

Child Marriage in Indonesia and Its Contributing Factors: A Literature Review Approach

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Suggested Citation:

Samnuzulsari, T., Oktariyani, S., & Safitri, A. (2025). Child Marriage in Indonesia and Its Contributing Factors: A Literature Review Approach. *Temali: Jurnal Pembangunan Sosial*, Volume 8, Nomor 1: -. 10.15575/jt.v8i1.36397.

Article's History:

Received June 2024; Revised October 2024; Accepted January 2025.

2025. journal.uinsgd.ac.id ©. All rights reserved.

Abstract:

This study aims to identify the underlying aspects of child marriage in Indonesia. The method employed in this study is a narrative literature review. The data sources were drawn from the Web of Science (WoS) database, consisting of journal articles discussing child marriage in Indonesia from 2008 to 2023. Among the 11 documents analyzed, the topic of child marriage was most frequently published between 2018 and 2023. The researchers also reviewed the research methodologies used, revealing that qualitative approaches were predominantly chosen to analyze this topic. The findings indicate six factors driving child marriage in Indonesia: socio-cultural, economic, educational, health, religious, and familial factors. This study contributes to understanding the causes of child marriage in Indonesia from a sociological perspective. Through this literature review, the study provides a solid foundation for examining the relationships among these factors in future research on child marriage.

Keywords: *Child marriage, contributing factors, literature review, Indonesia.*

Abstrak:

Studi ini berupaya mengidentifikasi aspek-aspek yang melatarbelakangi terjadinya pernikahan usia anak di Indonesia. Metode yang digunakan dalam studi ini yaitu tinjauan literatur naratif. Sumber data diambil dari data base Web of Science (WoS) berupa artikel jurnal yang membahas tentang pernikahan usia anak di Indonesia dari tahun 2008 sampai dengan 2023. Dari 11 dokumen yang dianalisa, topik pernikahan usia anak paling banyak diterbitkan dari tahun 2018 sampai tahun 2023. Peneliti juga meninjau metodologi penelitian yang digunakan, dimana pendekatan kualitatif cenderung dipilih untuk menganalisa topik ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat enam faktor yang mendorong terjadinya pernikahan usia anak di Indonesia, yaitu faktor sosio-kultural, ekonomi, pendidikan, kesehatan, agama, dan keluarga. Studi ini berkontribusi dalam memberikan pemahaman terkait faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan terjadinya pernikahan usia anak di Indonesia dalam perspektif sosiologi. Melalui tinjauan literatur ini, studi ini memberikan landasan yang kuat untuk melihat hubungan diantara faktor-faktor tersebut terhadap pernikahan usia anak pada penelitian selanjutnya.

Kata Kunci: Pernikahan usia anak, faktor penyebab, tinjauan literatur, Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Child marriage has become a global concern in various countries, including Indonesia. According to UNICEF (2023), Indonesia is one of the top ten countries in the world with the highest child marriage rates, with 25.53 million cases. The child marriage rate exceeds 10 percent and is distributed evenly across all provinces in Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). In Indonesia, child marriage is much more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas. The child marriage rate in rural areas reaches 30.1 percent, while in urban areas, it is 13.1 percent (UNICEF & UNFPA, 2012). In other words, young women in rural areas are more likely to marry at a young age. Moreover, child marriages are mostly dominated by those with a primary school education background (Arimurti & Nurmala, 2017).

Although child marriage is predominantly a problem in developing countries, it also occurs in developed countries, where parents approve of marriages for children under the age of 15 (Isnaini & Sari, 2019). According to Badan Pusat Statistik (2023), child marriage rates above 10 percent are spread evenly across all provinces in Indonesia. This phenomenon of child marriage not only creates many social problems but also legal issues. For example, the controversy surrounding underage marriages has long been debated, particularly concerning the minimum age for a child to marry (Adam, 2020).

