



Contents lists available at [Journal IICET](#)
JPPi (Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Indonesia)
ISSN: 2502-8103 (Print) ISSN: 2477-8524 (Electronic)
Journal homepage: <https://jurnal.iicet.org/index.php/jppi>



Knowledge of the early marriage in high school adolescents

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Aug 14th, 2024
Revised Sept 04th, 2024
Accepted Sept 13th, 2024

Keyword:

Early marriage knowledge,
High school adolescents,
Knowledge level

ABSTRACT

Early marriage is prevalent among teenagers in Indonesia, leading to school dropouts, increased abortion rates, and higher maternal mortality rate (MMR) and infant mortality rate (IMR). This study aims to assess the knowledge of the early marriage in high school adolescents. This research is a descriptive quantitative study involving a sample of 151 students selected through stratified random sampling. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using bivariate analysis with chi-square test. The study found that more than half of the adolescents (59.6%) have inadequate knowledge about early marriage. Despite this, there was no statistically significant relationship between gender, age, maternal education, or parental income and adolescents knowledge about early marriage ($p > 0.05$). The findings indicate that adolescents have insufficient knowledge about early marriage. This highlights the need for schools to provide targeted education on early marriage. Future research should explore factors contributing to early marriage incidences and evaluate the effectiveness of educational interventions.



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Introduction

Marriage is a lasting bond between husband and wife, aimed at fostering a harmonious, romantic family based on belief in the One Almighty God. Early marriage is a type of marital union in which at least one of the partners is under 18 years old or still enrolled as a student in senior high school (SMA). In other words, marriage is categorized as early if one or both partners are under 18 years old, during their adolescent years (Susyanti and Halim 2020). This practice often has broad and profound consequences, not only for the girls directly involved but also for the children born from such marriages, as well as for the community and society as a whole (Parsons et al. 2015). Research in Brazil has shown a significant negative correlation between teenage pregnancy and school enrollment status, indicating that teenage pregnancy significantly reduces the likelihood of girls remaining in school. Furthermore, early pregnancy increases the risk of abortion, particularly in countries where safe and legal reproductive health services are difficult to access. In this context, many teenagers opt for high-risk illegal abortions due to social or economic pressure not to continue their pregnancies (Cruz et al. 2021).

Research conducted by Suryaningrum et al. (2023) indicates that infant mortality rates (IMR) in districts/cities in Indonesia are statistically significantly influenced by child marriage. Angka kematian ibu di Indonesia tahun 2022 sebesar 3.572, antara lain disebabkan oleh hipertensi, pendarahan, jantung, dan lain-lain (Kemenkes RI 2023). Pregnancy at a young age is often associated with higher rates of maternal mortality and morbidity. Girls aged 10-14 have a fivefold higher risk of death during childbirth compared to those aged 20-24,

with the risk doubling for those aged 15-19. In lower- and middle-income countries, maternal mortality for those under 16 is even higher, exceeding six times the rate for older age groups (Fadlyana and Larasaty 2016). The immature biological anatomy of young girls makes them more vulnerable to complications during childbirth. Pregnancy at a very young age can lead to maternal and infant death, infant disabilities, high blood pressure, premature birth, low birth weight, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and postpartum depression (Anjarwati 2017).

According to Article 7, Paragraph (1) of the Marriage Law of 1974, the minimum age limit for men to marry is 19 years and for women is 16 years. However, with the enactment of Law Number 16 of 2019, the minimum marriage age was changed to 19 years for both men and women. In Indonesia, the rate of early marriage among teenagers reaches 55.38% (BKKBN 2021). Data from the Indonesian Health Survey (2023) shows that in Indonesia, 0.9% of women were married and pregnant before the age of 15, and 25.8% were married and pregnant between the ages of 15-19. Meanwhile, in West Java Province, these figures are 1.0% and 29.7%, respectively, which are higher than the national average. This indicates that Bekasi Regency, which is part of West Java Province, has a higher prevalence of early marriage and pregnancy compared to the national average. These numbers suggest that efforts to prevent early marriage and pregnancy in West Java may require more focused attention and more intensive interventions than in other regions of Indonesia.

