




**IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE ON CHILD MARRIAGE THROUGH
SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING IN TANJUNGAN VILLAGE, MOJOKERTO,
INDONESIA**

**UPAYA MENINGKATKAN PENGETAHUAN MENGENAI PERKAWINAN
ANAK MELALUI PEMBELAJARAN SINKRONUS DI DESA TANJUNGAN,
MOJOKERTO, INDONESIA**

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Abstract

Child marriage remains a prevalent issue in many regions, including Indonesia. This practice is associated with significant adverse outcomes, such as interrupted education, elevated maternal morbidity and mortality rates, and prolonged the cycle of poverty. Synchronous learning can foster critical thinking, enabling audience to challenge harmful social norms and traditions that perpetuate child marriage. Thus, to this study aims to improve knowledge about child marriage among residents of Tanjungan Village, Mojokerto, through synchronous learning interventions. By employing a mixed-methods research design, a survey and interview following a synchronous learning from six experts on child marriage, the study explores the current understanding of respondents' knowledge of the minimum marriage age, the effects of child marriage, and evaluates the effectiveness of synchronous learning programs in enhancing knowledge towards delaying marriage. Sixty-five adolescents and adults from Tanjungan Village, Mojokerto District, East Java, participated in synchronous learning on regulation of child marriage and its consequences. A questionnaire is distributed to assess their knowledge of government regulations on the minimum age of marriage, minimum and maximum age of marriage, and age disparity during marriage before and after the activity followed by interviews with five participants, whom willing to be interviewed, to further explore their understanding of child marriage. The results show an increase in knowledge of the legal age for marriage (from 89.23% to 100%), with females demonstrating a higher level of understanding of this regulation. Interestingly, after the intervention, respondents' understanding of the maximum age limit for marriage varied more, with the majority suggesting ages between 21 and 26. These findings suggest that direct learning interventions can be effective in increasing awareness about child marriage, particularly regarding legal age limits. However, further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of these interventions and to develop strategies to address the underlying social and cultural factors that contribute to child marriage.

Keywords: Child Marriage; Child Protection; Early Marriage; Knowledge.

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Abstrak

Pernikahan anak tetap menjadi isu yang lazim di banyak wilayah, termasuk Indonesia. Praktik ini terkait dengan dampak negatif yang signifikan, seperti terputusnya pendidikan, peningkatan angka morbiditas dan mortalitas ibu, serta perpanjangan siklus kemiskinan. Pembelajaran yang sinkron dapat menumbuhkan pemikiran kritis, sehingga memungkinkan peserta untuk menantang norma dan tradisi sosial yang merugikan yang melanggengkan pernikahan anak. Oleh karena itu, kegiatan ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan tentang pernikahan anak di kalangan warga Desa Tanjungan, Mojokerto, melalui intervensi pembelajaran sinkron. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian metode campuran, survei dan wawancara setelah pembelajaran sinkron dari enam ahli tentang pernikahan anak, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pemahaman responden saat ini tentang pengetahuan mengenai usia minimum pernikahan, dampak pernikahan anak, dan mengevaluasi efektivitas program pembelajaran sinkron dalam meningkatkan pengetahuan untuk menunda pernikahan. Enam puluh lima remaja dan dewasa dari Desa Tanjungan, Kabupaten Mojokerto, Jawa Timur, berpartisipasi dalam pembelajaran sinkron tentang peraturan pernikahan anak dan konsekuensinya. Kuesioner disebar untuk menilai pengetahuan mereka tentang peraturan pemerintah tentang usia minimum untuk menikah, usia minimum dan maksimum untuk menikah, dan perbedaan usia selama pernikahan sebelum dan sesudah kegiatan diikuti dengan wawancara dengan lima orang partisipan, yang bersedia diwawancarai, untuk lebih mengeksplorasi pemahaman mereka tentang pernikahan anak.. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan pengetahuan tentang usia legal pernikahan (dari 89,23% menjadi 100%), dengan perempuan menunjukkan tingkat pemahaman yang lebih tinggi terhadap peraturan ini. Menariknya, setelah intervensi, pemahaman responden tentang batas usia maksimum pernikahan lebih bervariasi, dengan mayoritas menyarankan usia antara 21 dan 26 tahun. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa intervensi pembelajaran langsung dapat efektif dalam meningkatkan kesadaran tentang pernikahan anak, khususnya mengenai batas usia legal. Namun, penelitian lebih lanjut diperlukan untuk mengeksplorasi dampak jangka panjang dari intervensi ini dan untuk mengembangkan strategi untuk mengatasi faktor sosial dan budaya mendasar yang berkontribusi pada pernikahan anak.

