



The Factors Influencing Early Marriage among Women

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Abstract

A marriage that is carried out prematurely or at a too young age is something that is contrary to the law on marriage. Objective: This research is to determine the relationship between factors that influence young marriage in young couples. Method: The study used a descriptive analytical design with a cross-sectional approach. A total of 97 couples in AFD 2 Bahbutong, Sidamanik District, Simalungun Regency, were selected as respondents through a simple random sampling technique. The dependent variable was early marriage, while the independent variables included self-will, family/parental support, education, and economic factors. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using Pearson correlation. Results: The study showed that self-will had a strong positive relationship with early marriage ($r=0.605$, $p<0.001$). Family support had a moderate positive relationship ($r=0.417$, $p<0.001$), while education factors had a strong negative relationship ($r=-0.650$, $p<0.001$). Economic factors also had a moderate negative relationship with early marriage ($r=-0.453$, $p<0.001$). Conclusion: All independent variables showed a significant relationship with early marriage. Therefore, interventions to reduce early marriage need to be focused on increasing access to education, economic empowerment, and family awareness of the negative impacts of early marriage. Key words: Young marriage, own will, economic factors, family factors.

Introduction

Marriage that is carried out prematurely or at an age considered too young contradicts the laws governing marriage and is referred to as underage marriage (Ningtias, 2022). Actions prohibited by both religion and law are inherently unfavorable for individuals; in this context, underage marriage inevitably leads to negative consequences for the couples involved (Halli & Biradar, 2021). The adverse outcomes associated with underage marriage include an increased likelihood of divorce, as couples who marry young often lack sufficient maturity in terms of age and cognitive development, making them highly susceptible to conflicts that eventually lead to separation. This is largely due to the biological and psychological immaturity of underage spouses, and such marriages also pose significant health risks for young brides (Paul et al., 2023; Marphatia et al., 2017; Handayani, 2023).

In the literature, an ideal marriage is characterized by the competency and maturity of the couple, as well as adequate material preparation (Utami, 2019). Although there is no absolute standard for determining marriage readiness, a woman is generally considered mature at 18 years of age, while a man is deemed mature at 20 years (Paul et al., 2023). However, this differs from the provisions of Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage, which permits marriage at 19 years for

men and 16 years for women (Ningtias, 2022). Additionally, if either party has not yet reached 21 years, they must obtain written parental or guardian consent as a prerequisite for marriage (Sari & Sunarti, 2019). For brides under the age of 16, a court permit is required (Melati, 2021). According to the Indonesian Civil Code, legal adulthood for specific matters begins at 18 years; however, the Marriage Law sets the minimum marriageable age for women at 16 years (Utomo & Sutopo, 2020). Meanwhile, the Child Protection Law No. 23 of 2002 explicitly defines adulthood as beginning at 18 years. Therefore, marrying before the age of 18 constitutes a violation of Law No. 23 of 2002 (Putra & Burhanusyihab, 2023).

The prevalence of early marriage in Sidamanik is influenced by various factors that compel individuals to marry young. In AFD Bahbutong, many believe that once a person is deemed mature and ready, marriage is appropriate regardless of age. The widespread incidence of early marriage is primarily driven by the low level of education among females, often rooted in economic hardships that prevent families from affording higher education or even completing secondary school (Sweeney, 2002). For many parents, early marriage is perceived as the best solution to alleviate their financial burdens (Suryani & Kudus, 2022; Susilo et al., 2021).

A portion of the community in AFD 2 Bahbutong marries while still in school, interrupting their education as a consequence of early marriage. From a different perspective, this practice produces numerous negative outcomes, such as the fragility of young marriages observed in Desa Pisang, where many fail to sustain their unions. Immaturity in problem-solving skills, especially regarding financial management, serves as a primary trigger for conflict, often resulting in divorce (Piorkowski, 2008; Margulies, 2001; Donohue, 1992).

Individuals around 18 years of age remain vulnerable to marriage due to insufficient mental readiness and physical capacity (Zahra et al., 2021). This practice is prevalent in many regions worldwide. According to a 2007 United Nations report, approximately 72 million women globally were married before turning 18 years old.

Interviews with the Sidamanik Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) recorded that, in the past two years, there were nine cases of early marriage involving females aged 16–18 and three involving males aged 18–19. Most cases were attributed to parental influence, where marrying off their children was perceived as a means to reduce the family's financial responsibilities (Erica et al., 2021). An interview with one couple revealed that economic pressures were the primary reason behind early marriage, with the aim of alleviating their families' financial burdens. Family influence plays a dominant role in the decision-making process for young girls in AFD 2 Bahbutong, where marriage is often seen as a solution to financial constraints. Similarly, an interview with a 16-year-old girl revealed that her parents arranged her marriage due to their inability to continue financing her education. This phenomenon is indicative of broader economic and educational challenges in Desa Pisang.

