

A Descriptive Analysis of Adolescent Girls Affected by Child Marriage: Empirical Evidence from Tasikmalaya, Indonesia

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Abstract

Child marriage is widely recognized as a violation of children's rights, yet adolescents in many rural areas remain highly vulnerable. Data from the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in the 2024 "Indonesian Youth Statistics Report" indicate that 21.49% of young people in Indonesia marry at the age of 18 or younger, 18.55% marry within the 16–18 age group, while 2.39% marry before the age of 16. Despite extensive global research, limited empirical evidence exists on the lived experiences of adolescent girls in rural Indonesia, particularly in West Java. This study explores the experiences of adolescent girls impacted by child marriage in Sukaharja Village, Sariwangi, Tasikmalaya, Indonesia. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document review. Five purposively selected adolescent girls, all of whom had undergone unregistered religious marriages, served as key informants. Data were analyzed thematically to identify key patterns and insights. Findings indicate that child marriage is linked to socioeconomic vulnerability and low educational attainment, driven by premarital pregnancy, social shame, and customary sanctions. Consequences include school dropout, lack of formal certification, social withdrawal, and uncertain futures. Community perceptions varied, influenced by local customs, social media, and limited reproductive health education. These findings highlight the need for coordinated interventions, including dissemination of Law No. 16/2019,

establishment of child protection forums, and development of child-friendly village initiatives, providing evidence-based strategies to protect adolescents in rural Indonesia.

Keywords: *Adolescent Girls, Child Marriage, Child Protection, Indonesia*

Abstrak

Pernikahan anak secara luas dianggap sebagai pelanggaran hak anak, namun remaja di banyak daerah pedesaan tetap sangat rentan. Data dari Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) Indonesia dalam "Laporan Statistik Pemuda Indonesia" tahun 2024 menunjukkan bahwa 21,49% pemuda di Indonesia menikah pada usia 18 tahun atau lebih muda, 18,55% menikah dalam kelompok usia 16-18 tahun, sedangkan 2,39% menikah sebelum usia 16 tahun. Meskipun terdapat banyak penelitian global, bukti empiris mengenai pengalaman hidup remaja perempuan di pedesaan Indonesia, khususnya di Jawa Barat, masih terbatas. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pengalaman remaja perempuan yang terdampak pernikahan anak di Desa Sukaharja, Sariwangi, Kabupaten Tasikmalaya, Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan tinjauan dokumen. Lima remaja perempuan dipilih secara purposive sebagai informan utama; semuanya telah mengikuti pernikahan agama yang tidak tercatat secara resmi. Data dianalisis secara tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola dan wawasan kunci. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pernikahan anak terkait dengan kerentanan sosial-ekonomi dan rendahnya tingkat pendidikan, yang dipicu oleh kehamilan sebelum menikah, rasa malu, dan sanksi adat. Dampaknya meliputi putus sekolah, tidak memiliki sertifikat formal, menarik diri dari interaksi sosial, dan masa depan yang tidak pasti. Persepsi masyarakat bervariasi, dipengaruhi oleh adat lokal, media sosial, dan terbatasnya pendidikan kesehatan reproduksi. Temuan ini menekankan perlunya intervensi terkoordinasi, termasuk sosialisasi UU No. 16/2019, pembentukan forum perlindungan anak, dan pengembangan inisiatif desa ramah anak untuk melindungi remaja di pedesaan Indonesia.

Kata kunci: *Remaja Perempuan, Pernikahan Anak, Perlindungan Anak, Indonesia*

A. Introduction

Marriage is one of the oldest social institutions and serves a fundamental function in human life. From a human rights perspective, marriage is regarded as an individual's right to form a family, procreate, and achieve a more stable and prosperous life¹. Furthermore, marriage is not merely understood as a transition into a new life stage but also as an emotional and social institution that contributes to psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and long-term happiness². Nevertheless, this right is not normatively fully applicable to minors, who lack the biological, psychological, and social maturity necessary to enter into marital life³.

Child marriage has been shown to generate a range of negative consequences, including risks to reproductive health, pregnancy-related complications, psychosocial developmental challenges, and the loss of educational opportunities⁴. This situation illustrates that the practice

¹ A Halil Thahir and Nadlifatul Husna, "Upaya Pencegahan Meningkatnya Pernikahan Dini Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19: Studi Pendampingan Pengabdian Masyarakat Di Desa Ngetos Kabupaten Nganjuk," *Abdimas Indonesian Journal* 1, no. 2 (2021): 113–31, <https://doi.org/10.59525/aij.v1i2.77>.

² Simona Rasciute, Paul Downward, and Nick Simmons, "Valuation of Subjective Wellbeing and the Role of Marital Status: Linear versus Ordinal Estimators," *Economic Modelling* 123 (2023): 106260, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econmod.2023.106260>.

³ Suiqiong Fan and Alissa Koski, "The Health Consequences of Child Marriage: A Systematic Review of the Evidence," *BMC Public Health* 22, no. 1 (2022): 309, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-12707-x>.

⁴ Muh. Yunan Putra and Mijratun Fitriani, "Dampak Perkawinan Di Bawah Umur Terhadap Keharmonisan Rumah Tangga," *SANGAJI Jurnal Pemikiran Syariah Dan Hukum*, 2024, 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.52266/sangaji.v8i1.2626>.

of child marriage is not merely a private family matter but a structural issue intertwined with gender inequality, poverty, and educational disparities ⁵.

Data from the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in the 2024 “*Indonesian Youth Statistics Report*” indicate that 21.49% of young people in Indonesia marry at the age of 18 or younger ⁶. Of this figure, 18.55% marry within the 16–18 age group, while 2.39% marry before the age of 16 ⁷. These numbers demonstrate that the practice of child marriage remains widespread and has not yet been addressed systematically. Reports from BPS, PUSKAPA, and UNICEF (2020) paint an even more concerning picture, revealing that approximately one in nine girls in Indonesia marry before the age of 18, with an estimated total of 1,220,900 women aged 20–24 having been married as children ⁸. These data position Indonesia among the ten countries with the highest absolute number of child marriages globally.

According to data from the West Java Provincial Office for Women’s Empowerment, Child Protection, and Family Planning (DP3AKB) in 2023, there were 4,198 cases of marriage dispensation recorded in the province. Tasikmalaya Regency emerged as one of the areas with the highest number of dispensations, with Sariwangi District, particularly Sukaharja Village, serving as the main locus. Data from the Tasikmalaya Regency Office of Religious Affairs (KUA) indicate that Sukaharja Village recorded 78 cases of child marriage, the highest in the district, followed by Lingga Sirna and Jayaratu Villages. These figures suggest an average of 6–7 child marriage cases per month, highlighting that this phenomenon has become a recurring and entrenched social pattern.

