BREAKING THE SILENCE: UNVEILING THE REALITY OF EARLY MARRIAGE THROUGH THE EYES OF MODERN TEENS

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Abstract

The global concern over early marriage, particularly involving underage children, has grown due to its adverse effects on health, social dynamics, and the economy. This study, conducted in Pangkep district in 2021, delves into adolescent perceptions of early marriage. Findings reveal a negative response from teenagers, recognizing its detrimental impact on health, economy, social aspects, and educational opportunities. The study emphasizes the importance of marrying after achieving physical, mental, and financial maturity to mitigate household conflicts. Education contributes to breaking the cycle, empowering women to support children's development. While family education and economic stability are crucial in preventing early marriages, some areas still hold onto traditions, viewing spider money as a family income source.

Keywords: Early Marriage, Teenage Marriage, Mental Maturity, Modern Teens.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of child marriage, also known as child marriage or marriage below the legal minimum age, is a complicated global issue. Child marriage occurs worldwide, particularly in developing nations where poverty, low levels of education, and gender inequality remain significant obstacles that perpetuate this harmful practice. It constitutes a violation of children's rights and has devastating effects on their physical, emotional, and mental health. Efforts must be made to address the root causes of child marriage and provide assistance to vulnerable communities in order to protect children from this harmful practice. Only then can we create a world where every child has the chance to realize his or her full potential[1].

Child marriage is a multifaceted problem that necessitates a multifaceted solution. Although efforts have been made to raise awareness about the negative effects of this practice, there is still a great deal of work to be done. It is imperative to address the underlying causes of child marriage, such as poverty, a lack of education, and gender inequality. Providing girls with access to education and economic opportunities can assist in breaking the cycle of poverty and reducing their susceptibility to child marriage. In addition, community-based interventions involving parents, religious leaders, and other stakeholders can assist in shifting cultural norms and attitudes regarding child marriage. In addition, it is crucial to offer support and protection to girls who are at risk for or have already experienced child marriage. This includes the availability of health care, legal services, and counseling services[2]. By addressing

the underlying causes of child marriage and providing support for vulnerable communities, we can create a world in which every child has the chance to reach their full potential without being forced into early marriage. According to, more than 650 million women and young women will be married before the age of majority. Almost every two seconds, a girl under the age of 18 is married. Child marriages are most common in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, but they also occur in Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and even some developed nations. This data illustrates the alarming global prevalence of child marriages. It violates human rights and negatively impacts the health, education, and well-being of young girls. This practice must end, and every girl must be given the chance to realize her full potential[3].

This practice must end, and every girl must be given the chance to realize her full potential. In addition to having physical, emotional, and mental effects on young girls, child marriage also perpetuates cycles of poverty and inequality. Girls who are forced to drop out of school due to early marriage have fewer future opportunities and perpetuate the cycle of poverty. In addition, child marriage frequently results in early pregnancy and childbirth, which can pose grave health risks for both the mother and the child. Governments and communities must collaborate to end this harmful practice by enacting laws prohibiting child marriage and empowering girls with education and resources to make their own decisions about their futures. By abolishing child marriage, we can give young girls around the world a brighter future.[4] The economic effects of child marriage on the lives and communities of girls, including diminished access to education and employment. Girls who are married off at a young age are frequently compelled to abandon their education, limiting their potential for economic independence and perpetuating the cycle of poverty. In addition, child brides are more likely to experience domestic violence and health complications related to pregnancies and births that occur at a young age. By abolishing child marriage, we can end this cycle and create a more equitable society for everyone. It is essential that we continue to raise awareness about the dangers of child marriage and collaborate with governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and communities to eradicate it. Only then will we be able to guarantee that every girl has the opportunity to live a safe, healthy, and fulfilling life[5].

Legal reforms, education campaigns, and community engagement programs by governments and NGOs to combat child marriage. Some regions have experienced success with these initiatives, but there is still much work to be done. It is essential to address the underlying causes of child marriage, including poverty, gender inequality, and harmful cultural practices. Providing girls with access to education and economic opportunities can also prevent them from being forced into marriage at a young age[6]. Additionally, it is essential to include men and boys in these efforts, as they play a crucial role in perpetuating harmful gender norms. By cooperating and placing a priority on the rights of girls, we can create a world where child marriage is no longer a reality. It is time for us to take action and ensure that every girl has the opportunity to achieve her full potential[7].