This study aims to explore the development of the literature on child marriage through a literature review approach. Although several researchers have conducted previous studies on child marriage with a literature review approach (Bawono et al., 2019; El Arab & Sagbakken, 2019; Irhamni et al., 2023; Istiqomah et al., 2023; Nabila et al., 2022; Parsons et al., 2015; Pourtaheri et al., 2023; Svanemyr, 2020), these studies have not sufficiently provided a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the child marriage phenomenon in Indonesia and the factors behind it. This is not an easy task, considering that the child marriage phenomenon is highly complex and often intersects with societal values and norms. In the study by Rumble et al. (2018), significant variations in child marriage rates were revealed across different regions of Indonesia, such as the influence of religion, ethnicity, and geography. Furthermore, the existing studies do not adequately describe the development of literature on child marriage. This study aims to highlight the importance of understanding the factors that drive child marriage in Indonesia and provide contributions to the efforts of formulating appropriate policies and programs to eliminate this harmful practice.

Therefore, this research aims to analyze the phenomenon of child marriage in Indonesia and the factors behind it. The study also explores the impacts of child marriage, considering that the phenomenon is increasingly complex and often intersects with societal values and norms.

METHOD

This study uses a literature review method, which is employed to identify relevant theories and previous research related to the chosen research topic and methodology. We can generally describe a literature review as a somewhat systematic approach to gathering and synthesizing previous research (Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Denyer & Tranfield, 2009; Tranfield et al., 2003). In this literature review, the researcher uses the *preferred reporting project for systematic review (PRISMA)* to explore the factors behind child marriage and the resulting impacts. The researcher conducts this systematic literature review following a protocol designed to ensure future studies can replicate this method. This technique is used to answer the question: what factors contribute to child marriage?

In this section, the researcher conducts a literature review using four stages: (1) designing the review, (2) conducting the review, (3) analysis, and (4) writing the review. This process is developed from practical experience and is a synthesis of and influenced by, various standards and guidelines recommended for literature reviews (Liberati et al., 2009; Tranfield et al., 2003). In the designing stage, the researcher performs the literature search. The researcher conducts the literature search in two stages: (i) article identification (databases used and search terms/keywords) and (ii) article screening (based on inclusion and exclusion criteria). The researcher uses the Web of Science (WoS) database in the article identification stage. Researchers consider this database to yield more credible sources (Jambrino-Maldonado et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2021). The article search begins with searching for “key terms” or terms used to describe poverty alleviation. The keyword protocol used in this research is TITLE-ABS-KEY (“child marriage” OR “early marriage” OR “teenage marriage” OR “young marriage” OR “underage marriage”) AND Indonesia), which is considered a commonly used keyword. At this stage, the researcher obtains 56 articles. The selection criteria include all articles published until 2023. In the article screening stage, in addition

to selecting keywords, the researcher also sets inclusion and exclusion criteria that determine which articles will be selected and which will not. At this stage, the number of articles that meet the criteria is 24. The inclusion and exclusion criteria can be seen in Table 1.

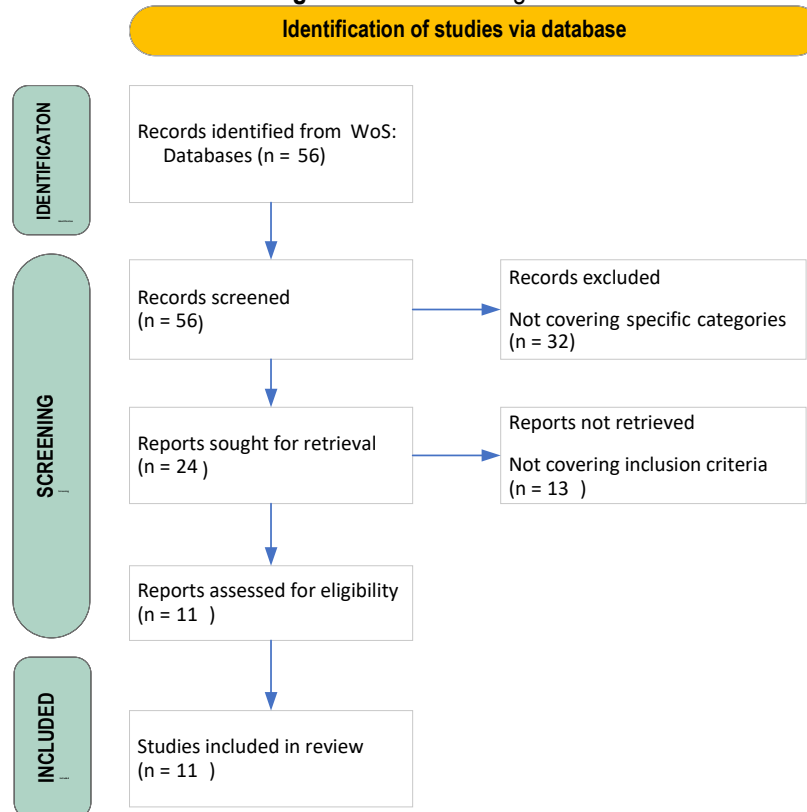
Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Article Selection	
Inclusion Criteria	1) Articles published in peer-reviewed journals 2) Document type: research articles 3) Articles written in English 4) Keywords included in the title, abstract, or keywords of the article 5) Web of Science Index: Social Science Citation Index (SSCI)
Exclusion Criteria	1) Conference papers, book chapters, books, book reviews, early access publications, retracted publications, data papers 2) Web of Science Index: Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE), Art and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI), Emerging Source Citation Index (ESCI) 3) Articles that do not discuss child marriage in Indonesia.