Kata kunci: Perkawinan Anak; Perlindungan Anak; Perkawinan Dini; Pengetahuan.

INTRODUCTION

Child marriage refers to marriages involving couples where at least one partner is below the age of 19. Individuals at this age may not possess the physical, physiological, and psychological maturity required to fulfill the responsibilities of a marital union (Muhajarah et al. 2022; Wahyuningrum et al. 2015). Even though child marriage is violation of human right, but the incidence remains high, especially in Africa and South Asia (Parsons et al. 2015). According to Law No. 16 of 2019, the legal minimum age for marriage is 19 for both men and women (Wahyuningrum, et al. 2015).

Ideally, marriage is intended to establish a happy and complete family unit. To achieve this, the couple must complement each other not only spiritually but also materially (Mubasyaroh 2016). Scientifically, the ideal age for marriage is 25 for men and 21 for women. At these ages, individuals have typically reached adulthood and are better equipped to assume their respective roles as husband and wife (Suryanto 2022).

Child marriage is also prevalent in Indonesia, with numbers surging during the pandemic. The country ranked seventh globally in terms of child marriages in 2021, with approximately 1,220,900 girls under 18 years old getting married (Putri 2021). According to data from the Directorate General of Religious Courts in 2022, East Java ranked first

nationally with 15,339 child marriage cases, or 29.44% of the national total (Figure 1) (Mufrida 2024). Meanwhile, 2023 BPS data shows that the proportion of women aged 20-24 in East Java who married before the age of 18 reached 8.86% (BPS 2023). Based on interview with Tanjungan villages' head, the incidence of early marriage in this village is 1-3 cases annually (Suparlik 2024). This indicates that this problem remains a serious challenge that must be addressed immediately.

The high prevalence of early marriage is a significant reproductive health concern among adolescents (Murniati et al. 2021). Health risks associated with child marriage include increased maternal and infant mortality, pregnancy complications (preeclampsia, hemorrhage, anemia, prolonged labor, premature rupture of membranes), and a higher risk of sexually transmitted infections and cervical cancer (Sistiarani et al. 2021). Child marriage is also closely linked to stunting, as adolescent pregnancies can lead to fetal weakness (Putri 2021).

A major challenge is the lack of public awareness regarding early marriage, particularly its physical and mental health consequences, which can contribute to divorce and domestic violence among young couples (Isman 2021). Many people still do not fully understand the implications of child marriage. The Delaying Age at First Marriage program, part of the National Family Planning program, aims to raise the minimum age at first marriage to 21 for women and 25 for men (Follona et al. 2014).

Synchronous learning, or direct learning, offers opportunities for immediate feedback and guided practice, allowing participants to consolidate their understanding and apply their knowledge effectively. This approach is particularly beneficial for teaching foundational skills, explicit procedures, and factual information, making it a valuable tool in various educational contexts (Rolf et al. 2021). Direct learning can be a powerful tool in the prevention of child marriage. By imparting knowledge and skills, direct learning can empower children to make informed decisions about their future (Dhiman 2023). This approach can foster critical thinking, enabling children to challenge harmful social norms and traditions that perpetuate child marriage. Additionally, direct learning can increase awareness of the negative consequences of early marriage, including health risks, limited opportunities, and increased vulnerability to violence (Pacheco-Montoya et al. 2022).