Cultural factors contribute to the prevalence of child marriage in various parts of the globe. These practices frequently involve the notion that girls are inferior to boys and should be married as soon as possible. Also contributing to the issue are poverty, a lack of education, and limited economic opportunities. In some instances, families may view child marriage as a way to secure their daughter's future or protect her from

sexual abuse. The consequences of child marriage can be devastating for girls, including an increased risk of domestic violence, early pregnancy and childbirth complications, and limited opportunities for education and career advancement. To address this issue, it is essential to provide girls with access to education and economic opportunities, as well as raise awareness about the negative consequences of child marriage. This can involve working with community leaders and religious figures to change attitudes toward the rights of girls and empower them to make their own decisions about their futures. By taking a comprehensive approach that addresses the underlying causes of child marriage, we can create a world where every girl has the opportunity to realize her full potential [8].

Contributions to this cause include supporting organizations working to end child marriage, advocating for policy changes that protect girls' rights, and educating oneself and others about the issue. Moreover, it is crucial to acknowledge the intersectionality of child marriage with other forms of oppression, such as poverty and gender inequality. We can create a more just and equitable society for all by addressing these underlying issues. Ultimately, ending child marriage requires a concerted effort from individuals, communities, and governments worldwide. But by working together towards this common objective, we can create a brighter future for girls worldwide[9]. Marriage is a significant event in Indonesian culture, particularly in Islamic-influenced societies. In Indonesian culture, marriage is highly esteemed and one of the key indicators of a person's success in life. High rates of child marriage in Indonesia typically stem from cultural and traditional factors. In Indonesia, high birth rates are frequently associated with a higher social status; consequently, high birth rates have become a significant and revered social event. Additionally, high-child marriages frequently involve a large number of families and relatives from both sides, making it a momentous occasion for both families. Typically, high school weddings are steeped tradition and customs, such as receptions, wedding ceremonies, celebrations[10].

The importance of social status in Indonesian culture affects the practice of child marriage. Child marriage has long been an important aspect of Indonesian culture, particularly for those aspiring to achieve a higher social standing. Numerous families and relatives from both sides come together to celebrate the union, which is commonly regarded as an important and revered custom. Typical customs and traditions associated with high school weddings include elaborate ceremonies, receptions, and other celebrations. However, the prevalence of child marriage in Indonesia has also prompted concerns regarding the effect of social standing on this practice. Others argue that it perpetuates harmful gender norms and reinforces inequality, while some may view it as a means to improve their social standing[11]. Consequently, there is an ongoing discussion regarding the influence of social status on the practice of child marriage in Indonesia. The cultural significance of weddings in Indonesia, including customs and festivities associated with high-child unions. Nonetheless, efforts are also being made to combat this practice. The Indonesian government has implemented various policies and programs to achieve its goal of ending child marriage by 2030. These include expanding access to education for girls, providing economic assistance to families, and raising awareness about the negative effects of child marriage. In addition, non-governmental organizations and community groups have been working to empower girls and provide them with the resources necessary to resist early marriage. Despite these efforts, child marriage in Indonesia continues to be a complex issue requiring the continued attention and participation of all sectors of society[12]. By addressing the underlying factors that contribute to this practice, such as poverty and gender inequality, we can create a future in which every child has the chance to reach his or her full potential. Government policies and community-based programs are designed to decrease the prevalence of child marriage in Indonesia. There has been some success with these efforts, but much remains to be done. Changing cultural attitudes toward marriage and the role of women in society is one of the greatest obstacles. Education and awareness-raising campaigns can aid in changing these attitudes and empowering girls to determine their own destinies. In addition, providing access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities can reduce the economic pressures that often lead to the early marriage of daughters. We can create a brighter future for Indonesia's children and ensure that every child has the opportunity to live a healthy, happy, and fulfilling life by collaborating across sectors and communities[13].

