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An Analysis of the reasons of males associated with underage eloping cases recorded in Anuradhapuwara district during 2017- 2019

Senanayake SMHMK^{*1}, Senanayake SMDW²

¹*Wayamba University of Sri Lanka*

²*South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust*

^{*}senanayakekumara@yahoo.com

Background: Males eloped with girlfriends below 16 years are arrested by police and produced for medicolegal examination to prosecute under the offence of statutory rape and abduction.

Method: During the three years of 2017 to 2019, the first author had medicolegally examined 49 boyfriends at the teaching Hospital Anuradhapura. Information recorded in medicolegal examination forms were extracted to a data sheet. Percentage of age groups, occupations, reasons for elope, knowledge about age of marriage and sex were calculated.

Results: Ages were between 15 to 34 years and the highest number 14% (n=7) was at the age of 20 years. All were aware of the age of marriage and age of consenting sex. All wished to marry in due age. Occupational history revealed unemployment 37% (n=18), unskilled laborer 28% (n=11), skilled laborer 8% (n=4), farmer 8% (n=4), army soldier 8% (n=4), worker of private company 6%(n=3), businessman 6% (3 cases), carpenter 2% (n=1) and mason 2% (n=1). Several reasons were identified such as hostile domestic environment including assaults and scold by parents 40% (n=20), no reason 12% (n=6), attempt to separate the couple by girlfriend's parents 10% (n=5), insist of the girlfriend 10% (n=5), unsafe environment at the home of the girlfriend 10% (n=5), advised by girlfriend's father 8% (n=4) and disclosure of love affair to girlfriend's parents 6% (n=3). Girlfriend was half-sister of boyfriend and relations disapproved marriage 2% (n=1).

Conclusion: Since all were wishing to marry when legal age of girlfriend is reached, the offence of underage elope should be considered according to sociocultural context. Development of life skills and psychosocial support system are necessary to address reasons.

Keywords: Girl child, reasons, elope, statutory rape.