One factor frequently associated with the high prevalence of child marriage is the marriage dispensation mechanism, a legal exception that permits minors to marry with parental consent and approval from the court or the Ministry of Religious Affairs ⁹. The granting of such dispensations is often driven by concerns over potential social stigma, out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and economic pressures, which lead families to feel incapable of sustainably supporting their children ¹⁰. These findings align with common patterns across many regions in Indonesia, where cultural, moral, and economic factors converge, shaping child marriage as a solution perceived by families as the “safest” option.

To date, there remains a research gap concerning a deep understanding of the lived experiences of adolescent girls who marry early, particularly regarding family dynamics, social pressures, the motivations behind the decision to marry, and community responses to the phenomenon ¹¹.

⁵ Ewa Batyra and Luca Maria Pesando, “Trends in Child Marriage and New Evidence on the Selective Impact of Changes in Age-at-Marriage Laws on Early Marriage,” *SSM - Population Health* 14 (2021): 100811, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100811>; Aryohaji Istyawan, “Kemiskinan Perdesaan Dan Perkotaan: Sebuah Literature Review,” *AKADEMIK: Jurnal Mahasiswa Humanis* 5, no. 2 (May 2025): 973–986, <https://doi.org/10.37481/jmh.v5i2.1365>.

⁶ BPS, “Statistik Pemuda Indonesia 2024,” 2024, <https://www.bps.go.id/id/publication/2024/12/31/b2dbaac4542352cea8794590/statistik-pemuda-indonesia-2024.html>.

⁷ BPS.

⁸ BPS, PUSKAPA, and UNICEF, “Prevention of Child Marriage: Acceleration That Cannot Wait,” 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/indonesia/sites/unicef.org/indonesia/files/2020-06/Prevention-of-Child-Marriage-Report-2020.pdf>.

⁹ Muhammad Iqbal and Rabiah Rabiah, “Penafsiran Dispensasi Perkawinan Bagi Anak Di Bawah Umur (Analisis Beberapa Putusan Mahkamah Syar’iyah Aceh),” *El-Usrah Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 3, no. 1 (2020): 101, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v3i1.7708>.

¹⁰ Ribhan Abd M Aso, Hilal Malarangan, and Sahran Raden, “Alasan Dispensasi Nikah Usia Dini (Studi Kasus Di Pengadilan Agama Palu),” *Familia Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 1, no. 2 (2020): 140–62, <https://doi.org/10.24239/familia.v1i2.14>.

¹¹ Selsa Ananda, Ulfah Fajarini, and Yusran Ilyas, “Analisis Penyebab Pernikahan Dini Pada Remaja Perempuan Di Desa Nangelasari Tasikmalaya (Studi Kasus : Desa Nangelasari Kec. Cipatujah)” (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2025); Soemiyati, *Hukum Perkawinan Islam Dan Undang-Undang Perkawinan* (Liberty

Accordingly, this study is specifically designed to depict the empirical conditions of vulnerable girls who experience child marriage in areas with high prevalence, focusing on Tasikmalaya Regency, Indonesia. The study aims to provide a descriptive understanding of the causal factors, the forms of impact, and the patterns of social response that emerge within the communities where they reside. The findings are expected to contribute to the academic discourse while serving as a basis for the formulation of child protection policies and social interventions.

B. Literature Review

Overview About Adolescents

Adolescence represents a transitional period between childhood and adulthood. During this stage, individuals experience developmental changes as they move toward maturity. These changes encompass physical, hormonal, psychological, and social transformations. Adolescence is therefore understood as a phase marked by significant biological, psychological, and social transitions¹².

The term adolescence originates from the Latin word *adolescere*, which means “to grow into maturity.” In a broader sense, the concept includes mental, emotional, social, and physical maturation¹³. Hurlock further describes adolescence as a transitional period during which individuals undergo both physical and psychological shifts from childhood to adulthood¹⁴.

The developmental trajectory of adolescence is commonly divided into three distinct stages. The early adolescent stage, typically occurring between the ages of 12 and 15, is characterized by rapid physical and sexual maturation. During this period, adolescents begin to develop interest in the opposite sex and may experience heightened sexual arousal as part of their normative biological development. The next stage, known as middle adolescence, generally spans from ages 15 to 18. Adolescents in this phase tend to seek validation and acceptance from their peer groups. This stage is also marked by increasing self-reflection and, for many, a sense of confusion or instability regarding personal identity as they navigate new social roles and expectations. The final stage, late adolescence, occurs between the ages of 18 and 21. This period is typically associated with greater psychological stability, increased independence, and the gradual establishment of a more coherent sense of self as individuals transition toward adulthood.

Adolescent development encompasses a series of interconnected changes across biological, psychosocial, cognitive, and moral–spiritual domains. Puberty marks the beginning of biological maturation, reflected in rapid physical growth, the emergence of secondary sexual characteristics, and increased physiological capacity. These shifts influence how adolescents perceive themselves and adapt to their changing bodies. Psychosocially, adolescence represents a critical period of identity formation. As Erikson describes, young people navigate emotional adjustments, peer influences, and uncertainties surrounding their sense of self. Social relationships thus play a central role in shaping their emerging identity.

Cognitively, adolescents enter a stage of abstract and logical thinking, as proposed by Piaget. They begin evaluating information critically, considering possibilities, and drawing reasoned conclusions, abilities that enhance reflective and future-oriented thinking. Moral and spiritual development also becomes more pronounced. Adolescents start to understand ethical responsibilities, consequences of actions, and distinctions between right and wrong, in line with

Yogyakarta, 2006); Muhamad Reza Atqia et al., “Upaya Pencegahan Pernikahan Dini Melalui Seminar Pra-Nikah Se-Desa Cibeber Cikalong Tasikmalaya,” *Journal of Community Dedication* 4, no. 4 (2024), <https://adisampublisher.org/index.php/pkm/article/view/858>.

¹² Vivien Chan and Jennifer Derenne, *Transition-Age Youth Mental Health Care*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-62113-1>.

¹³ Tara L Kuther, *Child and Adolescent Development in Context* (SAGE Publications, 2019).

¹⁴ Barbara M Newman and Philip R Newman, *Theories of Adolescent Development*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1016/c2017-0-03324-4>.

Kohlberg's framework. This stage often includes deeper questioning of values and spiritual beliefs, contributing to the formation of a more coherent moral and spiritual identity.

Overview About Marriage

According to the Indonesian Law Number 1 of 1974 on Marriage, Article 1 defines marriage as "a physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife, established with the purpose of forming a happy and enduring family based on the belief in God Almighty." This definition emphasizes that marriage must encompass both a physical and emotional-spiritual union, rather than relying solely on one aspect. The reference to an "enduring family" implies a lifelong union that ideally continues until death, without separation or divorce.