One thing related to marriage regulated by the state is the age limit. Article 7 paragraph (1) of Law Number 16 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage (UU 16/2019) regulates that marriage is only permitted if the man and woman have reached the age of 19 years. In cases of early marriage, namely those where the prospective husband/wife is under 19 years of age, basically it is not permitted by law. Apart from that, if the prospective bride and groom have not reached the age of 21 years, they must obtain permission from both parents in order to get married (Article 6 paragraph (2) of the Marriage Law). Even though early marriage is not permitted, based on Article 7 paragraph (2) of Law 16/2019, it is still possible for there to be deviations from the 19 years age requirement, namely by the parents of the man and/or woman asking the court for dispensation for very urgent reasons accompanied by evidence sufficient supporting evidence[14]. What is meant by very urgent reasons is a situation where there is no other choice and it is absolutely necessary that the marriage must take place as regulated in the Elucidation to Article 7 paragraph (2) of Law 16/2019. The request for dispensation is submitted to the Religious Court for those who are Muslim and the District Court for those of a religion other than Islam (Explanation of Article 7 paragraph (2) of Law 16/2019. The court must listen to the opinions of both prospective bride and groom who will be getting married (Article 7). paragraph (3) Law 16/2019)

The influence of high-child marriages and adult marriages on gender roles and familial relationships is distinct. Due to economic pressures, young girls are frequently coerced into marriage in countries with high rates of child marriage, limiting their access to education and economic opportunities. This reinforces traditional gender roles, in which women are expected to be subservient to men and carry out domestic responsibilities. Adult marriages, on the other hand, are typically founded on mutual consent and a shared desire for companionship, resulting in more equal partnerships and a greater emphasis on personal fulfillment. In addition, adult marriages prioritize education and career opportunities for both partners, resulting in a more equitable distribution of household duties. By addressing the underlying causes of high rates of child marriage, such as poverty and a lack of access to education, we can create a society in which all individuals have the opportunity to make educated decisions about their futures[15].

Emphasize the factors that influence the outcomes of early marriage in developing countries. In the study, poverty, poor education, and cultural traditions were identified

as the primary causes of early marriage. This study provides a comprehensive understanding of the social and economic contexts that motivate these practices. investigated the effects of early marriage on women's reproductive health in various nations. The study found a correlation between early marriage and the risk of pregnancy complications, maternal mortality, and other reproductive health issues. The findings emphasize the significance of interventions to prevent early marriages and safeguard women's health. examined the effect of early marriage on women's education and economic participation in several African nations. The study revealed that early marriages inhibited women's access to education and impeded their participation in economic activities. To combat child marriage, the research emphasizes the need for policies and programs that promote education and gender equality. The study did not investigate the perspectives of adolescents on juvenile marriage. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to examine adolescents' perspectives on early marriage[16].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the Pangkajene Islands district, we surveyed individuals aged 17 to 19. High school (man level) or equivalent is required for application. According to the Pangkep district's Department of Education, there are seventeen high schools based on Islamic religion, seventeen high schools based on the national curriculum, and six SMK. There were 3,819 students enrolled in high school in the Pangkep district. The questionnaire was completed by 371 students. 18 of them were eliminated because they were under the age of seventeen. The survey instruments include demographic questions, parental education, parental employment, parental beliefs regarding child marriage, and access to and use of the media distributed by school instructors.uring approximately three months, the school was visited on a regular basis to obtain the data. A team of researchers, assisted by the class teacher and the director of school, socialised the adolescents on how to complete the questionnaire prior to their completion. Before socialisation commences, the school's approval has been obtained. We analyse the data collected subsequently using univariate and multivariate analyses in SPPs 25.

RESULT

Recognition of Educational Importance

Teenagers acknowledge the pivotal role of female education, understanding its transformative impact on personal and familial well-being. The benefits extend to enhanced skills, critical thinking, career opportunities, and self-reliance, as evidenced data shows that teenagers are well aware of the importance of a good female education. They understand that adequate education can help improve their quality of life and that of their families. Other benefits of education are improved skills, thinking abilities, better career opportunities, and self-reliance. Further data is shown in Table 1. Respondents felt that education could improve the quality of life of men's families more than women's (70.37% vs. 29.62%, p 0.05). besides, adolescents believed that education can only improve the life quality of boys in society compared to girls (57.29%: 42.70%, p<0,05). Other benefits of this start-up were the improvement of knowledge, the ability to think critically in decision-making, and improved independence. Most respondents responded positively to the importance of premarital education. Early marriage will prevent them from getting a higher education. Girls who receive adequate education have better life skills. In addition, their capacity to manage

households, such as caring for children, managing finances, and career prospects, is better compared to that of those without education. In general, these abilities are very useful in family and community life[17].