Tanjungan Village, situated in the northern hills of Mojokerto Regency and adjacent to Lamongan Regency, had a population of 3,059 in 2023, with adolescents (aged 15-24) comprising 24% of the population. The majority of residents work as farmers and livestock breeders, with moderate to low economic status. Economic instability and crop failures can compel families to marry off their children at an early age. This can serve as a means to alleviate the family's economic burden or to secure additional income through marriage. Furthermore, its remote location contributes to limited access to healthcare and child protection services, which can exacerbate the lack of awareness regarding the detrimental effects of child marriage (DP2KBP2 2024).

Thus, the Graduate School of Universitas Airlangga conducted a community service activity in Tanjungan Village, Mojokerto Regency by giving an education on child marriage to adolescents and adults. Increasing of knowledge on child marriage was calculated using pre and post-test. The relation with sociodemographic was further investigated.

COMMUNITY SERVICE METHOD

The community development activity was approved by the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga (No. 260/EC/KEPK/FKUA/2023). The location of study was in Tanjungan Village, Mojokerto, East Java, Indonesia, with adolescents and adult respondents. The village was chosen due to the continuous incidence of early marriage annually. The informed consent was given by the guardian for respondents below 18 years old, and the respondent himself for those older than 18 years old. The direct learning was delivered by experts and practitioner on child marriage, including the experts from Mojokerto religious courts, East Java child protection agency, East Java National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN), which was held on September 2024 in Balai Desa Tanjungan, involving sixty-five youth from the Karang Taruna and PKK cadres. Synchronous learning was conducted by face-to-face interaction between the speaker and the audience. After the explanation on child marriage, a discussion regarding this matter was held. The respondents' knowledge on child marriage was measured before and after the activities using questionnaire. To support the synchronous learning, several posters were distributed during the activity.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections, including 4 questions on sociodemographic such as age, sex, education, and current job; and 4 questions on knowledge of ideal age for marriage such as ideal age of marriage for girls, disparity in ideal age of marriage, minimum and maximum acceptable age of marriage for girls. The frequency of each variable was calculated, and compared before and after the community development. Moreover, differences among groups were assessed using Mann-Whitney U test or Kruskal-Wallis H test on SPSS 25.00 (IBM, Chicago, IL) and visualized using Graph PRISM version 5.00 (La Jolla, California USA). Furthermore, five participants were interviewed to explore their understanding on child marriage and the effect of early marriage. Interview results were transcribed into text and thematic analysis was performed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To increase knowledge on ideal age of marriage, seminar was delivered with the topic the definition and law on child marriage, age for marriage, effect of child marriage on health and society. The seminar was delivered by the expert and practitioner of child marriage, including Mojokerto religious courts, East Java child protection agency, East Java National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN), followed by discussion. Several posters were distributed during the activity to ensure the topic delivery (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The community development activities.

This activity was held during September 2024 in Balai Desa Tanjungan, Kemlagi, Mojokerto, East Java, Indonesia. Sixty-five adolescent and adult respondents participated in this activity and completed the pre-test and post-test. Majority of the respondents was female in the reproductive age, and graduated from senior high school followed by university graduated. Characteristics of the respondents were summarized in figure 2.