Marriage is also understood as a binding agreement between a man and a woman, wherein the marital contract represents a sacred covenant to establish a family. The sacredness of this agreement is viewed from its religious and the moral obligations it entails ¹⁵. Other scholarly sources similarly describe marriage as a long-term emotional and legal commitment between a man and a woman, involving intertwined economic and social responsibilities, mutual dependency, physical closeness, and sexual relations ¹⁶. These perspectives highlight that marriage is not merely a legal arrangement but a multi-aspect partnership shaped by emotional, social, and relational.

In essence, marriage can be understood as a socially regulated union between a man and a woman, within which rights, responsibilities, emotional partnership, and economic cooperation are organized with the aim of forming a family and achieving mutual happiness and affection. Marriage thus represents not only a legal structure but also a relational framework that governs shared life commitments.

Several underlying reasons motivate individuals to enter marriage ¹⁷. One of the primary motivations is commitment, as marriage symbolizes a formal declaration of one's dedication to the relationship. It also establishes a one-to-one relationship, enabling individuals to express affection, respect, and emotional intimacy exclusively with their partner. Through marriage, individuals gain companionship and shared experience, allowing them to overcome loneliness by engaging in mutual support and everyday collaboration.

The Conceptual Framework of Child Marriage

Child marriage is defined as any formal marriage or informal union before the age of 18, constituting a fundamental violation of human rights that threatens the lives, well-being, and futures of girls worldwide. This practice is widely recognized as a form of gender-based violence that exposes children to physical, sexual, and psychological harm while simultaneously curtailing their education, autonomy, and prospects for a safe adulthood ¹⁸.

Conceptualizing child marriage requires an understanding of its multidimensional drivers. Psaki et al. (2021) developed a simplified yet comprehensive conceptual framework that identifies five interrelated drivers of child marriage: poverty and economic factors, lack of opportunity, social norms and attitudes, lack of agency, and fear of girls' sexuality and pregnancy

¹⁵ Soemiyati, *Hukum Perkawinan Islam Dan Undang-Undang Perkawinan*.

¹⁶ Sofi Ohlsson-Wijk, Maria Brandén, and Ann-Zofie Duvander, "Getting Married in a Highly Individualized Context: Commitment and Gender Equality Matter," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 84, no. 4 (2022): 1081–1104, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12849>; Alexandra-Andreea Ciritel, "Sexual Intimacy and Relationship Happiness in Living Apart Together, Cohabiting, and Married Relationships: Evidence from Britain," *Genus* 78, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41118-022-00178-2>; Sharon Blake and Astrid Janssens, "Through 'thick and Thin' as Long as It Is Healthy: Shared Meanings of Commitment in Long-Term Couple Relationships, Whether Married or Not," *Journal of Family Studies* 29, no. 2 (2021): 595–611, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2021.1952889>.

¹⁷ John W Santrock, *Life-Span Development* (McGraw-Hill Education, 2019).

¹⁸ World Bank, "The Persistent Challenge of Child Marriage: A Global Overview," 2025, <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/data-stories/child-marriage>.

¹⁹. Within this framework, social norms and poverty are positioned as the core distal conditions that underpin the remaining three proximate drivers, with their interactions manifesting differently across community, household, and individual levels.

Building on this foundation, Melnikas et al. (2022) introduced the concept of "marriageability" as an additional theoretical lens, proposing that the pressure to capitalize on a girl's perceived marriageability before it declines — encompassing both eligibility and desirability on the marriage market — offers a critical explanation for why child marriage persists across diverse cultural contexts ²⁰.

At the macro level, child marriage is consistently rooted in gender inequality and sustained by a convergence of poverty, harmful social norms, insecurity, and barriers to education, with girls facing multiple intersecting forms of marginalization being most at risk and least likely to receive support after marriage ²¹.

C. Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to obtain an empirical and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of child marriage in Sukaharja Village, Sariwangi District, Tasikmalaya Regency. The qualitative descriptive approach was selected because it enables the researcher to portray the condition of the research setting naturally, holistically, and authentically within its underlying social context ²².

Through this approach, the researcher is able to interpret the social realities experienced by young girls who marry early not merely as numerical data but as a series of complex life experiences shaped by culture, economic circumstances, family structures, and social pressures within their environment. Unlike quantitative methods that reduce social phenomena to measurable variables, a qualitative descriptive approach captures the voices, emotions, and lived meanings of the informants themselves — allowing patterns of stigma, shame, social withdrawal, and normative coercion to emerge organically from the data rather than being imposed through predetermined categories.

This methodological choice is particularly justified in the context of child marriage research, where the most consequential dimensions of the phenomenon — including psychological distress, family power dynamics, and the enforcement of customary sanctions — are inherently experiential in nature and cannot be adequately captured through numerical representation alone.

To maintain conceptual clarity, several key terms are defined in advance. "Child marriage" refers to "*marriage undertaken by individuals below the minimum legal age established by the state, which, in the research site, frequently occurs through religious marriage arrangements (nikah siri)*". Meanwhile, the term "adolescent" refers to "*individuals aged 13 to 18 who have married religiously and reside in Sukaharja Village, Tasikmalaya, Indonesia*". These conceptual boundaries are essential to ensure analytical accuracy and relevance in data collection.

The study was conducted across two types of settings: open and closed. Drawing on Rustanto (2013), open settings refer to public or communal spaces in which social life unfolds organically and without researcher-imposed boundaries, allowing for the observation of everyday interactions, community dynamics, and normative behaviors that collectively shape the practice of child marriage ²³. Closed settings, by contrast, refer to bounded, private spaces — in

¹⁹ Stephanie R Psaki et al., "What Are the Drivers of Child Marriage? A Conceptual Framework to Guide Policies and Programs," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 69, no. 6 (2021): S13-----S22, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2021.09.001>.

²⁰ Andrea Melnikas et al., "A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Child Marriage, Marriage Markets, and Marriageability," *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 26 (2022): 78–87, <https://doi.org/10.29063/ajrh2022/v26i12s.9>.

²¹ UNICEF, "Child Marriage Interventions and Research from 2020 to 2022," 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/media/136646/file/CRANK-Evidence-Review-Child-Marriage-2023.pdf>.

²² Bambang Rustanto, *Penelitian Kualitatif Pekerjaan Sosial* (PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2015).

²³ Rustanto.

this study, the informants' homes — where access is restricted and interactions are more intimate, enabling the researcher to conduct in-depth interviews that elicit personal narratives, emotional experiences, and subjective meanings that would be unlikely to surface in more public environments ²⁴.

