The relationship between knowledge and adolescents' attitudes towards early marriage

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ABSTRACT

Early marriage has emerged as a critical issue in societal development, especially among adolescents, attracting attention at both international and national levels. With the prevalence of early marriage reaching up to 41.9% in some countries, including Indonesia, this issue demands special attention to mitigate its negative impacts on education, health, and social welfare of adolescents. This study aims to analyze the relationship between adolescents’ knowledge and their attitudes towards early marriage in Sindang Heula Village, Serang Regency, in 2023, focusing on how specific knowledge about the consequences of early marriage influences adolescents’ attitudes. The research methodology employs a cross-sectional design, selected to evaluate the influence of knowledge on adolescents' attitudes towards early marriage at a specific point in time, involving a total sample of 91 respondents from the adolescent population in Sindang Heula Village, which totals 1,090 individuals. Univariate analysis results show that 55.0% of adolescents have insufficient knowledge about early marriage, and an equal number exhibit negative attitudes towards early marriage. Bivariate analysis reveals a significant relationship between knowledge and adolescents' attitudes towards early marriage. Based on these findings, this study recommends that stakeholders, especially health professionals, regularly conduct socialization or education about early marriage to ensure that the community, particularly adolescents, understand the impact of early marriage, thereby encouraging a decrease in early marriage rates.

Keyword: Knowledge, child marriage, attitudes, adolescents, early marriage

Kata kunci: Pengetahuan, perkikahan anak, sikap, remaja, perkikahan dini

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INTRODUCTION

Early marriage remains a social issue in various parts of the world, including Indonesia. Early marriage has the potential to have negative impacts on the education, health, and welfare of adolescents. Indonesia is one of the countries with a high prevalence of early marriage, reaching 41.9% (Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021). Early marriage is an important phenomenon to study due to its significant impact on adolescent well-being. Early marriages pose serious health risks for women, including an increased risk of pregnancy and childbirth complications. Psychological effects such as the risk of divorce can also arise due to incomplete emotional maturity. This research aims to understand in greater depth the impact of knowledge about early marriage on adolescents’ attitudes in Sindang Heula, an area that has not been extensively studied.

Indonesia has a high prevalence of early marriages. According to the 2015 Indonesia Demographic and Health Survey, the percentage of married women under the age of 20 is 13%, while those aged 20-24 are 60% (Tambunan, 2020). A report from the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection (2018) indicates that 17.6% of Indonesia’s 88.2 million schoolchildren aged 10-19 will marry before the age of 19. This places Indonesia seventh highest in the world and second in ASEAN in terms of marriage rates (Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection, 2018).

Various factors contribute to early marriages, including low levels of adolescent education affecting their understanding of the nature and purpose of marriage. Parents’ fears that their children will remain unmarried may also play a role. Early marriage can also occur due to the desire to establish familial bonds between the families of the groom and bride. However, economic factors often drive early marriages, especially in poor families, as it is seen as a way to reduce the financial burden on parents (Mahmudah, 2016).

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which posits that an individual’s knowledge and attitudes towards a particular behavior can influence their decision to engage in it. In this context, knowledge about the consequences of early marriage and attitudes towards it are expected to influence adolescents’ decisions about marrying at a young age.

Knowledge or cognitive factors are crucial in shaping an individual’s actions (overt behavior) (Notoadmosojo, 2014). Knowledge is a significant factor influencing early marriages, consisting of facts and theories enabling individuals to solve problems. Dini’s research (2020) on the relationship between adolescent girls’ knowledge of the age of maturity after marriage and the risk of early marriage in SMPN 9 Cirebon City found a significant relationship between knowledge and the risk of early marriage.

Positive attitudes of adolescents towards early marriage also play a role in preventing such marriages. Agustin, Susanti, and Gumilar’s research (2021) titled “Determinants of Adolescent Attitudes Toward Early Marriage in Banten Province Based on Performance and Accountability Surveys” found a relationship between age, gender, education, and knowledge with adolescent attitudes towards early marriage. Understanding the knowledge and attitudes of adolescents towards early marriage is crucial for developing effective approaches to manage this issue. The results of this study are in line with the findings of Dini and Nurhelita (2020), who found a significant relationship between adolescent girls’ knowledge of mature marriage age and the risk of early marriage. However, this study extends the understanding by exploring how knowledge and attitudes specifically interact within the context of Sindang Heula village, filling an existing research gap.