Source: Processed by the Author, 2024.

Finally, the researcher manually identified the remaining 24 articles to ensure that they were truly within the scope of child marriage. Out of the 24 articles, 12 articles were excluded because they did not fall within the scope of child marriage. The total number of articles that met the criteria and were analyzed further was 12.

Figure 1. PRISMA Diagram



Source: Processed by the Author, 2024.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Child Marriage

We define child marriage as marriage before the age of 18, which applies to both boys and girls, although this practice occurs far more commonly among girls (WHO, 2013), and from an age perspective, it is considered insufficient or immature (Isnaini & Sari, 2019). According to UNICEF (2023), child marriage refers to either formal or informal marriage between a child under the age of 18 and an adult or another child. This is a fundamental violation of human rights. Many factors place a child at risk of marriage, including poverty, the perception that marriage provides “protection,” family honor, social norms, customary or religious laws that condone such practices, inadequate legislative frameworks, and the condition of a country’s civil registration system. While this practice is more prevalent among girls than boys, it is still a rights violation regardless of gender. Adolescent girls are at risk of early marriage due to the interaction of various conditions present in society (Kurniawati & Sari, 2020).

Researchers can examine child marriage studies globally from three perspectives. The first is the economic approach (Fadilah, 2021; Harlina, 2020; Kurniawati & Sari, 2020; Octaviani & Nurwati, 2020; Putri, 2022; Tirang & Iadamay, 2019). This view generally sees economic factors as the primary cause driving child marriage in developing countries such as Indonesia (Tampubolon, 2021; UNFPA et al., 2019). Economic factors play a crucial role in child marriage, as they are seen as a solution or means to provide security and alleviate the economic burden on parents. In low-income families, marrying off a daughter means fewer household members to feed. They also see the dowry as income for the impoverished household (UNICEF & ICRW, 2017). The second is the socio-cultural approach (Kurniawati & Sari, 2020; Octaviani & Nurwati, 2020; Pepriyana et al., 2023; Saskara, 2018; Tampubolon, 2021; Tirang & Iadamay, 2019). This view considers cultural factors and the environment where an individual lives as influencing the likelihood of girls marrying early, such as the culture of early marriage. Marriage is seen as a significant marker of transition to adulthood, significantly expanding activities, access to resources, and social capital for youth; those who remain unmarried are at risk of being stigmatized as social failures (Himawan, 2019; Setyonaluri et al., 2020).

Lastly, the educational approach (Andy et al., 2023; Bawono et al., 2019; Kurniawati & Sari, 2020; Octaviani & Nurwati, 2020; Tirang & Iadamay, 2019). Low levels of education and knowledge in local communities contribute to early marriage within the community. Low educational levels result in minimal knowledge among children, parents, and the local community. Due to this lack of knowledge, they are more likely to marry off their children at a young age. According to a study by Jensen & Thornton (2003), which collected data from 35 countries’ *Demographic Health Surveys (DHS)*, it was found that women who marry young have lower education levels, start raising children earlier, have less decision-making power in the household, and are more likely to experience domestic violence.