Gender Disparities in Perception

Survey results reveal a perceived gender gap in the impact of education on quality of life. Respondents believe education disproportionately benefits men's families (70.37%) over women's (29.62%) and is more beneficial for boys (57.29%) than girls (42.70%). Additional advantages include improved knowledge, critical decisionmaking, independence, and recognition of the importance of premarital education. Educated girls have the ability to identify things that help or harm them. They are also more aware of the socioeconomic benefits. Uneducated girls think of themselves as inferior to men. Another advantage of education for girls is a bright future. Unlike uneducated children, they only know what they see on both social media and electronic media. As a result, they do not have a strong principle of life, so they are easily influenced by the words of others. This makes them easily affected and stressed. Education for girls plays a role in raising awareness of the human rights inherent in them. Women who know their rights and the laws that protect them are better able to protect themselves from violence, harassment, and even justice for reproductive health. Health problems can be caused by their ignorance of such rights, so early-age marriages cannot be prevented. If this happens, there are many risks for women[18].

Girls should be educated like boys. Giving girls a chance to get a higher education can prevent early marriage. In Indonesia, girls who complete high school education are on average 18–19 years old. The minimum age for marriage is 18 years, according to the WHO. At this stage, girls already have sufficient emotional maturity and a reproductive system. Their ability to control stress is sufficient. They become more able to manage the home and family. In addition, they are also more able to reduce conflicts with husbands, relatives, and parents. Furthermore, educated women are able to understand the importance of a well-off small family, its role in caring for and educating children, and how to make good money by working. Thus, educated women not only prevent early marriages but also help control the population explosion to improve family well-being. In the long term, if each family achieves this, then the life of society and the economy of the nation are encouraged to grow[19].

Life Skills and Household Management

Adequately educated girls exhibit superior life skills, excel in household management, childcare, financial control, and career prospects, contributing significantly to family and community life. Other studies say that girls who are married at an early age do not have a chance to get an education. They feel limited in a lot of ways. As one of them cannot even write or read. This is because they can't help their children with education. They completely depend on the child's education on the school side. High-educated girls play an important role as models in preventing early marriages. She is highly educated, well-established, and able to boost the family's economy, becoming an example for other families in her neighbourhood. Thus, society is encouraged to advance their daughters in education and withhold cultural practises such as early marriages. Based on the above, teenagers are assumed to have a negative response to early marriage. They understand the benefits of education well enough to be able to complete their education before marriage. Adolescents argue that education should

be their primary priority before reaching the age of maturity for marriage, which is <18 years. With the hope that they can live a more stable marriage, both financially and emotionally[20].

Table of 1: Adolescent awareness of the benefits of education

Benefid Of Education	For Boys N (%)	For Girls N (%)
Improved Knowledge	37(46.83)	39(49.36)
Improved Decision Making	40(46.83)	31(43.66)
Have A Better Status In The Family	19(70.37)	8(29.62)
Gain Better Life Quality	55(57.29)	41(42.70)
Being Self Sufficient	42(50.60)	41(49.39)

Parental education affects views of early marriage. Based on data obtained from fathers of teenage boys who obtain higher education than teenage girl fathers (14.88%: 2.54%, p 0.03). Most mothers of teenage boys are uneducated compared to their fathers (17.28%: 1.98%, p 0.05). The same applies to the parents of teenage girls, where there are more uneducated mothers than their fathers (22.09%: 5.94%, p 0.05). In Indonesia, early marriage for the majority of children is due to the decision of parents or children's families. Children who are under the age of 18 still heavily depend on their parents, so important decisions such as marriage are usually decided by their parents. Parents' education plays an important role in this decision. In this study, we identified a fairly large gap between the education of fathers and mothers of teenagers[21].