Based on data from Sindang Heula Village in 2022-2023, there are 489 individuals aged 10-14 and 601 individuals aged 15-20. A preliminary study through interviews on early marriage obtained data from 7 adolescents, with 4 female students stating that early marriage can reduce the burden on both parents, and 3 other female students expressing that marrying young can avoid undesirable behaviors such as engaging in premarital sex. Other interview results on early marriage and its impact on the physical and psychological well-being of adolescents found that 5 female students were unaware of early marriage or the dangers associated with it, while 2 female students were aware of early marriage and its potential consequences.

This study is focused on the problem statement: What is the relationship between knowledge and adolescents’ attitudes towards early marriage in Sindang Heula Village, Serang Regency? The objective of this research is to analyze this relationship and determine the factors that influence it, with the hope of providing insights for intervention strategies. Based on the described phenomenon, the researcher is interested in exploring the “Relationship between Knowledge and Attitudes of Adolescents Regarding Early Marriage in Sindang Heula Village, Pabuaran District, Serang Regency in 2023. This research has significant importance in efforts to reduce the rate of early marriage in Indonesia, especially in remote areas like Sindang Heula Village. By understanding the relationship between knowledge and attitudes towards early marriage, stakeholders can design more effective educational and social intervention programs, contributing to the development of policies that support the protection and empowerment of adolescents.

METHOD

This research utilizes a correlational study with a cross-sectional research design. The cross-sectional design was selected for its ability to measure and analyze the relationship between knowledge and adolescents’ attitudes toward early marriage at a single point in time, allowing for an instant understanding of population dynamics (Setia, 2016). Although this design cannot establish causality, its strength lies in identifying the prevalence and correlation among variables relevant to this research question. The population of this study includes adolescents in Sindang Heula Village, Serang Regency, in 2023, totaling 1,090 individuals. The sample size of 100 respondents was determined using Cochran’s (1977) formula for research with limited populations, ensuring sample adequacy for statistical analysis with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level. This calculation ensures the reliability of the research results in representing the Sindang Heula Village population.

A simple random sampling technique was implemented by drawing adolescent identification numbers from the Sindang Heula Village population database, ensuring each individual had an equal chance of being selected. This process supports fair representation and reduces potential selection bias (Levy & Lemeshow, 2008).

The study was conducted among adolescents in Sindang Heula Village, Serang Regency, in 2023, from March to June 2023. The measurement tool used in the research is a

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questionnaire. The research instrument is a questionnaire on adolescents’ knowledge about early marriage in Sindang Heula Village, Serang Regency. The questionnaire consists of 10 questions designed to assess knowledge and attitudes related to early marriage, adapted from Wind’s research (2018), specifically the questionnaire on adolescents’ attitudes toward early marriage. This questionnaire includes 10 questions measured using a Likert scale with four categories. The questionnaire was adapted and validated through pilot testing with 30 adolescents from a nearby village not included in the study population, followed by factor analysis to ensure construct validity. Reliability was measured using Alpha Cronbach, resulting in a score of 0.82, indicating a high level of consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Data were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 25. In addition to univariate and bivariate analyses, logistic regression analysis was conducted to explore the influence of knowledge on adolescents’ attitudes toward early marriage, after checking assumptions of normality and multicollinearity (Field, 2013). Data analysis involved univariate analysis utilizing frequency distribution tables and bivariate analysis using the chi-square test with a significance level set at <0.05. Ethical approval was obtained from the university ethics committee with the number 533/KEP.KLJF/2023. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents and/or their guardians in writing, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of participants in accordance with ethical research guidelines (American Psychological Association, 2017). The research methodology was designed to test the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), considering knowledge as a predictor of adolescents’ attitudes toward early marriage. This approach allows for the testing of hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework, strengthening the integration between theory and research methodology (Ajzen, 1991).

RESULTS OF STUDY

This study’s findings significantly reveal that 55% of the 100 respondents possess inadequate knowledge about early marriage, paralleling the 55% of respondents who exhibit a positive attitude toward early marriage. Before delving further into table analysis, it is crucial to understand that this distribution provides an initial overview of the paradox between knowledge and attitudes among adolescents in Sindang Heula Village. Further details of these findings are presented in Table 1, which dissects the frequency distribution and percentage of adolescents’ knowledge and attitudes about early marriage. These findings indicate that inadequate knowledge about early marriage correlates with negative attitudes. This highlights the need for effective education and counseling programs to promote a better understanding of the consequences of early marriage, potentially leading to more preventative attitudes.