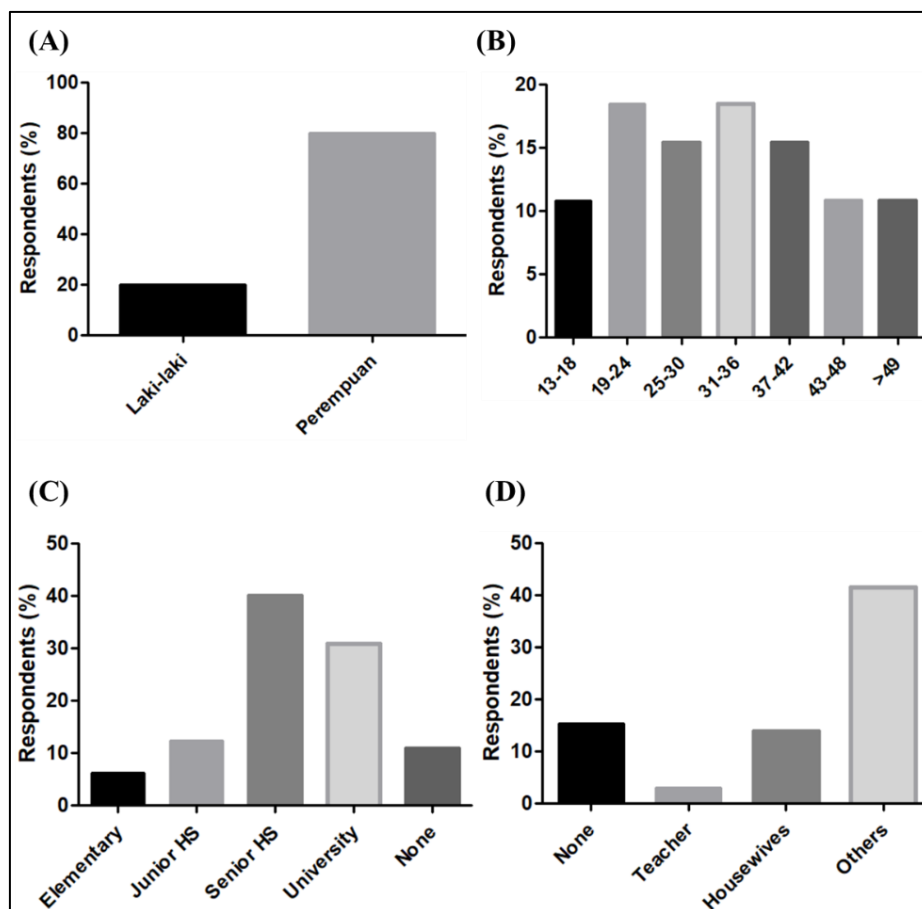


Figure 2. Characteristics of respondents.

To measure the effectiveness of synchronous learning on child marriage, 4-item questionnaires focusing on the marriage age were given before and after the activities. This study showed the community development succeed to increase the participants' knowledge on minimum age of marriage, which is 19 years old, from 89.23% to 100% (Table 1). This finding different with study di Sulawesi involving 1000 households that found 64.7% of the respondents said the lowest acceptable marriage was 18 years old and 35.3% of them agreed girls less than 18 years old can be married (Ratnaningsih et al. 2022). Moreover, this finding was higher compared the knowledge on child marriage in a slum area in Pakistan (Nasrullah et al. 2014).

Variation of answers was found in the answer of maximum age for marriage, which majority of the respondents choose 25-26 years old before the direct learning (58.46%), and change to 21-22 years old (35.38%), 23-24 years old (20%), and 25-26 years old (20%) after the activity. Only 7.69% of respondents choose no limit age of marriage (Table 1). These answer was different with study in Sulawesi where majority of the respondents (39.5%) choose 30-40 was the highest acceptable age for girls to married; and 7.4% of them choose no upper limit for marriage (Ratnaningsih, et al. 2022). The variation also found in respondents answer on age difference between groom and the bride during marriage, which majority of them choose between 2 to 5 years gap of age (Table 1), which support the finding of previous study (Ratnaningsih, et al. 2022). This variation might cause by better understanding on the importance of optimum physical ability, emotionally mature, financially stable were importance for marriage satisfaction (Mosavi et al. 2012). However, there was no correct answer for this question.

Table 1. Knowledge on marriage age.