In addition to these three approaches, researchers can also examine other factors influencing child marriage, such as free association (Chairiyah & Anggraeni, 2022; Tirang & Iadamay, 2019) and internet abuse (Alifah et al., 2021; Anwar et al., 2019; Kurniawati & Sari, 2020). Free association among adolescents can lead to early marriage, as relationships formed by adolescents who are unaware of the social consequences can result in premarital sex and unintended pregnancies. Free association that is not regulated or restricted by parents increases the incidence of early marriage. Furthermore, the fear and anxiety parents have regarding their children’s associations can lead them to marry off their children at an early age. Aside from free association, the influence of mass media also contributes to the high rate of child marriage in certain countries. While mass media has encouraged adolescents to behave freely in social interactions, advances in technology and widespread media exposure have also led to internet abuse. This is evident in the easy access to pornography across different age groups. On the other hand, mass media can raise awareness about the impact of early marriage, which could reduce its occurrence (Rumble et al., 2018). A study by Shaud & Asad (2020) revealed a significant relationship between access to information and media exposure and child marriage.

Child marriage certainly has significant impacts on the individuals, families, and communities involved. The impacts of child marriage include reproductive health (Isnaini & Sari, 2019), divorce (Fadilah, 2021; Tirang & Iadamay, 2019), maternal and infant mortality (Fadilah, 2021; Octaviani, 2020), domestic violence (Ikhsanudin & Nurjanah, 2018), stunting (Zagita et al., 2023), and psychological effects (Maudina, 2019). Reproductive health risks are often overlooked by both the parents marrying off their children early and the children themselves. According to Isnaini & Sari (2019), women who marry young are at risk during childbirth. The younger a woman marries, the greater the risks she faces for her health and the health of her child. Pregnant women under the age of 20 have reproductive organs that are not fully mature, leading to various health problems. Additionally, Fadilah (2021) and Tirang & Iadamay (2019) note that divorce can occur due to the emotional immaturity of adolescents in

early marriages, their childish attitudes, and their desire for self-centeredness, which ultimately leads to divorce. This is because they are not mature enough to care for children properly. Early marriages caused by adolescent-free association are highly vulnerable to issues arising from psychological immaturity, leading to divorce among young couples. Marrying at a young age significantly impacts family life. Furthermore, maternal and infant mortality factors, as seen in studies by Fadilah (2021) and Octaviani (2020), indicate that early marriage can lead to miscarriages or maternal and infant deaths.

Moreover, the impact of child marriage includes an increased risk of domestic violence (Ikhsanudin & Nurjanah, 2018). Their study reveals many women experience domestic violence due to negative marriage intentions, such as hiding family shame, which can lead to negative consequences. The mental and emotional unpreparedness of children for marriage also contributes to criminal actions such as domestic violence. Additionally, child marriage can lead to stunting. In a study by Zagita et al. (2023), they found that having an underage mother increases the likelihood of stunting, a condition where babies are born with shorter body proportions, posing health risks for newborns. Lastly, the psychological effects of child marriage, as observed by Maudina (2019), show that couples who marry early are not mentally and emotionally prepared for role changes and household challenges. This can lead to stress, depression, and anxiety. Moreover, child marriage can affect their relationships with family and friends.

Research on Child Marriage in Indonesia: Publication Trends, Methodologies, and Journal Sources

In this section, the researcher presents the results of the review conducted on the selected articles in the tables below. Table 2 presents data on the number of articles based on publication year and the methods used. According to Table 2, the most articles on child marriage were published in 2021, with a total of 3 articles. Additionally, the researcher identified the methodological procedures used in each article. Table 2 shows that many articles employed a qualitative method as their research strategy, with a total of 7 articles. Meanwhile, four articles used a quantitative method, and 1 article employed a mixed-method approach. In addition to the publication year and methods used, the researcher also reviewed the number of articles based on the source of publication (see Table 3).

Table 2. Number of Articles Based on Publication Year and Methods Used

Year	Number of Articles	Method	Number of Articles
2008	1	Quantitative	4
2018	2	Qualitative	6
2019	1	Mixed	1
2020	2		
2021	2		
2022	2		
2023	1		

Source: Research Results, 2024.