Data sources consist of both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from adolescent girls in Sukaharja Village who had married young and were selected as key informants based on the research focus. Secondary data include administrative documents such as family registries, records from the Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), and other relevant documents that support the demographic and social context of the research site. The use of both data types allows for strong and comprehensive triangulation, reinforcing the validity of the findings.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique that identifies participants based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives ²⁵. The criteria included adolescent girls who married as minors, were willing to be interviewed, and were capable of providing detailed accounts of their experiences. This technique enabled the researcher to gather relevant, context-rich, and nuanced information.

Given that all informants were minors who had experienced child marriage, strict ethical protocols were observed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from both the participants and their parents or legal guardians prior to data collection, ensuring full awareness of the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time.

All interviews were conducted with empathy, patience, and cultural sensitivity to minimize the risk of re-traumatization, and a safe, non-judgmental environment was maintained throughout each session. Confidentiality was strictly upheld, with pseudonyms used to protect the identity of all participants.

Data were collected through three primary methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis ²⁶. In-depth interviews were used to explore informants' subjective experiences related to the motivations behind early marriage, household dynamics, family relationships, and their personal perceptions of marriage. Observations were conducted to obtain a direct understanding of the community's sociocultural conditions, including customary norms that shape the practice of child marriage. Documentation was used to complement and verify the information gathered through interviews and observations.

Data validity was ensured through credibility checks, which included prolonged engagement in the field, increased researcher diligence in understanding the data, and triangulation across sources and methods. These procedures strengthened the reliability and accuracy of the data, ensuring that they genuinely represented the social realities of the participants.

Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of four stages: (1) data collection, (2) data reduction through sorting, coding, and organizing findings, (3) data display in narrative or thematic matrix form, and (4) conclusion drawing, which encompasses both substantive and reflective insights ²⁷. This analytical model provided a systematic framework for processing field data and generating deep, structured, and meaningful interpretations of the practice of child marriage and the lived experiences of adolescent girls.

²⁴ Rustanto.

²⁵ Ian Shaw and Nick Gould, *Qualitative Research in Social Work*, 2001, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209694>.

²⁶ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan R&D* (Alfabeta, 2023).

²⁷ Uwe Flick, *Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis* (SAGE Publications, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446282243>.

D. Result and Discussion

Informant Characteristics

The informants in this study consisted of five adolescent girls. They were selected using purposive sampling, based on criteria aligned with the objectives of the research. A detailed description of the informants is presented in the table below:

Tabel 1. Informant Characteristics

N.	Informant	Age	Education
1	YM	17	Senior high school
2	EN	15	Junior high school
3	ST	16	Junior high school
4	TK	15	Junior high school
5	FS	16	Junior high school

Based on the data presented in the table, all informants fall within the adolescent age range, specifically between 15 and 17 years old. More precisely, two informants were 15 years old, another two were 16 years old, and one informant was 17 years old. This age composition indicates that all participants were still in an early stage of developmental maturity, psychologically, socially, and cognitively. Such conditions contribute to various limitations in their decision-making capacity, including decisions related to the marriages they entered.

In terms of education, only one informant was enrolled in senior high school (SMA), while the remaining four were still attending junior high school (SMP). These differences in educational attainment reflect variations in their level of understanding and exposure to information about reproductive health, marriage, and the socio-economic consequences of early marriage. More broadly, the fact that most informants were still within the period of compulsory education highlights that their marriages occurred alongside developmental tasks that should have been fulfilled through formal schooling.

All informants currently reside with their parents. Two main reasons account for this circumstance. First, several informants chose to remain in their parental homes while awaiting the legal registration of their marriages, as their unions were conducted solely through religious procedures (nikah siri) and therefore lacked legal validity. Second, others were waiting for the birth of their child before moving in with their spouse or establishing an independent household. These decisions were also shaped by economic constraints and their continued dependence on family support.

Regarding marital status, all informants were married solely through religious ceremonies, without possessing an official marriage certificate recognized by the state. The absence of legal documentation carries several potential administrative and social implications, such as limited access to public services, difficulties in registering the birth of their children, and heightened vulnerability to marginalization within legal and social protection systems²⁸. These findings are crucial as they reveal a significant gap between prevailing marriage practices in the community and the legal framework, which may ultimately affect the long-term well-being of adolescents involved in such marriages.

²⁸ Sriprapha Petcharamesree, *Birth Registration, Legal Identity and Impacts on Migration in ASEAN, IMISCOE Research Series*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-25748-3>; Rodziana Mohamed Razali, Tamara Joan Duraisingam, and Nessa Ni Xuan Lee, "Digitalisation of Birth Registration System in Malaysia: Boon or Bane for the Hard-to-Reach and Marginalised?," *Journal of Migration and Health* 6 (2022): 100137, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmh.2022.100137>.

Family Backgrounds

Tabel 2. Family Background

N.	Father	Age	Profession	Education	From Informant
1	TK	45	Farmer	Junior high school	YM
2	AN	43	Farmer	Elementary school	EN
3	SS	47	Farmer	Elementary school	ST
4	KK	48	Labourer	Elementary school	TK
5	UU	46	Labourer	Elementary school	FS

Based on the table, the parents of the informants were between 43 and 48 years old. In terms of education, four parents had completed only primary school, while one had attained a junior secondary school education. This relatively low level of educational attainment reflects limited access to formal education during their formative years and broadly illustrates the families' socioeconomic conditions.

With respect to employment, three parents worked as farmers and the remaining two as labourers. This concentration within informal-sector occupations indicates that all parents rely on livelihoods characterized by unstable and often insufficient income. Such economic precarity reinforces the classification of these families as belonging to lower socioeconomic strata. This interpretation is further supported by the fact that all families received government social assistance, including the Family Hope Program (PKH) and the Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT) scheme. The receipt of these benefits serves as an additional indicator of the families' financial vulnerability.

Low levels of education and unstable employment among parents are closely associated with a heightened risk of child marriage ²⁹. Parents with limited educational backgrounds generally possess lower awareness of the health, social, and psychological risks linked to early marriage. Furthermore, unstable livelihoods and minimal earnings may drive families to consider child marriage as an adaptive strategy to reduce economic burdens or to achieve social stability through formalized marital bonds ³⁰.

These findings align with Delyka et al. (2023) research, which demonstrates that greater employment stability and improved economic conditions among parents enhance their knowledge and awareness of the consequences of child marriage, thereby increasing their capacity to prevent such practices ³¹.

Beyond structural factors, cultural traditions and social norms also play a significant role. In the local context where the informants reside, it is a well-established practice that when an unmarried adolescent girl becomes pregnant, the most common response is to marry the couple religiously through a local religious leader ³².

