharya (2011) for empirical evidence, and Wahhaj (2018) for a theoretical explanation for this phenomenon

institutions remain closed. With adolescent girls out of school and out of education, there are concerns over their growing vulnerability to early marriage.

Although the incidence of marriage during the lockdown is low relative to 2019, the proportion of pending marriage offers has doubled. It is unclear whether and how parents will respond to this rise in outstanding marriage offers over the medium term. In case of a prolonged pandemic, these offers may lead to early marriages as parents strive to cope with economic losses. The policy priority should, therefore, be to treat schooling as an essential service and ensure timely return to the safe space provided at school and restore adolescent-targeted community level programmes. The government's television-based distance-learning mechanism is promising but not gender-targeted. The available evidence suggests that the uptake is low. If schools are to remain closed for the rest of the year, Bangladeshi policymakers must continue to seek solutions to ensure uninterrupted access to counselling and educational services for adolescent girls by enhancing distance-learning tools and harnessing social media platforms for educational purposes.

Tables

Table 1: Comparison of Means by Gender

	male	female	difference	p-value
Enrolled	0.905	0.923	-0.018	(0.477)
Home Study Support	0.673	0.714	-0.042	(0.330)
Extra Study Time	0.381	0.418	-0.037	(0.425)
Family Tutoring	0.411	0.407	0.004	(0.929)
Private Tutor	0.143	0.126	0.016	(0.602)
Lockdown Study Time	136.711	119.583	17.127	(0.026)
Study Time Before	213.750	195.765	17.985	(0.113)
Will Return to School	1.000	0.994	0.006	(0.343)

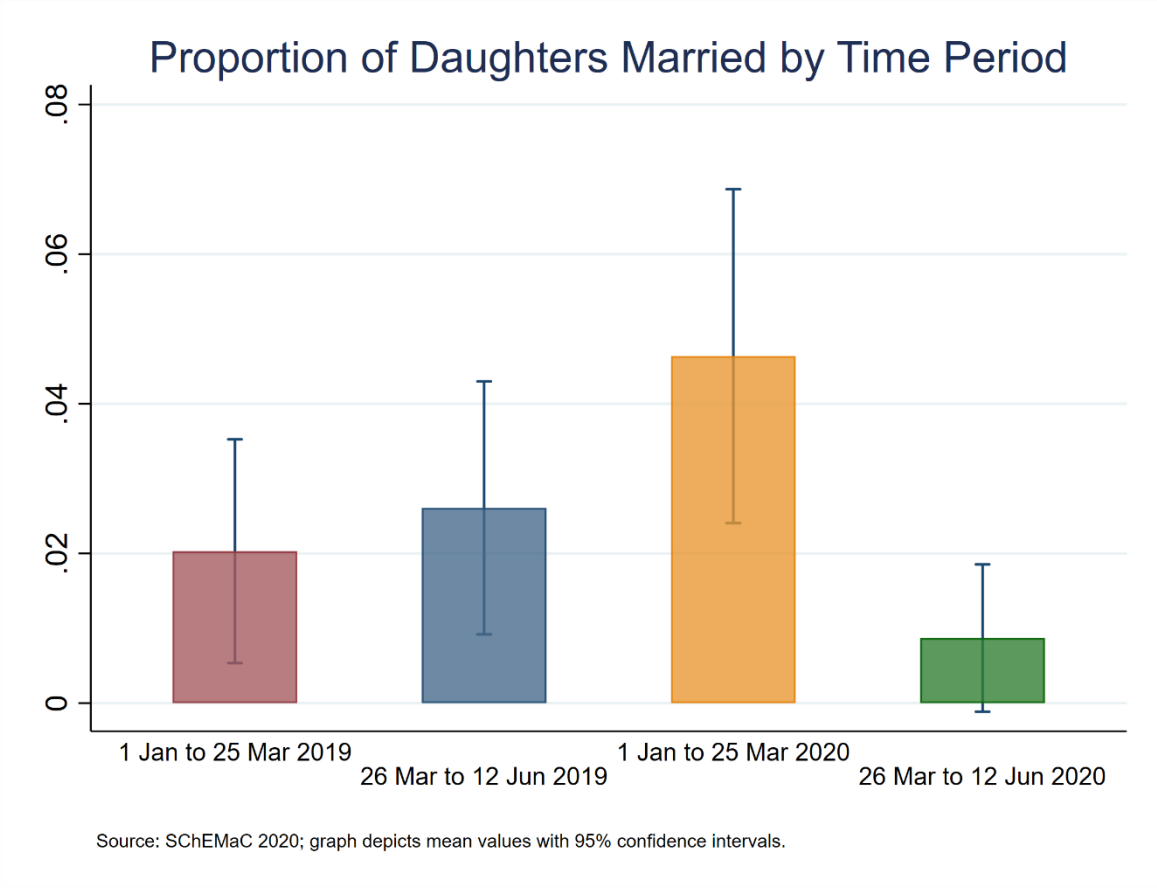
Source: 2020 SChEMaC.

Table 2: Comparison of Means by Size of Negative Income Shock

	small shock	large shock	difference	p-value
Change in Study Time	-49.021	-93.786	44.765	(0.000)

Source: 2020 SChEMaC. Note: a large (small) income shock denotes a reduction in household income of greater than (less than) 50 percent, compared to pre-lockdown levels.

Figure 1: Incidence of Marriage among Respondents' Daughters by Time Period



About EDI

Institutions matter for growth and inclusive development, but there is little evidence on how positive institutional change can be achieved. The Economic Development and Institutions (EDI) research programme addresses this knowledge gap by working with some of the finest economic thinkers and social scientists across the globe to inform new pathways to inclusive, sustainable economic growth.

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This project was funded with UK aid from the UK government. For more information, please visit: www.edi.opml.co.uk

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