

POVERTY AS A CAUSE OF EARLY MARRIAGE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Background: Early marriage is a marriage contract which is held for children under the age of applicable regulations. 1 of 5 children in Indonesia is married. The number of women aged 20-24 years old who were married before the age of 18 in 2018 were estimated to reach 1.220.900 and this number put Indonesia in 10 countries with the highest absolute number of child marriage in the world. **Methods:** The method used in this research was literature review by compiling 10 journals based on the inclusion criteria. **Results:** A number of socioeconomic and cultural factors such as education, adolescent pregnancy, and poverty affected early marriage. Poverty was the main driver of child marriage on women in developing countries. **Conclusions:** A higher poverty level increased the probability of girls to be a young bride significantly. The issue of poverty and low education level cannot be eradicated instantly, and would need persistent and comprehensive planning and regulations.

Keywords: Child marriage, Reasons of child marriage, factors of child marriage

INTRODUCTION

Family problems mostly emerge from the lack of preparedness before marriage, physically or psychologically. Physical and psychological maturity is measured from an individual's age. Therefore, early marriage is an interesting issue for most people. The definition of marriage according to the 1st article of Law Number 1 Year 1974 regarding marriage is a physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife with the aim of forming a happy and eternal family (household) based on the Supreme Lordship. The phenomenon of child marriage or often called early marriage is a social phenomenon which happens often especially in Indonesia (Yunianto, 2018).

Istiqomah, et al (2023)

According to the Ministry of Health in 2022, early marriage is a marriage contract which is held for children under the age of applicable regulations. The Law Number 16 Year 2019 regarding the Change of the Law Number 1 Year 1974 regarding marriage states that a marriage is only permitted if the bride and groom are aged at least 19 years old.

In developing countries, it is estimated that 1 out of 7 girls marry before the age of 15 and 38% of them were married before the age of 18 (Ahonsi et al., 2019). According to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2020), in 2018, 1 out of 9 girls is married in Indonesia. Women aged 20-24 years old who were married before the age of 18 in 2018 were estimated to reach 1.220.900 and this number put

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Indonesia in one of 10 countries with the highest absolute child marriage number in the world.

Children who are forced to marry or in certain conditions have to get married under the age of 18 years old would have a higher vulnerability in education access, quality of health, violence victim potential, and living in poverty. Child marriage will impact not only the married children, but also the newly born babies in the future and would also have a potential to cause intergenerational poverty (UNICEF, 2020). The research of Khairanis (2019) obtained the data that 80% of respondents were from lower middle class families with average family expenses of less than Rp1.360.000 a month. Based on the issue, the writer aims to conduct a research regarding poverty as a cause of early marriage.

METHODS

Design

The design used in this research was literature review.

Eligibility Criteria

The inclusion criteria for articles in this literature review research included: 1) Articles in English; 2). Publications dated 2019-2023 (last 5 years); 3). Being the main research; 4). Has a correlation with early

marriage. The exclusion criteria of this research included: 1). Publications dated before 2019; 2). Researches deviating from the observed topic; 3). Researches not focusing on early marriage. Every article identified were read thoroughly and assessed for relevance with the review in accordance with the inclusion criteria where the article has to provide an information regarding poverty as a cause of early marriage.

Source

Literature search was done starting from February to April 2023 using electronic database Google Scholar dated 2019 to 2023.

Search

Keywords utilized included “early child marriage” and “early marriage”. Only articles in English which has been accepted well were included in the review. Protocols for literature review were followed systematically, including: citations, theoretical basis, methodology, objectives, and conclusions. The search yielded 20.900 articles.

Study Selection

The review was done in four steps using Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-analysis (PRISMA) flow diagram (Figure 1).

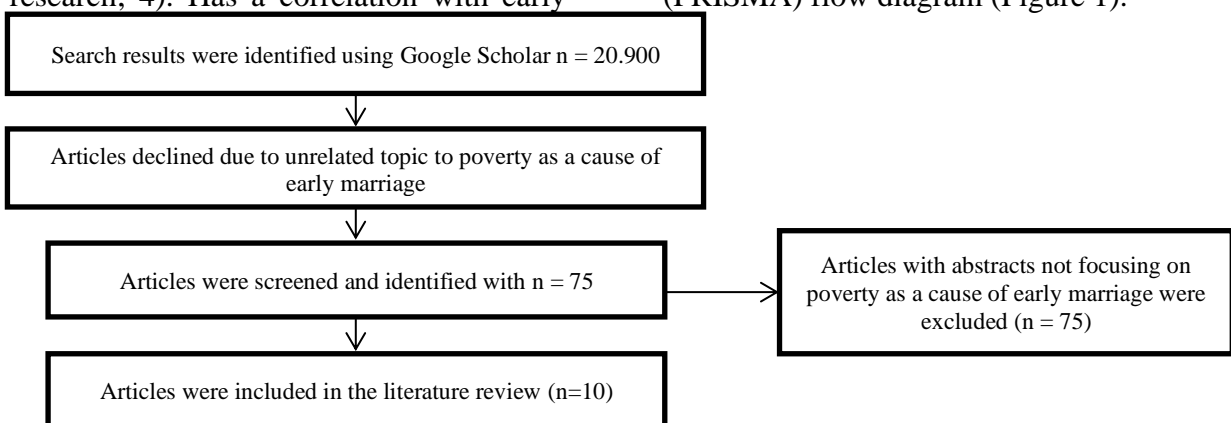


Figure 1. Study Selection Based on The PRISMA Flow Chart

The first step was initial search which yielded 20.900 using Google Scholar. The second step, abstract was examined according to inclusion criteria. 75 based on the topics regarding poverty as a cause of

early marriage. The third step, the writer chose 10 journals to be reviewed based on the full text. Reference list of the 10 journals or articles is presented in Table 1.