Early marriage remains a significant issue in various regions of Indonesia, including Bekasi Regency, where SMA Negeri 2 Cibitung is located. Factors such as educational attainment, knowledge, economic conditions, family influence, cultural norms, mass media, and the social environment contribute to this problem. At SMA Negeri 2 Cibitung, many students lack comprehensive sexual education, leading to limited understanding of the risks associated with early marriage and its impacts on reproductive health. For women under 19, early marriage can result in serious complications during pregnancy and childbirth, including biological, psychological, social, and economic consequences. Additionally, children born to teenage mothers are often at risk of poor nutrition and developmental issues, such as delayed development, anemia, and stunting (Humaira and Kartini 2023; Sekarayu and Nurwati 2021). Addressing these issues within the context of SMA Negeri 2 Cibitung, it is crucial to provide adequate antenatal care and effective education to mitigate the risks associated with teenage pregnancy and improve overall awareness among students (Sari and Astuti 2022). Adolescence is a transitional period marked by physical, emotional, and psychological changes. Adolescents also face risks of changes in biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional aspects. Physical transformation in adolescence includes the onset of puberty and the end of body growth. Cognitive changes in adolescents involve the development of abstract thinking abilities, while socio-emotional changes involve preparations for adulthood, where adolescents begin to consider their surroundings and express emotions through behavior or actions (Ajhuri 2019).

Knowledge is the result of sensory experiences with a particular object. Adolescent knowledge about reproductive health is important to understand the impact and risks of early marriage. Knowledge is the result of experiencing a specific object through the senses. Human senses, including sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, enable these sensory experiences (Notoatmodjo 2014). According to Notoatmodjo, there are six levels of knowledge in the cognitive domain: knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Most adolescents have an understanding of reproductive health, uniting the view that it involves the overall aspects of reproductive health and not just focusing on diseases or disorders. This is consistent with the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of reproductive health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease but also encompassing the functions of the reproductive system and its processes, including sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, and abortions (Onwuachi-Saunders, Dang, and Murray 2019). Reproductive health challenges, especially for women, sometimes arise due to early marriage when the reproductive organs are not yet mature enough to handle pregnancy (Mulyaningsih and Hiola 2020). SMA Negeri 2 Cibitung, located in Bekasi Regency, was selected for this study due to its unique demographic characteristics and reported high rates of early marriage among its students. This school provides a critical context for examining how early marriage affects adolescents in a local setting. Factors contributing to early marriage include educational levels, parental education, economic conditions, cultural norms, and peer influence (Arikhman, Efendi, and Putri 2019).

Early marriage has broad impacts, including biological, psychological, social, economic, and adolescent reproductive health fields. Biologically, early marriage can disrupt the development of immature reproductive organs in children. The psychological impact includes long-term trauma from unprepared sexual relationships. Socially, early marriage can limit adolescent social development (Sardi 2016). The psychological impact of children's unpreparedness for sexual relationships can result in long-lasting inner trauma, which is difficult to heal, and can make children feel isolated and regretful of their life experiences (Satriyandari 2019). Early marriage can limit children's ability to develop freely, as after marriage, adolescents will experience a decrease in social interaction in society, especially among peers of the same age (Khilmiyah 2014). A previous study at

SMK Negeri 1 Limboto showed that knowledge about the impacts of early marriage among adolescent girls was in the "adequate" category, with a percentage of 52.8% (Lihu, Ishak, and Kasa 2019). Research conducted by Afifah and Susilawati (2022) on the knowledge of adolescent girls about the impacts of early marriage in Lempong Village, Jenawi Subdistrict, Karanganyar Regency, found that 68 individuals (40.5%) had adequate knowledge. Preliminary survey interviews with students from SMA Negeri 2 Cibitung, Bekasi Regency, revealed that many students do not receive comprehensive sexual education at school or at home, leaving them with insufficient knowledge about the impacts and risks of early marriage and its health and social consequences. Inaccurate or incomplete information from unofficial sources, such as peers or social media, can influence their views on early marriage. This background led to research on knowledge of the early marriage in high school adolescents.

