



Child Marriage in Vietnam: A Socio-Demographic Analysis

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Introduction

Child marriage, defined as a marital union where at least one party is below 18 years of age, is a critical challenge in Vietnam, infringing on human rights and hindering individual development. Motivated by a need to understand and address this issue, this research delves into the socio-demographic drivers of child marriage across different regions and ethnic groups in Vietnam.

Research Question: How do socio-demographic factors influence the prevalence of child marriage across different regions and ethnicities in Vietnam?

Hypotheses:

- Child marriage is more likely among individuals with lower educational levels and poorer economic backgrounds;
- The prevalence of child marriage varies significantly across different regions and ethnic groups in Vietnam;
- The impact of education on reducing child marriage is more pronounced in rural areas. This research aims to provide insights that can help develop targeted interventions to effectively combat child marriage in various Vietnamese communities.

Data

The data for this study is sourced from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), conducted by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the General Statistics Office (GSO) of Vietnam in 2021.

Methods

To explore the multifaceted dimensions of child marriage in Vietnam, this study adopted a nuanced statistical approach, specifically multivariate binary logistic regression analysis. This method was chosen for its aptness in handling binary response variables and its capability to elucidate the complex relationships between socio-demographic determinants and child marriage occurrence.

Dependent Variable:
$$Y_i = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{if } marriage\ at < 18\ age \\ 0, & \text{if } marriage\ at \geq 18\ age \end{cases}$$

Independent Variables: Education Level, Wealth Index, Area, Ethnicity, Region, Mass Media Access, Health Insurance, HIV/AIDS Awareness, and Contraceptive Use.

Model Development:

Model I – Base Model: Assesses the impact of key socio-demographic factors on child marriage odds.
Model II – Enhanced Model: Adds "Region" and "Ethnicity" as Fixed Effects to the Base Model, assessing how these factors might additionally influence child marriage across different geographic and cultural contexts.
Model III – Advanced Model: Includes Interaction Terms between "Area" and "Education Level", assessing differential effects based on location (urban/rural).

Results

Variables	Model I		Model II		Model III	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Area of Residence						
Urban	1.00	—	1.00	—	1.00	—
Rural	1.3**	(1.08, 1.56)	1.16	(0.96, 1.41)	0.92	(0.47, 1.96)
Education Level						
No Education or Pre-Primary	1.00	—	1.00	—	1.00	—
Primary	0.64***	(0.53, 0.79)	1.15	(0.91, 1.44)	1.14	(0.56, 2.49)
Lower Primary	0.6***	(0.49, 0.73)	1.09	(0.86, 1.37)	0.82	(0.41, 1.75)
Upper Primary	0.28***	(0.21, 0.36)	0.49***	(0.36, 0.65)	0.35**	(0.17, 0.79)
Vocational High School	0.03***	(0.01, 0.09)	0.06***	(0.01, 0.16)	0.04**	(0, 0.21)
University/College/Higher	0.04***	(0.02, 0.08)	0.08***	(0.04, 0.13)	0.07***	(0.03, 0.18)
Wealth Index						
Poorest	1.00	—	1.00	—	1.00	—
Poor	0.54***	(0.45, 0.65)	0.95	(0.77, 1.17)	0.94	(0.76, 1.16)
Middle	0.38***	(0.31, 0.48)	0.69**	(0.54, 0.89)	0.69**	(0.54, 0.89)
Rich	0.47***	(0.37, 0.59)	0.85	(0.65, 1.13)	0.86	(0.65, 1.13)
Richest	0.36***	(0.26, 0.49)	0.65*	(0.45, 0.93)	0.66*	(0.46, 0.94)
Ethnicity						
Kinh and Hoa	—	—	1.00	—	1.00	—
Tay, Thai, Muong, Nung	—	—	1.74***	(1.33, 2.28)	1.75***	(1.34, 2.29)
Khmer	—	—	1.4*	(1.06, 1.84)	1.39*	(1.05, 1.82)
Mong	—	—	6.85***	(5.01, 9.4)	6.98***	(5.09, 9.61)
Constant	0.88		0.19***		0.23***	

***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05.

Summary of Regression Analysis Results on the Likelihood of Child Marriage:

Model I: Basic Factors Influencing Child Marriage

- Children in rural areas are more likely to get married before the age of 18 compared to those in urban areas.
- The more education a child receives, the less likely they are to be married young. Specifically, children who attend vocational schools or university are much less likely to experience child marriage.
- Wealthier families are less likely to have children who marry young. This trend holds across different levels of wealth, showing that the richer the family, the lower the chances of early marriage.

Model II: Fixed Effects of Region and Ethnicity

- The chances of child marriage vary significantly across different ethnic groups in Vietnam. For example, the Mong ethnic group has a much higher likelihood of child marriage than others.
- Even when considering different regions and ethnicities, more education continues to reduce the likelihood of child marriage.

Model III: Interaction of Rural Settings and Education Levels

- In rural areas, higher education levels do not significantly reduce the odds of child marriage as much as in urban areas.
- This means, in rural areas, the benefit of higher education in preventing child marriage is not as strong as in urban areas.

Conclusion

Key Takeaways:

- A significant inverse relationship between educational attainment and the likelihood of child marriage. Higher levels of education, particularly vocational high school and university or higher education, are associated with substantially lower odds of child marriage.

- Economic disparities play a crucial role in driving child marriage. Individuals from lower wealth quintiles are more likely to experience child marriages. However, as economic status improves, the probability of child marriage diminishes, highlighting the need to address economic instability as a means of reducing child marriage rates.

- Notable regional and ethnic variations in the prevalence of child marriage. Certain regions, such as the Northern Midlands and Mountains, exhibit higher rates of child marriage, while specific ethnic groups, like the Mong, face significantly higher risks.

Applications:

The findings provide empirical evidence to inform policy development aimed at combating child marriage. Policies focused on enhancing educational opportunities and economic empowerment, particularly in vulnerable regions and among marginalized ethnic groups, could be instrumental in reducing child marriage rates.

Limitation:

The study excluded all instances of missing data (about 30% of original dataset), which ensured that the analysis was conducted on a reliable dataset. However, this conservative strategy presents a limitation as it leaves a gap in our understanding of its potential influence. The excluded data might have offered additional insights or altered the results.

Next Steps:

Future research should prioritize improving data collection methods to address missing data issues and implement quality control measures. Developing accurate techniques for imputing categorical data is also essential for conducting comprehensive and unbiased analyses.

References

General Statistics Office of Viet Nam and UNICEF (2021). Viet Nam Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2020-2021: Dataset. Ha Noi, Viet Nam: General Statistics Office.

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