Item	Pre-test (%)	Post-test (%)
<i>Knowing the government regulation on minimum age of marriage</i>		
Yes	56.92	93.85
No	43.08	6.15
<i>Minimum age of marriage</i>		
<17 years old	1.54	0
17 years old	6.15	0
18 years old	3.08	0
19 years old	9.23	6.15
> 19 years old	80	93.85
<i>Maximum age of marriage</i>		
<19 years old	1.54	0
19-20 years old	4.62	13.85
21-22 years old	13.85	35.38
23-24 years old	4.62	20
25-26 years old	58.46	20
27-28 years old	6.15	1.54
29-30 years old	4.62	1.54
No maximum age	6.15	7.69
<i>Age disparity when married</i>		

Same age	12.31	6.15
1 years	6.15	3.08
2 years	32.31	15.38
3 years	24.62	24.62
4 years	6.15	9.23
5 years	6.15	38.46
>5 years	12.31	3.08

Moreover, there was a statistically significant differences on the knowledge of government regulation between male and female ($p<0.05$) and the difference on the maximum age for marriage between age ($p<0.023$, Table 2). Other sociodemographic factors were not affecting the knowledge difference between each group.

Table 2. Difference of pre and post-test answer based on sex, age, education level, and current job.

Items	Sex	Age	Education	Current Job
Knowing government regulation on marriage age	0.05	0.501	0.212	0.057
Minimum age of marriage	0.798	0.278	0.437	0.798
Maximum age of marriage	0.588	0.023	0.476	0.106
Age disparity during marriage	0.798	0.085	0.187	0.254

To explore more about participants' understanding on child marriage and its' effect, interview was performed in 5 participants who willing to be interviewed.

R1 (female, 17 years old, students) stated that *"I know the reason of the marriage legal age for girl was shifted from 16 to 19 years old. And I am happy with that, means girl have freedom, still can play with the friends or go to school."*

This statement was in line with a study in Africa that conclude early marriage had negative impact on the education, especially the girl (Barrow et al. 2022). Many cases of child marriage caused by unmet pregnancy (Sekine et al. 2021), as stated by R2 (female, 60 years old, housewife), *"Even though the child marriage in our village is getting lower, but I know several cases due to unmet pregnancy among the junior or senior high school students."*

Early marriage might devastated for the groom, bride, and family (Yoosefi Lebni et al. 2023), as more mature the emotional of bride or groom provide better satisfaction on marriage life (Mosavi, et al. 2012). This effect was emphasized by R3 (female, 22 years old, entrepreneur), *"In child marriage, the physical and mentally healthy are important, and also the financial. I think more mature and more stable the groom and the bride, their satisfaction to the marriage will increase."*

Child marriage also affect physical and mental health (Isman 2021) as underlined by R4 (male, 55 years old, parliament), *"We know that child marriage can lead to stunting,*

where the parents unable to take care the baby, poor economic condition, lack of nutrition. What will happen to the next generation? How about the parents' mental health?"

However, religious value also become consideration in some cases, such as stated by R5 (female, 40 years old, housewife), *"Of course we know that there is a rule for minimum age for getting married, but there are no rules for maximum age for getting married. We cannot rule out the destiny, what God already decide for us."*

From the quantitative and qualitative results, direct learning was effective in increasing knowledge about the legal age of marriage, including its effects. However, there is room for improvement to increase awareness of the maximum age of marriage. Despite its limitations, including the focus on only one village and the small number of respondents, this study supports the importance of education in increasing awareness of delaying marriage to pursue *Indonesia Golden Era 2045*.

CLOSING

This community development underscored the significance of direct learning in raising awareness about child marriage, particularly in rural area. These findings highlight the potential of direct learning interventions to promote the ideal age on marriage. However, the study also identified challenges, such as limited resources, cultural barriers, and lack of sustained engagement. To maximize the impact of direct learning interventions, it is crucial to address these challenges and adopt a comprehensive approach that combines community mobilization, capacity building, and policy advocacy. Future research should explore the long-term effects of direct learning interventions, particularly on the lives of young people and their communities. By investing in evidence-based direct learning programs, we can contribute to the global effort to eradicate child marriage and create a brighter future for generations to come. However, further research with broader and larger respondents is needed to provide a more complete understanding of the knowledge on child marriage in Indonesia.

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