Method

The type of research used in this study is quantitative research with an analytical observational research design. The research design used is cross-sectional. The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 2 Cibitung, Bekasi Regency, from April to June 2023. The focus of the study is to assess adolescents' knowledge about early marriage, with the variable under investigation being their knowledge level. The population for this study consists of 244 Grade X students at SMA Negeri 2 Cibitung. Stratified random sampling was utilized to ensure representation across different strata of the population. Stratification was based on class sections, as the school is divided into 7 classes for Grade X. Each class was considered a stratum, and a simple random sample was selected from each class (Elvera and Astarina 2021).

This method aims to reflect the diversity within the student population and enhance the accuracy of the findings. The selection criteria included students who were willing to participate, while students who were ill or unable to attend were excluded. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula, which yielded a sample of 151 students. While this approach is commonly used, it is essential to note that this sample size was chosen to balance practical constraints and statistical power. To ensure the sample's representativeness, the allocation of sample size across classes was proportionate to the class sizes. Potential biases, such as non-response bias, were mitigated by following up with students who initially did not respond and by ensuring that the sample selection process was as random as possible.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \quad (1)$$

The allocation of the sample size for each class is determined using the stratified sampling formula.

$$n_i = \frac{N_i}{N} \times n \quad (2)$$

Table 1. Sample Size

Class	Sample size
X IPS 1	$\frac{37}{244} \times 151 = 23 \text{ students}$
X IPS 2	$\frac{36}{244} \times 151 = 23 \text{ students}$
X IPA 1	$\frac{35}{244} \times 151 = 22 \text{ students}$
X IPA 2	$\frac{34}{244} \times 151 = 21 \text{ students}$
X IPA 3	$\frac{34}{244} \times 151 = 21 \text{ students}$
X IPA 4	$\frac{34}{244} \times 151 = 21 \text{ students}$

In this study, data collection was conducted using primary data. Data collection involved the direct completion of questionnaires by 151 respondents. The questionnaire included various statements, including the definition of marriage in item 1, the age limits for marriage in items 2-3, factors causing early marriage in items 6, 7, 9, 10, and 14-16, as well as the impacts of early marriage in items 4, 5, 8, 11, 12, 13, and 17-21. In this questionnaire, assessment was done by assigning a score of 1 if the statement was considered true, and a score of 0 if considered false. After respondents completed the questionnaire, the data were analyzed to obtain relevant results. The research instrument was tested using IBM SPSS Version 27 data processing software. The

instrument has been validated with the highest calculated r-value of 1.00 and the lowest calculated r-value of 0.367. The research instrument has also been tested for reliability with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.957.

Univariate analysis was conducted to describe respondent characteristics, and bivariate analysis using the chi-square test examined the relationship between respondent characteristics and knowledge about early marriage. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Ethics Committee for Health Research of the Faculty of Medicine and Health, Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta, under approval number 110/PE/KE/FKK-UMJ/VI/2023.

Results and Discussions

A study on the characteristics of adolescent in grade X at SMA Negeri 2 Cibitung shows that the majority of respondents are female, comprising 68.9%, while males make up only 31.1%. In terms of age, 16-year-old students dominate with a percentage of 70.9%, while only one student (0.7%) is 14 years old. Consistent with previous research showing that the majority of high school adolescents are 16 years old (Afifah and Susilawati 2022; Isnaini and Sari 2019). Most of the respondents' mothers, 68.9%, have completed senior high school education, and the majority of families have incomes above the Regional Minimum Wage (RMW), accounting for 59.6%. Additionally, it was found that the majority of adolescents have inadequate knowledge about early marriage, with a rate of 59.6% (Table 2).

