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Hyderabad activists want women's legal marriage age to stay at 18, increasing it may cause more harm

Raising the legal age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 will lead to an increase in elopement cases and criminalisation of sexual activity, say activists.



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The activists stated that increasing the age bar for marriage will only do more harm than good. (Express Illustrations)

By Express News Service

HYDERABAD: Raising the legal age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 will lead to an increase in elopement cases and criminalization of sexual activity, say activists. Around 20 organizations including Bhumika Women's Collective, Gramya Resource Centre for Women and Shaheen held a discussion over the proposal to increase the women's marriageable age. Post the discussion, the activists stated that increasing the age bar for marriage will only do more harm than good.

Recently, a Delhi-based NGO Partners for Law in Development undertook an analysis of cases reported under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006. The data analysed comprised 83 High Court and District Court judgments and orders between 2008 to 2017 and found that in 65 per cent of the cases, PCMA was used to punish elopement of two consenting older adolescents.

Experts claimed that they spoke to around 1,500 children between the age of 18-21 from Telangana. Most of them felt that if after 18 years of age, they have the right to choose their leader, they should not be deprived to make decisions regarding their marriage, said chief functionary from Bhumika, K Satyavathi.

Citing that while 26% of women in the 20-24 age group, as per the National Family Health Survey (2015-16), married before 18. As many as 56% out of this

group marry before 21, Satyavathi added that the law which is being designed to protect children will only add more criminal cases against them and their families.

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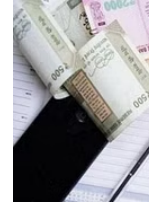
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