Based on these considerations, the author is motivated to conduct further research under the title "Factors Influencing Early Marriage in the Community of AFD 2 Bahbutong, Sidamanik Sub-District, Simalungun Regency."

Methods

This research employs a descriptive analytical design with a cross-sectional approach. The study focuses on a one-time observation of both independent and dependent variables without any subsequent follow-up. It aims to examine the influence of self-determination, family or parental support, educational background, economic conditions, and social media exposure on the prevalence of early marriage within the community of AFD 2 Bahbutong, Sidamanik District, Simalungun Regency, at a single point in time without additional monitoring after data collection.

The population for this research includes all young couples residing in AFD 2 Bahbutong, Sidamanik District, Simalungun Regency, during the period of 2023–2024, totaling 130 couples. Using the Lemeshow two-proportion formula, a sample size of 97 participants was determined. The sample was selected through an accidental sampling technique. The independent variables assessed in this study are self-will, family or parental support, education, and economic factors, while the dependent variable is early marriage.

The study utilizes both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected directly from respondents, whereas secondary data were sourced from the Sidamanik Office of Religious Affairs (KUA). Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire as the research instrument. The questionnaire employed a closed-ended format, providing respondents with predefined answer choices for each question. All variables were measured on a Likert scale, and data were gathered through a self-administered Google Form, following a detailed explanation from the researcher. Data analysis comprised univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses. The bivariate analysis aimed to examine the relationships between pairs of variables, employing the chi-square test to assess statistical associations.

Result and Discussion

Based on the results of the study, the distribution of respondents' characteristics is presented in the table below:

Table 1. Respondents' Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Husband Age		
18 Years	3	3
19 Years	68	70
20 Years	26	27
Total	97	100
Wife's Age		
16 Years	43	44
17 Years	28	29
18 Years	26	27
Total	97	100
Occupation		
Laborer	44	45,4
Farmer	27	27,8
Tra	26	26,8
Total	97	100

Based on the table above regarding respondents' characteristics in terms of the husband's age, most respondents were 19 years old, with a frequency of 68 respondents (70%), followed by those aged 20 years with 26 respondents (27%), and 18 years with 3 respondents (3%). The age distribution of the participants falls within the category of healthy reproductive age. In terms of the wife's age, the majority of respondents' wives were 16 years old, comprising 43 respondents (44%), while 28 respondents (29%) were 17 years old, and 26 respondents (27%) were 18 years old. Regarding the occupation of the wives, most respondents were laborers, accounting for 44 respondents (45.4%), followed by farmers with 27 respondents (27.8%), and traders with 26 respondents (26.8%).

Univariate Analysis

Based on the results of the univariate test conducted, the distribution of the results of the univariate analysis test will be presented in the form of a table below:

Table 2. Univariate Analysis

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Self-Will Factors		
High	33	34
Enough	29	30
Low	35	36
Total	97	100
Social Factor & Family Support		
Good	62	64
Enough	22	23
Less	13	13
Total	97	100
Economic Factor		
Good	5	5
Enough	9	9
Less	83	86
Total	97	100
Educational History Factor		
SD	39	40
SMP	30	31
SMA	28	29
Total	100	100
Young Marriage		
Young Marriage	23	24
Not Young Marriage	74	76
Total	97	100

Based on the results of the univariate analysis presented in the table, it can be observed that a significant proportion of respondents demonstrate a low level of self-will regarding the desire for early marriage, comprising 35 respondents (36%). Although managing household responsibilities after marriage is an individual duty, parental involvement remains essential in providing support, as many young couples lack experience in managing both children and household matters independently. A majority of respondents, totaling 62 individuals (64%), reported receiving strong family and social support in navigating early marriage. Early marriage is often perceived by many as immature due to the couple's young age, with the responsibilities of marriage requiring careful consideration and preparation. Parental blessing is a critical aspect of marriage, as parents play a pivotal role in an individual's life. One prominent reason for early marriage stems from parental influence, wherein children of parents who married early are likely to adopt similar patterns due to ingrained familial concepts and practices.