Data Analysis



Selection process was done using PRISMA diagram approach in Table 1. The writer analyzed literatures in this review which focused on poverty as a cause of early marriage, presented in Table 1.

RESULTS

This literature review identified 10 articles in accordance with the inclusion criteria. The research done by Ahonsi *et al* (2019) showed that 1 out of 5 women were married before the age of 18 and the maximum age of marriage is 24 years old. Rahayu and Wahyuni (2020) stated the prevalence of early marriage in Indonesia reaches 16.36%, 46.61% of which who were married before the age of 18 did not complete mandatory 9 years of basic education and 52.35% of women who were married early do not have health insurance card. Moreover, the research done by Murphy-Graham *et al* (2020) showed that

financial reasons could force girls to drop out of schools and lead them to early marriage.

Talukder *et al* (2020) stated in their research that early marriage is a major social issue in Bangladesh. The research showed a number of demographic factors, including women education, partner's education, religiosity, wealth, and geographical location that affect the prevalence of early marriage. It is also supported by the research of Paul and Chouhan (2020) which showed that 40% of the respondents were married before the age of 18, and more than ¼ of them did not have formal education, and belonged to the poor group. This is further supported by the study of Adekoya and Sokunbi (2021) which showed that there is a bi-directional causality between early marriage and poverty, as well as low income and early marriage.

Table 1. Study of Poverty as A Major Factor in Early Marriage

No.	Author (s) Year	Purpose of Study	Methods (Design, Subject, Variable, Instruments, Analysis)	Main Finding
1.	Babatunde Ahonsi, Kamil Fuseini, Dela Nai, Erika Goldson, Selina Owusu, Ismail Ndifuna, Icilda Humes, Placide L. Tapsoba (2019)	Examine the predictors, norms and practices surrounding child marriage using frequencies and logistic regression methods and thematic analysis.	D: Multiple-method approach of quantitative and qualitative data. S: Women's file of 2014 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS), qualitative data of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) country program support regions (Central, Northern and Greater Accra) in 2016 V: Predictors, norms, and practices surrounding early marriage I: - A: Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)	Various socioeconomic and cultural factors such as education, teenage pregnancy and poverty influence child marriage. Household economic status appeared to be significantly related to early marriage. It is done in order to escape from poverty and amass some wealth from their husband.
2.	Raaj Kishore Biswas, Jahidur Rahman Khan, Enamul Kabir (2019)	Identify the influence of socioeconomic factors on child marriage trend in Bangladesh	D: Correlational S: Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) data from 2004 to 2014 V: Socioeconomic factors of child marriage I: Cumulative Link Mixed Models (CLMM) A: Bivariate analysis	86% of the sampled women were married before the age of 18. Residents living in the rural areas consider marrying off their daughters in an early age as a profitable way to get income.



No.	Author (s) Year	Purpose of Study	Methods (Design, Subject, Variable, Instruments, Analysis)	Main Finding
3.	Ayako Kohno, Teeranee Techasrivichien, S. Pilar Suguimoto, Maznah Dahlui, Nik Daliana Nik Farid, Takeo Nakayama (2020)	Identify the key factors that influence girls to marry early.	D: Meta Synthesis S: 12 final filtered studies found from electronic database V: Human insecurity and conflict; legal issues; family values and circumstances; religious beliefs; individual circumstances, beliefs, and knowledge; social norms I: Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) for qualitative research A: Thematic synthesis	One of the factors which encourage early marriage to parents who live in the slums was financial constraints. The parents perceived that the girls would become the responsibility of their husbands who would take care of them financially.
4.	Ayako Kohno, Maznah Dahlui, Nik Daliana Nik Farid, Razitasham Safii, Takeo Nakayama (2020)	Explore the factors leading to child marriage in Sarawak state, Malaysia	D: Exploratory qualitative study S: 22 women who were married before the age of 18 in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia V: Health risk behaviour; family poverty; family disharmony I: Semi-structured interview guide A: Thematic analysis	Early marriage was done to reduce the financial burden of the girls' parents. Poverty and school dropouts also lead to early marriage.
5.	Ayako Kohno, Maznah Dahlui, Nik Daliana Nik Farid, Siti Hawa Ali, Takeo Nakayama (2019)	Examine individual, familial, community and societal issues surrounding the reasons for child marriage in Kelantan, Malaysia	D: Qualitative study S: 18 women of reproductive age (18-44 years old) that were married before the age of 18 V: Immaturity in decision-making, family poverty, religious and cultural norms I: Semistructured interview A: Thematic analysis	Family poverty was an issue that affected the women's decision to get married at a very young age. Family poverty is connected to child marriage in two subthemes: child marriage to reduce financial burden and leaving school due to poverty.
6.	Erin Murphy-Graham, Alison K. Cohen., Diana Pacheco Montoya (2020)	Examine intersections between schooling, child marriage, and adolescent pregnancy	D: Longitudinal design S: 684 rural female youth V: Transition to Adulthood Characteristics; Schooling Characteristics; Educational Attainment; Sociodemographic Characteristics; Household Characteristics I: Quantitative research from 2008 to 2010 and data from 2016 survey A: Mixed-Methods Analytic Approach	School dropouts were caused by financial reasons which then lead to early marriage.
7.	Wulansari Dyah Rahayu, Heni Wahyuni (2020)	Analyze the influence of early marriage on monetary poverty in Indonesia	D: Longitudinal design S: 766 married women aged 15 and older V: Monetary poverty; early marriage; level of education; age; place of residence; unemployment; household size I: Logit and probit regression models A: Comprehensive quantitative method	The prevalence of early marriage in Indonesia has reached 16.36 percent. 46.61 percent of those who were married before the age of 18 did not complete mandatory 9 years of basic education.