Table 2. Adolescent Characteristics

Variables	n	%
Sex		
Boys	47	31.1
Girls	104	68.9
Age		
14 years	1	0.7
15 years	37	24.5
16 years	107	70.9
17 years	6	4.0
Mothers education		
College	38	25.2
Senior high school	104	68.9
Junior high school	7	4.6
Elementary school	2	1.3
Family Income		
> Regional minimum wage (RMW)	90	59.6
< Regional minimum wage (RMW)	61	40.4
Knowledge		
Good	61	40.4
Not Good	90	59.6

This study shows that the majority of adolescents have inadequate knowledge about early marriage. These findings align with research conducted by Lihu, Ishak, and Kasa (2019) in Limboto Village, which found that the majority of respondents, 66 individuals (52.8%), had a moderate level of knowledge about the impact of early marriage. This is attributed to the respondents having only a basic understanding of early marriage without a deep comprehension of its effects on reproductive health. Similar research conducted in Malang City also revealed that adolescents have limited knowledge about the impact of early marriage on reproductive health (Putri and Sulistyah 2021). The study by Farikasari and Noorratri (2023) also found that the level of knowledge among adolescents about the impact of early marriage in Camden Village, Sambi Sub-district, Boyolali District, was categorized as sufficient. This is attributed to the lack of socialization efforts regarding early marriage and its effects in the village.

The literature review studies have shown that the majority of adolescents have inadequate knowledge about the risks of early marriage (Supriandi, Rosalina, and Berthiana 2022). This study reveals a significant information gap regarding the risks and consequences of early marriage. These findings highlight the urgent need for more effective educational interventions that can raise adolescents' awareness of the importance of understanding the negative impacts of early marriage, particularly concerning reproductive health and long-term well-being. In a previous study, an intervention using educational videos was implemented to enhance students' knowledge. Educational videos have proven to be an effective method for improving adolescents' understanding

and attitudes regarding the appropriate age for marriage. This method can be utilized to prevent child marriage among teenagers (Meilani et al. 2023).

Knowledge of early marriage was obtained from statements, as shown in Table 3, where the statement most frequently answered correctly by students was "marriage is a physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman," with a response rate of 98.01%. Meanwhile, the statement most frequently answered incorrectly by students was "a baby born to a mother under 19 years of age will have a normal weight," with a response rate of 58.28%.

Table 3. Percentage Distribution of Correct Answers Knowledge of Early Marriage

No	Statement	Value	
		Right	Wrong
1	Marriage is an inner and outer bond between a man and a woman.	98.01	1.99
2	Viewed from a reproductive health perspective, early marriage is a marriage carried out at the age of less than 20 years.	69.54	30.46
3	Marriages between women under the age of 19 do not violate the law.	65.56	34.44
4	Early marriage will reduce the risk of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).	52.32	47.68
5	Early marriage will prevent couples from committing sexual deviations.	53.64	46.36
6	Unpreparedness for early marriage can trigger divorce.	90.73	9.27
7	Marriage at a truly mature age can make the family more harmonious.	85.43	14.57
8	Adolescents who marry young may be at lower risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases in adolescents.	47.68	52.32
9	One of the risks of early marriage is infidelity.	84.77	15.23
10	Getting married at a young age can create a happy family.	72.85	27.15
11	The impact of early marriage is that teenagers get attention from their parents.	70.86	29.14
12	Early marriage will have an impact on the level of family economic welfare.	60.26	39.74
13	Promiscuity will trigger early marriage.	94.70	5.30
14	Unpreparedness for early marriage can result in stress.	92.72	7.28
15	Early marriage does not cause bleeding in the mother giving birth.	73.51	26.49
16	Early marriage can cause depression.	90.07	9.93
17	Early marriage carries a greater risk of young death.	68.21	32.79
18	Early marriage can have an impact on the babies born.	88.08	11.92
19	Babies born to mothers who are less than 19 years old will have normal weight.	50.33	49.67
20	Early marriage will reduce the number of abortions.	41.72	58.28
21	Early marriage risks increasing the maternal mortality rate (MMR).	65.56	34.44