Meanwhile, in Table 3, it can be seen that the topic of child marriage was most frequently published in the *Child Abuse & Neglect* journal, with two articles. This indicates that the *Child Abuse & Neglect* journal is the most popular for such topics. In addition to *Child Abuse & Neglect*, several other journals, such as the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *Review of Economics of the Household*, *Asian Population Studies*, *Problems of Sustainable Development*, and *Midwifery*, also published the topic of child marriage.

Table 3. Number of Articles by Article Publication Source

Journal Name	Number of Articles
Child Abuse & Neglect	2
Journal of Adolescent Health	1
Review of Economics of the Household	1
Asian Population Studies	1
Problems of Sustainable Development	1
Midwifery	1
BMC Women's Health	1
Journal of Youth Studies	1
BMC Public Health	1
The Lancet Regional Health - Western Pacific	1

Source: Research Results, 2024.

Table 4 provides a descriptive overview of the 11 documents (articles), showing the number of articles based on publication year, research methodology used, and the source of article publication.

Table 4. Results overview from Web of Science Database

No	Author(s)	Source of Article	Key Information	Method
1	Baumont et al. (2020) Understanding childhood adversity in West Sulawesi, Indonesia	Child Abuse & Neglect	Highlighting cultural, economic, and community factors contributing to divorce.	Qualitative
2	Bhan et al., (2019) Effects of parent-child relationships on child marriage of girls in Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam: Evidence from a prospective cohort	Journal of Adolescent Health	Communication, the quality of the relationship between parents and children, education, and socio-economic factors.	Qualitative
3	Cameron et al. (2023) Child marriage: using the Indonesian family life survey to examine the lives of women and men who married at an early age	Review of Economics of the Household	Educational attainment, income, household decision-making, as well as maternal and child health.	Quantitative
4	Dommaraju & Tan (2018) Marriage Age Transition in Indonesia	Asian Population Studies	Social change and marriage, including the influence of political, economic, and religious factors on the timing of marriage.	Quantitative
5	Duadji et al. (2022) Analysis of child marriage and related policies in Indonesia: Sustainable development issue	Problems of Sustainable Development	Analyzing the ban on child marriage in Indonesia, the contributing factors to child marriage, and the challenges it poses to human resource development.	Quantitative
6	Erfina et al. (2022) Becoming an adolescent mother:	Midwifery	Emphasizing the importance of cultural and family support for teenage mothers through	Qualitative

	The experiences of young Indonesian new mothers living with their extended families		healthcare providers, especially nurses and midwives.	
7	Kohno et al. (2021) Development of early marriage attitude scale: A multi-dimensional scale for measuring the attitudes toward child marriage	SAGE Open	Child marriage is influenced by factors such as the personality of the girl, family poverty, societal tolerance, and religiosity.	Qualitative
8	Nilan (2008) Youth Transitions to Urban, Middle-class Marriage in Indonesia: Faith, Family and Finances	Journal of Youth Studies	Discourses shaping beliefs, family, and finances are characteristic of the contemporary youth transition to marriage for this group.	Qualitative
9	Rahiem (2021) COVID-19 and the surge of child marriages: A phenomenon in Nusa Tenggara Barat, Indonesia	Child Abuse & Neglect	The increase in child marriage is influenced by factors such as the belief that marriage is an escape from stress and boredom, customary law, a lack of understanding about the implications of underage marriage, economic issues, and peer influence.	Qualitative
10	Rumble et al. (2018) An empirical exploration of female child marriage determinants in Indonesia	BMC Public Health	Identifying factors related to child marriage in Indonesia. Findings show that education, wealth, and the number of siblings have an impact on child marriage.	Quantitative
11	Wibowo et al. (2021) One household, two worlds: Differences of perception towards child marriage among adolescent children and adults in Indonesia	The Lancet Regional Health - Western Pacific	Highlighting factors contributing to child marriage, such as socio-economic issues, cultural beliefs, and lack of communication on sexual and reproductive health.	Mixed

Source: Research Results, 2024.