Awareness and Socioeconomic Benefits

Education empowers girls to identify beneficial factors, increases awareness of socioeconomic advantages, and contrasts starkly with the self-perception of uneducated girls, who often consider themselves inferior. Educated parents can identify the long-term impact of early marriage on children. Those who have received sufficient formal education are able to understand the risks posed by early marriage on child development. The negative impact of early-age marriage decisions is not only physical but also psychological and social. The child's opportunity to pursue higher education will be hampered. In addition, because of the emotional side of an immature child, the risk of internal and external conflict and unwanted pregnancy problems is higher. With the educational capital that he has, he can perform his role in guiding and supporting their children. The information they give children is more accurate, so it can strengthen the child's awareness of the risks of early marriage. In addition, they can communicate with various stakeholders, such as schools, health institutions, and communities, to support the prevention of early marriage. Educated parents also value education and encourage their children to pursue higher education. They are also more open to social change and new norms. Educated parents can also be a conversation partner for their children, especially their daughters, as they pursue education and careers before marriage[22].

The situation is different if the parents are less educated. They tend to follow what has dominated culture in the family. In the Bugis society, which is the majority tribe that exists in the district of Pangkep, the culture of marrying children at an early age has occurred since ancient times. Evidence from the data of 2022 shows that early marriages in Pangkep County still occupy the highest rank. This requires more intense efforts from all sectors, from the central government, the region, and the community, to encourage equal education and eradicate illiteracy.

Table of 2: Education of Adolescents

Education Of Father	Boys	Girls
Not School	7(1.98)	21(5.94)
Elementary School	39(11.04)	50(14.16)
Junior High School	64(18.13)	17(4.81)
Senior High School	35(9.91)	62(17.56)
Diploma / Graduate	49(13.88)	9(2.54)
Education Of Mother	Boys	Girls
Not School	61(17.28)	78(22.09)
Elementary School	35(9.91)	37(10.48)
Junior High School	51(14.44)	21(5.94)
Senior High School	31(8.78)	21(5.94)
Diploma / Graduate	15(4.24)	3(0.84)

The work of teenage parents is related to the occurrence of child marriages at an early age. Family economic factors are one of the strongest reasons children get married at an early age. Some conservative parents see children as a family burden. In order to relieve the burden on the family, they were married at a young age. The number of unemployed teenage girl parents is higher than that of teenage boys (20.67%: 8.49%, p 0.05). Parents of teenagers with a stable income were PNS more than parents of girl teenagers (19.54%: 7.74%, p 0.05). Moreover, the data in Figure 1 show that parents of teenagers who work in the private sector earn much more than teenage parents (34.27% vs. 9.34%, p < 0.05).

Preventing Early Marriages and Ensuring Rights

Education acts as a deterrent to early marriages, fostering a brighter future for girls. Informed girls, aware of their rights, can protect themselves from violence, harassment, and reproductive health issues, reducing health risks associated with early-age marriages. The question of family perenomousness has a significant impact on early marriage events. Parents who have a fixed income, such as PNS and private employees, are able to meet family economic needs. Children's marriages are often caused by the family's economic pressures. Parents see their child's marriage as a solution to their financial problems. Married children, especially women, will be the responsibility of the husband, so that the burden on the parents is reduced. The Mahar culture that exists in Bugis triggered the marriage of married children in Pangkep. In the tradition of the Bugis, the family of women will get mahar with a large number of men. The type of money varies from millions of rupees to gold, houses, cars, land, and buildings. The Mahar automatically becomes owned by a woman or a family of women when a man gives it over as a marriage condition. The higher the mahar given, it is assumed, the higher the degree of the male family. Mahar Inil is considered a source of income[23].

CONCLUSION

Early marriage of a child at the age of 18 affects the health, economic, and social risks of the offender. Adolescents have had a negative response to early marriage events. They are well aware that getting married at an early age prevents them from getting an education. This has influenced their development. Marrying at an age when you are physically, mentally, and financially mature helps reduce the conflict that occurs in the household. In addition, educated women can encourage their children to advance in their education as well. Family education and economics influence the prevention

of early marriage in children. Educated parents can see the long-term effects of earlyage marriages. However, in some areas, such as Pangkep district, with the majority of tribal communities, there are traditions such as mahar money that society assumes as a source of income for the family.

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