Previous research indicates that the primary source of information influencing adolescents' knowledge about early marriage predominantly comes from the internet, including various social media platforms, educational websites, discussion forums, and online videos (Sianturi, Manik, and Ambarita 2022). Through the internet, teenagers can access a wide range of content, from articles written by experts and tutorial videos to personal experiences shared by other teenagers or adults who have experienced early marriage. This makes the internet a very important and influential tool in shaping their understanding of early marriage.

Table 4 shows the relationship between adolescent characteristics and the level of knowledge about early marriage. It can be observed that there is no significant difference in knowledge of early marriage between male and female students. Both male and female students tend to have inadequate knowledge about early marriage. Regarding age, there is no significant difference in knowledge of early marriage among different age groups. Based on maternal education, mothers with a college education are more likely to have good knowledge about early marriage compared to mothers with other levels of education. However, there is no significant difference in maternal education and knowledge about early marriage. Knowledge about early marriage does not significantly differ between families with incomes above the RMW and those below it. Both families with incomes above and below the RMW tend to have inadequate knowledge about early marriage.

Table 4. Relationship between the Adolescent Characteristics and Level of Knowledge about Early Marriage

Variables	Knowledge				p-value
	N	Good %	N	Not Good %	
Sex					0.854
Boys	20	42.6	27	57.4	
Girls	41	39.4	63	60.6	
Age					0.795
14 years	0	0.0	1	100.0	
15 years	14	37.8	23	62.2	
16 years	45	42.1	62	57.9	
17 years	2	33.3	4	66.7	
Mothers education					0.213
College	20	52.6	18	47.4	
Senior high school	39	37.5	65	62.5	
Junior high school	2	28.6	5	71.4	
Elementary school	0	0.0	2	100.0	
Family Income					0.962
> RMW	37	41.1	53	58.9	
< RMW	24	39.3	37	60.7	

Most respondents at the age of 16 have inadequate knowledge, with 62 respondents. This is in line with Notoadmojo's statement (2014), which suggests that as individuals grow older, their thinking matures, and they become more adaptable. From the research results, it can be inferred that adolescents at the age of 16 should already have maturity in thinking and emotion. Therefore, adolescents at this age should have good results, but in this research, the results are lacking because most respondents are unaware of the impacts of early marriage and do not seek information about it (Rahayu and Santiasari 2017). Previous research shows that there is no gap between theory and reality because the better the adolescents' knowledge, the better their understanding of early marriage, thus reducing the incidence of early marriage (Peni, Lestari, and Prasida 2023). This study indicates that there is no relationship between knowledge about early marriage and students' age.

This study indicates that there is no significant relationship between students' age and their level of knowledge about early marriage. Despite the variations in age among the respondents, their understanding of early marriage remains consistent, suggesting that age alone does not significantly influence their awareness or knowledge on this topic. Research conducted on adolescent girls in a selected community of Rangpur District, Bangladesh, found a significant relationship between the age of adolescent girls and their knowledge of early marriage. The study showed that the older the adolescent girls, the higher their knowledge regarding issues related to early marriage. These findings provide important insights into how age can influence adolescent girls' understanding and awareness of the risks and consequences of early marriage (Zannatul Ferdous and Zeba 2019).

The majority of female respondents have inadequate knowledge, with 63 respondents. This is in line with Hurlock (1998), who states that on average, the thought patterns of females should experience an earlier and more mature period in adolescence at home and at school (1998). Females tend to accept information more quickly and have sufficient knowledge about the impacts of early marriage. Therefore, adolescents at this age should have good results, but in this research, the results are lacking due to inadequate education and knowledge, which affect the thought patterns of young age couples (Rahayu and Santiasari 2017). This study indicates that there is no relationship between knowledge about early marriage and students' gender. This indicates that both female and male adolescents have the same level of knowledge about early marriage.