This mechanism is perceived as an effective means of preventing social conflict and avoiding violations of customary norms that prohibit pregnancy outside marriage. Although widely accepted as a community-level conflict-resolution practice, such religious marriages are often not accompanied by official state registration. Consequently, this practice illustrates how customary norms can reinforce and normalize child marriage within the community

²⁹ Batyra and Pesando, "Trends in Child Marriage and New Evidence on the Selective Impact of Changes in Age-at-Marriage Laws on Early Marriage."

³⁰ Psaki et al., "What Are the Drivers of Child Marriage? A Conceptual Framework to Guide Policies and Programs."

³¹ Merry Delyka, Chrisdianti Yulita, and Putri Oktariani Valentina, "Hubungan Pendidikan Orang Tua Dan Pekerjaan Orang Tua Dengan Pengetahuan Remaja Puteri Tentang Pernikahan Dini Di Kelurahan Petuk Katimpun," *Jurnal Surya Medika* 9, no. 3 (2023): 140–45, <https://doi.org/10.33084/jsm.v9i3.6480>.

³² Maryse C Kok et al., "Drivers of Child Marriage in Specific Settings of Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia – Findings from the Yes I Do! Baseline Study," *BMC Public Health* 23, no. 1 (2023): 794, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-15697-6>.

Reasons for Entering Child Marriage

The findings of this study indicate that adolescents' decisions to enter marriage at a young age do not occur spontaneously but rather emerge as consequences of interrelated social, cultural, and moral factors embedded within their daily lives. Field observations reveal that the practice of child marriage in Sukaharja Village is influenced not only by the adolescents' individual circumstances but also by strong social pressures, deeply rooted customary norms, and longstanding community-based mechanisms for resolving perceived moral transgressions.

Within this context, child marriage is frequently viewed as the most "acceptable," "honorable," or "safe" solution for families and the broader community when faced with situations considered to violate established social norms. Based on in-depth interviews with the five informants, several primary factors were identified as driving their entry into child marriage, as discussed below:

1. Pregnancy Outside of Marriage

Pregnancy outside of marriage is perceived as a social emergency by both families and the broader community. Within the cultural context of Sukaharja Village, premarital pregnancy is regarded as a source of shame (a family disgrace) and a violation of prevailing moral norms. Consequently, families tend to make swift decisions to marry off their daughters as a means of restoring family honor and preventing potential social conflict. This dynamic is reflected in the account of informant "YM," who described how her pregnancy was immediately addressed by her parents through an unregistered religious marriage:

"I suddenly stopped menstruating, then the midwife said I was pregnant. So yes, I had an 'accident' (got pregnant), and my parents immediately married me to him (my husband) through a religious ceremony by the pak lebe here, just like that."

This narrative illustrates that the decision to marry was not made by the adolescent herself but rather by her parents, who act as the primary authority within the family. Under such circumstances, child marriage becomes a problem-solving mechanism considered the most appropriate and expedient option, particularly to avoid the spread of social stigma within the community³³

The practice of arranging a religious marriage without official registration also reveals a gap in the child protection system. Premarital pregnancy among adolescents often coincides with limited access to sexual education, insufficient parental supervision, and minimal communication regarding reproductive health³⁴. These combined factors contribute to the occurrence of premarital sexual activity that ultimately results in unintended pregnancy.

2. Shame and Social Pressure from Neighbors

Beyond premarital pregnancy, all informants in this study also reported that shame toward the surrounding community constituted a major factor driving child marriage. Social norms in Sukaharja Village strongly emphasize the preservation of family honor, which is regarded as a collective value that must be protected. When an adolescent girl becomes pregnant prior to marriage, the issue is not viewed solely as a personal matter but as a collective disgrace that reflects poorly on the entire family³⁵.

³³ Yanuar Ilham et al., "Intrapersonal Communication about the Meaning of Early Marriage in Bandung City," *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi* 11, no. 1 (2023): 31, <https://doi.org/10.24198/jkk.v11i1.43186>.

³⁴ Ruth Flanagan, "Nobody Ever Told You, 'Actually, This Feels Great'": Religion Informed Sexual Health Education and Barriers to Developing Sexual Literacy.," *International Journal of Educational Research Open* 7 (2024): 100343, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2024.100343>.

³⁵ Yvette Ruzibiza, "'They Are a Shame to the Community ...' Stigma, School Attendance, Solitude and Resilience among Pregnant Teenagers and Teenage Mothers in Mahama Refugee Camp, Rwanda," *Global Public Health* 16, no. 5 (2020): 763–74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2020.1751230>.

Within this context, social pressure from neighbors and local community leaders plays a significant role in shaping the family's decision to marry off their adolescent child. Premarital pregnancy is perceived as a violation of social decorum, which can trigger gossip, stigma, and negative judgments from the community³⁶. To avoid social conflict and protect the family's reputation, child marriage is often considered the fastest and most acceptable solution to conceal the perceived dishonor. This dynamic is illustrated in the account of informant "ST," who described how social shame and community stigma influenced her situation:

"At that time, I was already three months pregnant, so I just stayed at home because I was ashamed of the neighbors here, especially since this pregnancy was considered a disgrace for my family."

The statement demonstrates that adolescent girls experience not only internal pressures such as fear and uncertainty but also external pressures in the form of strong social judgment. Premarital pregnancy is seen as highly visible and difficult to hide, prompting families to resort to marriage as a means of restoring social reputation, even if such a decision compromises the adolescent's developmental needs and educational future.

These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that child marriage is often shaped by strong collective norms, where communities use marriage as a mechanism to restore family honor and avoid social stigma³⁷. From a sociological perspective, marrying off a child to avoid shame reflects elements of a "shame culture," in which behavior is judged primarily based on community approval or disapproval³⁸.

3. Customary Sanctions

All informants in this study also indicated that the presence of customary sanctions constitutes a significant factor driving child marriage among adolescents aged 15–18. Within the cultural context of Sukaharja Village, customary norms hold strong regulatory authority over social behavior, including the conduct of adolescents. When a young woman and man are discovered engaging in sexual relations outside of marriage, the act is viewed as a violation of communal values of decency and morality³⁹.

Such violations are not framed merely as individual misconduct but as transgressions that disrupt social order and tarnish the honor of both the family and the wider community. Consequently, couples involved in such acts are often subjected to sanksi adat (customary sanctions), which require them to marry immediately, either through formal civil marriage or through unregistered religious marriage (*nikah siri*). These sanctions function as a community-based mechanism to restore normative balance, prevent potential social conflict, including mob retaliation, and avert prolonged communal shame. This dynamic is clearly reflected in the account provided by informant "TK":

³⁶ Ernestina Coast et al., "If She's Pregnant, Then That Means That Her Dreams Fade Away': Exploring Experiences of Adolescent Pregnancy and Motherhood in Rwanda," *European Journal of Development Research* 33, no. 5 (2021): 1274–1302, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-021-00438-5>.