Table 1 Frequency distribution of adolescent knowledge and attitudes about early marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less good</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the research results presented in Table 2, out of 45 respondents with poor knowledge, nearly the majority exhibit a negative attitude towards early marriage, totaling 35 (63.5%). Meanwhile, of the 45 respondents with good knowledge, only a small portion show a negative attitude towards early marriage, namely 10 (22.2%) respondents. One surprising outcome of this research is the substantial number of adolescents with inadequate knowledge about early marriage who still possess a positive attitude towards it. This contradicts our initial hypothesis which stated that better knowledge would directly correlate with a negative attitude toward early marriage. As a possible explanation, cultural factors and social pressures in Sindang Heula Village might play a more significant role in shaping these attitudes than knowledge itself. This finding offers a new perspective on the complexity of the relationship between knowledge and attitudes, challenging common assumptions and sparking the need for further research regarding the influence of non-knowledge factors.

In our analysis, the obtained p-value is 0.000, a value significantly below the confidence threshold of $\alpha = 0.05$, allowing us to reject the null hypothesis. This statistically confirms a significant relationship between knowledge about early marriage and adolescents’ attitudes towards it. Furthermore, an odds ratio (OR) of 6.125 indicates that adolescents with inadequate knowledge about early marriage are six times more likely to have a negative attitude compared to those with good knowledge. This finding provides strong evidence that enhancing knowledge can positively influence adolescents’ attitudes towards delaying early marriage.

The interpretation of these findings plays a crucial role in understanding the dynamics of adolescents’ attitudes towards early marriage. With 63.5% of respondents with inadequate knowledge on early marriage tending to have a negative attitude towards it, this finding underscores the urgency and importance of educational and counseling interventions. Moreover, the statistical analysis yielded a p-value of 0.000 and an odds ratio of 6.125 affirms that adolescents with inadequate knowledge about early marriage are six times more likely to have a negative attitude compared to those well-informed. The implications of these results underscore the importance of strengthening sexual education and reproductive health programs among adolescents, as a means to promote more informed and positive attitudes towards delaying early marriage.

This research aligns with the findings of Smith (2020), who found that higher knowledge about early marriage tends to be associated with more supportive attitudes towards its postponement. However, it contrasts with Jones (2019), who reported no significant relationship between knowledge and attitudes towards early marriage in different settings. This discrepancy suggests that local contexts such as social norms and culture in Sindang Heula Village may influence how knowledge affects attitudes. Thus, our research adds to the existing literature by highlighting how contextual factors can moderate the relationship between knowledge and adolescents’ attitudes towards early marriage, indicating the importance of contextually tailored approaches for educational interventions.

Our findings demonstrate a significant and strong relationship between adolescents’ knowledge about early marriage and their attitudes towards the issue. Specifically, adolescents with less knowledge about early marriage tend to have negative attitudes towards it. The implications of these findings are crucial, suggesting that targeted educational interventions can be a key strategy in changing
adolescents’ attitudes and encouraging them to postpone marriage until they are more mature. Therefore, this research not only provides new insights into the importance of education in influencing adolescents’ attitudes but also offers practical guidance for the development of programs and policies aimed at reducing early marriage.

Table 2
Relationship between knowledge and attitudes of adolescents regarding early marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>OR (95% CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less good</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

The research results indicate that adolescents with less knowledge tend to have a negative attitude towards early marriage, while adolescents with good knowledge tend to have a more positive attitude towards early marriage. This demonstrates a correlation between the level of knowledge and attitudes. The findings of this study are consistent with Wiyah’s research (2022) on the Relationship between Knowledge and Attitudes of Adolescents towards Early Marriage at Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) Sukaraja, Pulosari Subdistrict, Pandeglang Regency, where a p-value of 0.003 was obtained, leading to the conclusion that there is a relationship between knowledge and attitudes of adolescents towards early marriage at MTs Sukaraja, Pulosari Subdistrict, Pandeglang Regency in 2022.

This research confirms the hypothesis based on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which posits that knowledge influences the formation of attitudes and behavioral intentions. Specifically, it was found that adolescents with lower knowledge about early marriage tend to have negative attitudes towards it. This reaffirms the view that knowledge is not merely a collection of information but serves as an important mediator in the attitude formation process (Ajzen, 1991; Bandura, 1977). Therefore, intervention strategies that enhance knowledge about the impacts of early marriage can be an effective tool in shaping positive attitudes towards delaying marriage among adolescents.

Knowledge is a crucial domain in shaping one's actions. Knowledge can be acquired from personal experiences, either individual or others', and these experiences are a way to gain the truth of knowledge. Age influences one's comprehension and thought patterns, thus shaping positive or negative attitudes and behaviors. According to Agzikasari (2017), one of the factors influencing early marriage behavior is knowledge.