In terms of economic factors, the majority of respondents fall within the category of lower economic status, accounting for 83 respondents (86%). This study indicates that many respondents do not have a stable monthly income, lack secondary income sources, and possess inadequate financial savings. These findings were derived from responses to the questionnaire. Regarding education, most respondents attained only a basic level of education, with 39 respondents (40%) having completed primary education. This distribution indicates that a majority of respondents had some form of formal education. Additionally, 23 respondents (24%) were categorized as engaging in early marriage. The study seeks to explore the relationship between early marriage status and its influencing factors.

Bivariate Analysis

Tabel 3. Bivariate Analysis

Variables	Self-Will Factors	Family Support	Education	Economic Factors	Young marriage
Self-Will Factors	1	0.371	-0.463	-0.366	0.605
Family Support	0.371	1	-0.286	-0.259	0.417
Education	-0.463	-0.286	1	0.254	-0.650
Economic factors	-0.366	-0.259	0.254	1	-0.453
Young Marriage	0.605	0.417	-0.650	-0.453	1

This research employs Pearson correlation statistical analysis to identify the relationship between several independent factors (self-will, family support, education, and economic factors) and early marriage as the dependent variable. Pearson correlation provides information on the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. The correlation coefficient (r) ranges from -1 to +1, where a positive value indicates a direct relationship, while a negative value signifies an inverse relationship. The significance value (Sig. or p -value) is used to determine whether the relationship is statistically significant.

The self-will factor shows a significant positive correlation coefficient of $r = 0.605$ ($p < 0.001$). This correlation demonstrates a strong relationship between self-will and the decision to marry young. The higher an individual's willingness to marry, the more likely they are to engage in early marriage. This finding reflects that young marriage decisions often stem from personal desire, despite other contributing factors. This result aligns with the study by Rahman et al. (2015), which indicated that self-will is a primary cause of early marriage.

Family support also exhibits a significant positive relationship with early marriage, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.417$ ($p < 0.001$). Although this relationship is not as strong as that of self-will, it suggests that family support or pressure, particularly from parents, plays a significant role in encouraging early marriage. Family support can include blessings or social encouragement that reinforce an individual's decision to marry at a young age. This finding concurs with Arista's (2019) research, which found a correlation between family support and early marriage.

The education factor reveals a significant negative relationship with early marriage, with a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.650$ ($p < 0.001$). This correlation is among the strongest in this study, indicating that higher educational attainment decreases the likelihood of early marriage. Higher education often provides a better understanding of the adverse impacts of early marriage and broader economic and career opportunities. This finding is consistent with Widiatmoko et al.'s (2019) research, which indicated that educational levels influence marriage decisions. The lower an individual's education, the higher the risk of early marriage.

Economic factors have a significant negative relationship with early marriage, with a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.453$ ($p < 0.001$). This relationship suggests that poorer economic conditions tend to increase the risk of early marriage. Families in low economic circumstances may view marriage as a means to alleviate financial burdens or provide economic stability for their daughters. Individuals living in poverty are more likely to marry early, as evidenced by Widiantara & Yuhan's (2019) study, which demonstrated the impact of poverty on early marriage practices.

The correlation values in this research provide insights into the strength of the relationships between independent variables and early marriage. The strong positive correlation of self-will ($r = 0.605$) and the strong negative correlation of education ($r = -0.650$) indicate that these two variables have the most significant impact. Meanwhile, family support and economic factors exhibit moderate relationships, with correlation values of $r = 0.417$ and $r = -0.453$, respectively.

All relationships in this study are significant at the $p < 0.001$ level, meaning there is less than a 1% probability that these results occurred by chance. This finding demonstrates that the independent factors examined (self-will, family support, education, and economic factors) are statistically associated with early marriage. Therefore, interventions targeting these factors could be implemented to reduce early marriage rates.

Conclusion

The statistical findings indicate that early marriage is a phenomenon influenced by a combination of individual (self-will), familial (family support), social (education), and economic (financial condition) factors. With education and economic status acting as protective factors that can reduce the risk of early marriage, these results underscore the critical importance of policies aimed at empowering women through education and enhancing economic welfare. This statistical analysis supports the conclusion that early marriage is the outcome of a complex interplay of factors, necessitating a multidimensional approach to address it effectively.

It is imperative to enhance access to education and improve its quality, particularly for girls, as a means of mitigating the risk of early marriage. Additionally, economic empowerment programs for underprivileged families are essential, including skill development training and financial capital assistance, to alleviate the economic pressures that drive early marriage. Educational campaigns about the adverse impacts of early marriage, delivered through social media, seminars, and family counseling, are also crucial to raising public awareness. The government should strengthen the enforcement of marriage age regulations and engage community and religious leaders in reshaping social norms that perpetuate early marriage. This multidimensional approach is expected to significantly reduce the prevalence of early marriage.

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