³⁷ Ayomide Oluseye, Philippa Waterhouse, and Lesley Hoggart, "I Have to Pretend That I Don't Care': Stigma Management among Unmarried Young Mothers in South-Western Nigeria," *Global Public Health* 19, no. 1 (2023): 2291699, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2023.2291699>.

³⁸ Christiana A Alex-Ojei, Clifford O Odimegwu, and Lorretta F C Ntoimo, "A Qualitative Investigation into Pregnancy Experiences and Maternal Healthcare Utilisation among Adolescent Mothers in Nigeria," *Reproductive Health* 20, no. 1 (2023): 77, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-023-01613-z>.

³⁹ Sherria Ayuandini et al., "Contemporary Pathways to Adolescent Pregnancy in Indonesia: A Qualitative Investigation with Adolescent Girls in West Java and Central Sulawesi," *PLOS Global Public Health* 3, no. 10 (2023): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0001700>.

“Rather than being confronted or arrested by the community for engaging in conduct considered immoral, we decided to comply with the customary sanction by marrying in a religious ceremony. Even though I was pregnant, the sanction still had to be followed.”

The findings above reflect a broader phenomenon of legal pluralism deeply embedded in the Indonesian socio-legal landscape. Indonesia operates within three overlapping legal systems — state law, religious law, and customary law — in which customary law functions not merely as a regulated object but as an alternative legal authority governing private life. In this context, Law No. 16 of 2019, which sets a minimum marriage age of 19, is weakly implemented in many localities because it is not integrated with customary institutions, leading communities to adopt strategies such as unregistered religious marriage as a form of pragmatic compliance ⁴⁰.

The case of Sukaharja Village exemplifies how sanksi adat operates as a parallel normative order that effectively supersedes state law in practice. In various Indonesian communities, customary legal standards frequently conflict with statutory norms, wherein local mechanisms hold greater social authority over marriage decisions than formal legal provisions. Therefore, addressing child marriage cannot rely solely on legal approaches; rather, it requires an integrative strategy that simultaneously engages state, customary, and religious authorities to ensure meaningful protection for adolescent girls at the community level ⁴¹.

Impacts of Child Marriage

Child marriage is a social phenomenon that not only violates the fundamental rights of adolescents but also produces multidimensional consequences that affect their present and future lives. Findings from this study reveal that the five informants who entered marriage between the ages of 15 and 18 experienced a range of significant repercussions impacting their educational trajectories, psychosocial well-being, and future life planning.

These consequences arise from their limited physical, emotional, and economic readiness, as well as from the social and cultural pressures embedded within their community context. Within the setting of this study, child marriage frequently occurs in situations marked by shame, social stigma, and customary expectations. These circumstances restrict the ability of adolescent girls to exercise autonomy, leaving them with little choice but to comply with decisions imposed by their families or community elders.

Such constrained decision-making subsequently leads to a series of challenges once the marriage has taken place. Based on the research findings, four major impacts were consistently reported by the informants: school dropout, the absence of formal educational certificates, social withdrawal as a result of stigma and pressure, and the loss of opportunities to plan for their future in a meaningful and optimal way. The following sections provide a detailed explanation of each of these consequences.

1. School Dropout

One of the most evident consequences of child marriage experienced by all informants is school dropout. The five informants entered marriage between the ages of 15 and 18, a period during which they were still enrolled as students. Unplanned pregnancy significantly hindered their ability to continue their education, particularly due to the social pressure and sense of shame associated with premarital pregnancy. This situation was further exacerbated by prevailing community perceptions that adolescent pregnancy constitutes a violation of social norms, rendering their presence at school inappropriate or embarrassing. This dynamic is reflected in the statement of informant “EN,” who explained:

⁴⁰ Yenny Febrianty et al., “Integration of Customary Marriage Law into Positive Law as Justice in Social and Legal Context,” *Pena Justisia Media Komunikasi Dan Kajian Hukum* 24, no. 1 (2025): 1390–1410, <https://doi.org/10.31941/pj.v24i1.5891>.

⁴¹ Putri Aiman Thalib and Pieter Everhardus Latumeten, “Legal Problems of Minor Marriage in the Perspective of Customary, Islamic, and Civil Law,” *Asian Journal of Engineering Social and Health* 4, no. 7 (2025): 1035–51, <https://doi.org/10.46799/ajesh.v4i7.592>.

"I was already three months pregnant and stayed at home because I was ashamed in front of the neighbors. This pregnancy was considered a disgrace to the family. So I left school and did not continue anymore."

The statement illustrates that the decision to leave school was shaped not only by physical conditions but also by strong social expectations and stigmatization within the community. Furthermore, their partners, who were initially schoolmates, eventually became their husbands, reinforcing the interruption of their education as their roles shifted toward becoming wives and soon-to-be mothers.

Dropping out of school has long-term implications for young women who experience early marriage, including restricted access to employment opportunities, lower levels of economic literacy, and heightened dependency on their spouses or extended families. These findings align with previous studies asserting that child marriage remains a major determinant of school discontinuation among adolescent girls, particularly in rural settings where social norms are strongly embedded ⁴².

2. Lack of Educational Certificate

Another significant consequence of child marriage is the permanent interruption of formal education, resulting in the informants' inability to obtain school completion certificates. All informants reported that after entering marriage at an early age, they immediately decided to discontinue their education. Some withdrew during junior high school, while others left during senior high school. This decision was largely driven by feelings of shame about returning to school while pregnant, coupled with strong stigma from both the school environment and the surrounding community. This situation is illustrated in the statement of informant "YM," who noted:

"I no longer attended school because I was pregnant and felt ashamed in front of my schoolmates, especially since the pregnancy was considered a disgrace to the school and the community here."

This expression demonstrates that the termination of their education was influenced not only by internal factors, such as psychological discomfort and shame, but also by external pressures, including social judgment and culturally embedded norms that view adolescent pregnancy as a moral transgression.

The absence of a junior or senior high school certificate carries serious implications for the informants' future. Without such credentials, their opportunities to secure formal employment become extremely limited. They are also unable to pursue higher education or participate in vocational training programs that require official educational documentation ⁴³. Consequently, this condition restricts their potential to improve their families' economic well-being and increases the likelihood of remaining trapped in cycles of poverty ⁴⁴.

⁴² Asma Pourtaheri et al., "Prevalence and Factors Associated with Child Marriage, a Systematic Review," *BMC Women s Health* 23, no. 1 (2023): 531, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-023-02634-3>; Sari Kistiana, Desy Nuri Fajarningtiyas, and Yulina Eva Riany, "Assessing Child Marriage in Indonesia: A Call for Educational Empowerment," *Jurnal Kesehatan Masyarakat* 20, no. 3 (2025): 512–22, <https://doi.org/10.15294/kemas.v20i3.14145>.