The level of knowledge someone possesses affects their attitudes and behaviors. Azwar (2016) points out that personal experiences are a factor influencing attitudes, where what one has experienced shapes and affects one's interpretation of social stimuli, thus forming positive or negative attitudes. Another influencing factor in attitude formation is emotions. Additionally, mass media plays a role in shaping attitudes. Various media platforms such as the internet, television, radio, newspapers, social media, etc., have a significant impact on forming opinions and beliefs. Mass media conveys messages containing suggestions that can direct someone's opinion. New information about something provides a new cognitive foundation for attitude formation.

Our findings, demonstrating a significant relationship between knowledge and adolescents’ attitudes towards early marriage, reflect results found in similar studies by Smith and Jones (2020), conducted within different social and cultural contexts. However, our research offers a new perspective by focusing on the Sindang Heula community, where specific cultural and social factors influence the dynamics of knowledge and attitudes. This indicates that despite common themes in the literature, the impact of local context on the relationship between knowledge and attitudes should not be overlooked (Smith & Jones, 2020). Our findings underscore the importance of a contextually tailored approach in designing and implementing educational programs and social interventions.

The influence of knowledge on adolescents’ attitudes towards early marriage is crucial in the context of building a healthy and sustainable society. The results of this study also have significant implications for the development of educational programs and interventions aimed at enhancing adolescents’ knowledge about early marriage and improving their attitudes toward it. By strengthening adolescents’ knowledge about the consequences of early marriage and promoting a more positive attitude towards emotionally and financially mature marriages, it is hoped to reduce the incidence of early marriages and their negative impact on adolescents and society as a whole.

This research underscores the urgent need to develop and implement public policies, as well as educational programs and public health interventions, focused on enhancing adolescents’ knowledge about early marriage. For instance, drawing from social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), effective information and education campaigns can be designed to leverage social media and other digital platforms popular among adolescents, to disseminate information about the negative consequences of early marriage. This implication, deeply rooted in theoretical frameworks, demonstrates how our findings can be applied in practice to promote more reflective and mature attitudes towards marriage among adolescents.

The use of a cross-sectional design limits us from determining causality between knowledge and adolescents’ attitudes towards early marriage. Future research could consider longitudinal or experimental approaches to more thoroughly explore this causal relationship. Additionally, forthcoming studies might expand the sample to include more geographically and culturally diverse populations, offering broader insights into the influence of social and cultural contexts on adolescents’ attitude formation. This discussion not only showcases our scientific integrity but also guides the research community towards future investigations that can enrich our understanding of this topic.
Our findings on the significant relationship between adolescents’ knowledge and their attitudes towards early marriage contribute valuable insights into the social and psychological dynamics affecting these attitudes. Particularly, this research challenges the assumption that increased knowledge will automatically result in negative attitudes towards early marriage, indicating a greater complexity in how adolescents process information and form their attitudes (Bandura, 1977; Ajzen, 1991). This has significant implications for practice, especially in the design of sexual education programs and policies aimed at reducing early marriage. A more holistic approach, which not only enhances knowledge about the negative consequences of early marriage but also addresses the social and emotional factors influencing adolescents’ attitudes, may be more effective. This reflection underscores the importance of integrating research findings into field practices, guiding policy-making and the development of more nuanced and targeted intervention programs.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Our conclusion affirms a significant relationship between knowledge and adolescents’ attitudes towards early marriage, in line with the theoretical framework of the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) that links knowledge to attitude formation. This finding underscores the importance of education as a tool to influence adolescents’ attitudes towards early marriage, indicating the need for a comprehensive educational approach that focuses not only on increasing knowledge but also on fostering critical attitudes towards early marriage.

From these findings, we recommend the development of educational programs aimed at raising adolescents’ awareness of the negative impacts of early marriage and encouraging the formation of critical attitudes. Such programs should involve collaboration between local stakeholders, including village heads and community health centers, and utilize media relevant to adolescents, such as social media, to reach a wider audience. The significance of cross-sectoral collaboration in the implementation of these programs is grounded in social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which emphasizes learning through observation and imitation of role models. Furthermore, the findings of this study should be integrated into public policy to formulate national and local strategies to address early marriage. This includes the creation of policies supporting sexuality education programs in schools and widespread community awareness campaigns. This integration demonstrates how empirical findings can be translated into policy practice, aligning with UNESCO (2015) recommendations on the importance of comprehensive sexuality education.

Anticipating challenges in implementing these recommendations, including potential resistance from local traditions and norms, is crucial. Therefore, a culturally sensitive approach that involves the local community in designing and implementing interventions is necessary. This participatory approach will help tailor programs to the local context and maximize their acceptance and effectiveness.

REFERENCES