No.	Author (s) Year	Purpose of Study	Methods (Design, Subject, Variable, Instruments, Analysis)	Main Finding
8.	Tsui-o Tai, Chin-Chun Yi, Chia-Hua Liu (2019)	Examine factors associated with early marriages in Taiwan and the subsequent risks for negative outcomes in family life and career trajectories	D: Descriptive statistics S: 2.970 respondents from Taiwan Youth Project Research V: Family socioeconomic status of origin at Wave I; Family structure; Egalitarian gender attitudes at Wave I; Gender; Age; Location of school at Wave I; Education; Work status prior to marriage; Sexual experience before 18 I: Data from Taiwan Youth Project A: Multivariate analyses	Sufficient financial support from parents has beneficial impact on the offsprings, and may further lead young adults to avoid early marriage.
9.	Ashis Talukder, Muhammad M. Hasan, Shaharior R. Razu, Zobayer Hossain (2020)	Explore the factors associated with the prevalence of early marriage among female teenagers in Bangladesh	D: Cross-sectional study S: 2014 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) data V: Women's education; partner's education; religion; wealth index; division I: - A: Binary logistic models	Possession of wealth is one of the important predictors of early marriage. Poverty is a significant factor for girls' early marriage.
10.	Adenuga Adekoya, Gbenro Sokunbi	Examine the link between early marriage and poverty in Nigeria.	D: Correlational research S: Annual data from 1970 to 2017 V: Poverty rate; early marriage, secondary education; low-income rate; financial development; social welfare I: - A: Granger causality, Autoregressive Distributed Lagged Model	The result showed that there is a bi-directional causality between early marriage and poverty, which confirms the endogeneity in the model tested. The current values of poverty are affected by past values of early marriage and vice versa. Similarly, a bi-directional causality exists between low income and early marriage.

DISCUSSION

Various socioeconomic and cultural factors such as education, adolescent pregnancy, and poverty influence early marriage (Ahonsi *et al.*, 2020; Talukder *et al.*, 2020; Tai *et al.*, 2019; Kohno *et al.*, 2020a; Kohno *et al.*, 2020b., Kohno *et al.*, 2019; Murphy-Graham *et al.*, 2020., Adekoya dan Sokunbi, 2021). Poverty is the main driver of early marriage on women in developing countries. Early marriage often happens with the background of parents who wish to improve their family's economic welfare. For poor families, most girls are considered an economic burden and marriage is regarded as a solution to

free themselves from poverty (UNICEF, 2020; Ahonsi *et al.*, 2020).

Poor family condition makes a girl considered to be an economic burden, therefore child marriage is viewed as the only solution to relieve the burden (UNICEF, 2020; Talukder *et al.*, 2020). Residents living in rural areas in Bangladesh consider marriage as a profitable initiative by marrying off their daughters in an early age, which is not the only economic way out for the metropolitan dwellers where more opportunities of income exist. Moreover, the act of dowry is more common in rural areas compared to urban areas (Biswas *et al.*, 2019).



The effort to eradicate early marriage has to be geared toward girls so that they can still attend schools and empower girls economically through vocational trainings (Ahonsi *et al.*, 2020). According to the findings, Talukder *et al* (2020) suggests a greater attention from the government to construct suitable regulations, such as comprehensive planning of spreading education nationwide and increasing awareness through social mobilization.

CONCLUSION

One of the important factors which influences early marriage is low economic level. Higher poverty level means lower public welfare and higher poverty level significantly increase the probability of girls to marry at a young age. The root cause and hardships that arise from early marriage cannot be eradicated easily. Poverty and low education level cannot be eradicated instantly and will need persistent and comprehensive planning and regulations. In order to gradually move girls out of poverty, higher education or entrepreneurship would also be needed.

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