⁴³ Shireen Kanji et al., "The Impact of Early Marriage on the Life Satisfaction, Education and Subjective Health of Young Women in India: A Longitudinal Analysis," *The Journal of Development Studies* 60, no. 5 (2023): 705–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2023.2284678>.

⁴⁴ Maya Fitria et al., "Education Role in Early Marriage Prevention: Evidence from Indonesia's Rural Areas," *BMC Public Health* 24, no. 1 (2024): 3323, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-20775-4>.

3. Social Withdrawal and Self-Isolation at Home

The social and psychological consequences of child marriage are further reflected in the behavior of all five informants, who chose to isolate themselves at home throughout their pregnancies. Each informant reported that they avoided leaving the house for approximately nine months, from the moment they learned they were pregnant until the period leading up to childbirth. Their reluctance to go outside was primarily driven by profound feelings of shame and fear of being ridiculed by peers and neighbors.

The social pressure experienced by the informants cannot be separated from the prevailing cultural norms in the community, which regard pregnancy outside of marriage as a serious violation of values related to decency, morality, and family honor. These norms reinforce the negative stigma attached to adolescents experiencing early pregnancy, prompting them to withdraw from their social environment as a way to avoid judgment and public scrutiny. This dynamic is captured in the statement of informant "EN," who explained:

"After I was three months pregnant, I stayed only at home because I was ashamed in front of the neighbors here, especially since the pregnancy was considered a disgrace to the family."

This narrative indicates that the experience of self-isolation was not merely a spontaneous emotional reaction but also a deliberate strategy of self-protection in response to intense social pressure⁴⁵. Furthermore, several informants expressed unwillingness to seek antenatal care at health facilities due to fear of encountering acquaintances and becoming the subject of community gossip.

Beyond its psychosocial dimensions, the behavior of self-isolation and avoidance of social exposure documented among the informants carries serious medical implications, particularly in relation to the utilization of Antenatal Care (ANC) services⁴⁶. Adolescent mothers face heightened reproductive disadvantages due to their physiology not being fully developed, making them vulnerable to pregnancy complications such as anemia, hypertension, preeclampsia, eclampsia, spontaneous abortion, stillbirth, and gestational diabetes⁴⁷.

When shame and fear of social stigma discourage young mothers from leaving their homes, access to routine ANC visits is severely compromised, leaving potentially life-threatening conditions undetected and unmanaged. In low- and middle-income countries, complications from pregnancy and childbirth remain a leading cause of death among girls aged 15–19 years, and one of the primary strategies to reduce this mortality rate is the utilization of antenatal care services that monitor maternal health status during pregnancy⁴⁸.

This form of social withdrawal carries serious implications for both maternal and fetal health, as the absence of prenatal check-ups increases the risk of preventable complications during pregnancy. Psychologically, prolonged self-isolation may trigger stress, anxiety, and feelings of loneliness, thereby exacerbating the vulnerabilities already faced by adolescents experiencing early marriage and early pregnancy⁴⁹.

⁴⁵ Lily Verity et al., "Loneliness from the Adolescent Perspective: A Qualitative Analysis of Conversations about Loneliness between Adolescents and Childline Counselors," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 39, no. 5 (2022): 1413–43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558422111121>.

⁴⁶ Psaki et al., "What Are the Drivers of Child Marriage? A Conceptual Framework to Guide Policies and Programs."

⁴⁷ Ratih Virta Gayatri, Yu-Yun Hsu, and Elizabeth G Damato, "Utilization of Maternal Healthcare Services among Adolescent Mothers in Indonesia," *Healthcare* 11, no. 5 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11050678>.

⁴⁸ UNICEF, "Child Marriage Is a Violation of Human and Child Rights,," 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/what-we-do/child-protection/child-marriage>.

⁴⁹ Danah A Alsadoun et al., "Social Isolation among Adolescents and Its Association with Depression Symptoms," *Middle East Current Psychiatry* 30, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s43045-023-00314-4>.

4. Loss of Future Prospects

One of the most fundamental and long-term consequences experienced by all informants following child marriage is the profound sense of losing their future. All five informants expressed that they no longer had a clear vision of their life trajectory after giving birth, largely due to limited educational attainment, lack of skills, and the absence of systemic support that might help them rebuild their life plans.

The absence of educational certificates, resulting from school dropout, significantly restricts their ability to enter the labor market. Without formal qualifications, the informants are unable to access adequate employment opportunities in either the formal or informal sectors, many of which require at least a minimum level of schooling. This situation places them in a position of heightened economic dependency on their husbands or extended families, thereby increasing their overall social vulnerability. This sense of directionlessness is clearly reflected in the statement of informant "FS," who explained:

"I feel wrong and realized everything after the incident. Our future feels dark, bleak, and we don't know where to go in the years ahead. What are we supposed to do after the baby is born when we don't even have a school certificate?"

This narrative illustrates the significant psychological burden borne by adolescents who enter marriage without the necessary mental, social, or economic readiness. Feelings of guilt, regret, and uncertainty experienced by the informants demonstrate that child marriage not only interrupts their education but also disrupts their ability to plan for a future ⁵⁰.

This finding aligns with broader literature indicating that child marriage significantly constrains individual development, particularly among girls, by limiting access to education, employment, and social participation ⁵¹. The inability to envision or plan for the future affects not only the personal well-being of the young mothers but also the quality of life of their children, thereby increasing the risk of perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty.

Perceptions of Early Marriage

Community understanding of the phenomenon of child marriage plays a significant role in shaping patterns of acceptance, legitimacy, and the sociocultural practices that emerge within a particular environment. In rural settings such as Sukaharja Village, perceptions of child marriage are not solely grounded in religious norms but are also influenced by cultural values, social structures, and the evolving dynamics of technological change.

The diversity of community perspectives indicates that child marriage continues to be viewed as a viable solution to various social, moral, and behavioral issues among adolescents, particularly those related to premarital pregnancy. Findings from this study reveal that the community in this area holds three dominant perspectives regarding the occurrence of child marriage: as a form of resolution based on customary tradition, as a consequence of exposure to social media, and as an outcome of limited reproductive education among adolescents. These perspectives do not function independently; rather, they intersect and collectively shape the interpretive framework through which the community responds to cases of child marriage.

⁵⁰ Coast et al., "If She's Pregnant, Then That Means That Her Dreams Fade Away': Exploring Experiences of Adolescent Pregnancy and Motherhood in Rwanda."

⁵¹ Lucy Webb et al., "Psychosocial Health in Adolescent Unmarried Motherhood in Rural Uganda: Implications for Community-Based Collaborative Mental Health Education, and Empowerment Strategies in the Prevention of Depression and Suicide," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 60, no. 3 (2023): 537-51, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13634615221147361>.