The majority of mothers with a high school education have inadequate knowledge, with 65 respondents. This is in line with the principles in educational theory, where education plays a role in influencing the level of

knowledge. Education is considered an effort to improve individuals' skills throughout their lives. The higher the level of education of an individual, the easier it is for them to understand and accept the information provided (Notoatmodjo 2003). This study indicates that there is no relationship between knowledge about early marriage and students' mothers' education. In line with previous research showing that parents' educational background is not related to students' knowledge about early marriage at State Islamic Boarding School Al-Maarif 03 Singosari, Malang (Wardani et al. 2024). This may be due to the greater influence of parental involvement in their children's education, supportive parenting styles that stimulate learning interest, and the impact of social and cultural environments, including peer interactions and access to educational resources around the child (Shaban et al. 2020). The study conducted by Ferdous & Zeba (2019), revealed a significant relationship between a mother's education level and the adolescent girls' knowledge of early marriage. The study indicated that the higher the mother's education level, the more likely it is that their daughters will have a better understanding of issues related to early marriage.

This study shows that there is no significant difference between family income above RMW and below RMW on adolescents' knowledge about early marriage. The study by Wardani et al. (2024) showed similar results, where family income was not related to students' knowledge about early marriage. This suggests that regardless of how high or low the parents' income is, it does not influence the students' knowledge about early marriage. Previous research shows that the majority of early marriages are caused by low family economic conditions. Parents who decide to match their children at a young age generally believe that this marriage will reduce the family's economic burden. This consideration arises because they believe that when their children get married, the financial responsibility will shift to their partners. However, this economic impact can also lead to challenges in increasing family income, thus increasing the risk of divorce due to difficulties in overcoming various problems (Khaerani 2019).

This study found that age, gender, maternal education, and family income did not have a significant impact on adolescents' knowledge of early marriage. These findings differ from some previous studies that have shown these demographic factors often correlate with knowledge levels. However, earlier research has also revealed that other factors, such as personal or others' experiences, have a significant influence on the lack of knowledge about the risks of early marriage (Oktavia et al. 2018). This suggests that adolescents' knowledge of early marriage may be more influenced by social context and life experiences than by demographic characteristics. These experiences may include witnessing cases of early marriage in their surroundings or obtaining information from social media, which often serves as a primary source of knowledge for adolescents today. Therefore, more holistic educational interventions, which consider these experiential aspects, may be necessary to improve adolescents' understanding of the risks of early marriage.

Conclusions

The study reveals that the majority of adolescents at SMA Negeri 2 Cibitung, Bekasi Regency, have inadequate knowledge regarding early marriage. Despite this general finding, our analysis shows no significant relationship between demographic factors such as gender, age, mother's education, and parental income with the students' knowledge levels about early marriage. This suggests that the gaps in knowledge about early marriage are widespread across different demographic groups within the study sample. These findings highlight a critical need for enhanced and targeted educational interventions at SMA Negeri 2 Cibitung. Given the lack of significant demographic predictors of knowledge levels, it is essential to implement comprehensive and inclusive sexual education programs that address early marriage and its consequences. Such programs should be designed to engage all students, regardless of their background, to improve their understanding and awareness of the risks associated with early marriage.

Additionally, while the study provides valuable insights into the current state of knowledge among adolescents, it is limited by its cross-sectional design, which does not allow for the exploration of causal relationships or changes over time. Future research could benefit from a longitudinal approach to assess how knowledge evolves with time and the impact of specific educational interventions. Furthermore, a deeper examination of other potential factors influencing adolescents' knowledge, such as peer influences or media exposure, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. In summary, this study underscores the importance of advancing sexual education initiatives at SMA Negeri 2 Cibitung and similar institutions to address gaps in knowledge about early marriage. Implementing targeted educational strategies and conducting further research will be crucial for developing effective interventions and enhancing adolescents' understanding of early marriage and its implications.

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