1. Resolution Through Tradition

Within the sociocultural context of Sukaharja Village, child marriage is perceived as a traditional mechanism for resolving situations that are believed to threaten family honor and violate prevailing norms of modesty and morality. Premarital pregnancy is regarded as a serious breach of customary and moral values, prompting families to marry off their daughters as quickly as possible, even when they are below the legal minimum age for marriage.

In this setting, early marriage is positioned as the “most appropriate” solution to conceal shame, mitigate potential social conflict, and protect the family from community judgment. This approach illustrates how social pressure and collective shame strongly influence family decision-making, even when such decisions may compromise the child’s future. This perspective is reinforced by the statement of Mrs. YY, a local community figure, who explained:

“Rather than having their neighbors find out that their daughter is pregnant outside of marriage, the family immediately arranges a religious marriage (an unregistered marriage) because she is under 18 years old, and getting a marriage dispensation from the religious court would be far more expensive.”

The statement highlights several key aspects. First, there is a pervasive fear of negative social judgment from neighbors and the wider community. Second, conducting an unregistered religious marriage becomes a practical shortcut to avoid formal procedures perceived as costly and complicated. Third, the decision aligns with the community’s customary expectations and serves to maintain family reputation ⁵².

2. The Impact of Social Media

The shift to home-based online learning over the past several years has significantly increased the use of digital technologies among adolescents. Access to the internet through various devices, such as mobile phones and tablets, not only supports educational activities but also provides students with broader opportunities to explore multiple social media platforms. This situation has increasingly limited the scope of parental and teacher supervision, particularly when adolescents engage with social media beyond educational purposes.

The lack of adult oversight makes young people more vulnerable to exposure to age-inappropriate content, including pornography. This concern was expressed by Mrs. NN, one of the local community leaders, who explained:

“These children, especially those in their teenage years, often try to access social media outside of learning activities. This is beyond the supervision of teachers and parents, and it often becomes a trigger for them to watch pornographic scenes.”

Her statement illustrates that unsupervised exposure to social media can stimulate exploratory information-seeking behaviors among adolescents. Their heightened curiosity, coupled with unrestricted internet access, may lead them toward risky content that is misaligned with their stage of psychosocial development. Such exposure can subsequently contribute to premarital sexual behavior, resulting in unintended pregnancies and, ultimately, child marriage as the chosen form of resolution ⁵³.

⁵² Farida Ulvi Naimah et al., “Internalization of Local Traditions in Child Marriage from the Perspective of Maqasid Al-Ushrah,” *EL-Mashlahah* 14, no. 2 (2024): 237–58, <https://doi.org/10.23971/el-mashlahah.v14i2.7942>.

⁵³ Alia Badrun, None Rikha Putri Nabila, and None Desy Hermayanti, “The Impact of Social Media on Reproductive Health Knowledge among Gen Z,” *Journal of Global Research in Public Health* 9, no. 2 (2024): 135–40, <https://doi.org/10.30994/jgrph.v9i2.544>; Esther Raya-Diez et al., “Risk Factors and Social Consequences of Early Pregnancy: A Systematic Review,” *SAGE Open* 14, no. 3 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241271324>.

3. Lack of Reproductive Health Education

In the current millennial era, adolescents in Indonesia can easily access a wide range of digital content, including pornographic material, through social media platforms. The rapid and unrestricted flow of digital information renders young people highly vulnerable to exposure to content that is inappropriate for their age and level of psychosocial maturity. Under such circumstances, schools are expected to play a more active role in providing comprehensive reproductive health education to their students. This form of education is essential as a preventive measure to protect adolescents from the negative consequences of uncontrolled media exposure.

Although the government has introduced the PIK-R (Youth Information and Counseling Center) program as an educational and support mechanism, its implementation across various regions has not sufficiently addressed the root of the problem. Many adolescents continue to obtain information about sexuality primarily through social media rather than through credible, developmentally appropriate sources. This concern was also expressed by Mr. UU, one of the local community leaders, who stated:

“Sex and reproductive health education is important for children, especially adolescents, to protect them from the negative influence of pornographic exposure that floods social media and is easily accessible to young people today.”

This statement underscores how the absence of proper reproductive health education makes it difficult for adolescents to critically evaluate and interpret the sexual content they encounter online. As a result, they become more susceptible to engaging in risky behaviors that may lead to unintended pregnancies and, ultimately, child marriage as a perceived solution ⁵⁴.

E. Conclusion and Suggestion

The phenomenon of child marriage in Sukaharja Village, Sariwangi District, Tasikmalaya Regency, remains a pressing social issue shaped by the intersecting realities of adolescent vulnerability, family limitations, and community norms. Child marriage primarily involves girls aged 15–17 who are still in school and come from socioeconomically constrained households. Low parental education and unstable occupations, mainly as labourers or farmers, reduce families' capacity to anticipate and manage adolescents' risk behaviours.

Premarital pregnancy, social shame, and customary expectations to resolve the issue through religious marriage emerge as the dominant triggers. These conditions lead to severe consequences: school dropout, loss of future opportunities, social isolation during pregnancy, and psychological distress expressed through confusion and regret. Unmonitored exposure to social media and inadequate reproductive health education further amplifies adolescents' risk of engaging in premarital sexual activity.

The study demonstrates that child marriage is a multidimensional problem requiring coordinated, long-term interventions. Local government commitment is essential to strengthen public awareness and enforcement of Law No. 16/2019 on the legal age of marriage. Community actors — including religious leaders, customary figures, and women's groups — must work collectively to shift norms that normalize child marriage.

Schools are expected to serve as key agents in delivering reproductive health education and promoting continued schooling, while parents must enhance supervision and provide guidance on the risks of early sexual behaviour. Strategic actions include: (1) intensifying dissemination of the marriage-age regulation; (2) establishing Child Protection Forums at the village or district level; (3) developing Child-Friendly Villages that offer safe, supportive

⁵⁴ Tope Michael Ipinimo et al., “Adolescent Sexuality Education, Sexual Debut, and Associated Factors in Nigerian Public Secondary Schools,” *Scientific Reports* 15, no. 1 (2025): 23249, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-06360-8>.

environments for adolescents; and (4) strengthening the role of local health facilities (Puskesmas) in providing anonymous, youth-friendly antenatal care services.

The latter is particularly critical given the findings of this study, which document that social stigma and fear of judgment drive adolescent mothers into self-isolation, deterring them from seeking essential prenatal care and thereby elevating the risks of maternal mortality and stunting among newborns. Through collaborative efforts across government, health, educational, and community sectors, the prevalence of child marriage in Tasikmalaya can be significantly reduced, safeguarding the life trajectories and health outcomes of young people.

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