The Factors Influencing Child Marriage in Indonesia

Based on the literature review conducted by the researcher, several factors contributing to child marriage were found, including socio-cultural, economic, educational, family, health, and religious factors. This indicates that the role of social institutions, which is considered important in preventing child marriage (Nursalim et al., 2023), has not functioned as it should. There are several factors contributing to child marriage, including:

First, socio-cultural. Socio-cultural factors have been one of the causes of child marriage continues to occur today (Baumont et al., 2020; Dommaraju & Tan, 2018; Erfina et al., 2022; Kohno et al., 2021; Wibowo et al., 2021). Cultural and family support has encouraged parents to marry off their daughters at a young age. The fear of their daughters remaining unmarried drives this. Furthermore, social culture significantly affects societal compliance with customary law, which has established norms where parents have discretion over their children, and outsiders have no right to intervene in family matters. Therefore, customary law is seen as a barrier to reporting and accessing services for related cases. People fear intervening in these matters or involving the police, as intervening in family affairs would contradict customary law, which is considered taboo. In their social culture, they avoid criminal

processes because they prefer to resolve issues according to customary law. As they comply with traditions, they discuss matters within the family and find solutions. According to Monique Baumont (2020), in the West Sulawesi region, customary law has established norms where parents have the discretion to use physical punishment on their children, and outsiders have no right to intervene in family affairs. For example, a stepmother beat a child. This is a criminal issue and should have been reported, but the local community chooses to resolve it according to customary law through family discussions.

Second, economy. Economic factors play an important role in causing child marriage. Difficult economic conditions leave parents with little choice but to support their children into adulthood through work or child marriage, so children no longer depend on their parents for economic support. Economic conditions compel parents to support the early transition to adulthood through work or marriage, so children no longer rely on their parents for support. Economic factors and the lack of awareness about the importance of education lead parents to expect their children to contribute to household income. As a result, parents bind their children to work in order to help with family finances (Baumont et al., 2020; Bhan et al., 2019; Rahiem, 2021; Rumble et al., 2018; Wibowo et al., 2021). In Siti Nurul Khaerani's (2019) journal, it is stated that some parents consider daughters as assets, so when someone proposes to their daughter, parents hope it will ease the family's burden and even raise the family's social status. However, it is undeniable that many early marriages occur due to economic factors.

Third, education. Low levels of education contribute to adolescent early marriages (Bhan et al., 2019; Dommaraju & Tan, 2018; Duadji & Tresiana, 2022; Rumble et al., 2018). Adolescents with low educational levels are more likely to engage in early marriages due to a lack of understanding about the impacts of early marriage on maternal and child health. A lack of parental education is also believed to result in children consuming processed foods and lacking nutrition. From the perspective of parental education regarding children's education, parents' motivation to send children to school is very low. Uneducated parents prioritize work over education and instill this mentality in their children, so they drop out of school and engage in adult activities at an early age. Some service providers also report that children of uneducated parents are often required to work in households at a young age. In this journal, Muhammad Ikhsanudin (2018) states that the family is the first place where a person begins life, and education within the family plays a key role as the foundation for a child's character and education. Therefore, the concept of education, especially family education, should be applied as it serves as the foundation for both formal and informal educational institutions.

Fourth, health. Early marriage can lead to reproductive health issues, which are serious for young girls, such as complications in pregnancy and childbirth (Bhan et al., 2019; Cameron et al., 2023; Kohno et al., 2020; Meijers et al., 2022; Wibowo et al., 2021). Additionally, early marriage can cause physical and mental health problems, including depression and anxiety. Marrying at a young age, especially under 18, has a strong negative impact on women's mental health. Early marriage is also associated with poor pregnancy, childbirth, and child health. Children born to women who marry before the age of 18 are more likely to experience stunting and developmental delays. Children of mothers under 18 tend to have lower birth weights and are more likely to be born prematurely due to growth restrictions. According to Siti Nurul Khaerani's (2019) journal, young women who marry and become pregnant at a young age face the risk of maternal death during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum. It is important to note that pregnancy under the age of 17 increases the risk of medical complications for both mother and child. Higher maternal morbidity and mortality rates correlate with early pregnancy.

Fifth, Divorce and Domestic Violence (DV). Lack of emotional readiness for marriage can also be a factor leading to DV or divorce. Young couples who marry at an early age are more likely to experience marital conflicts, including DV, because young women who marry are often uneducated, and early marriage has serious, detrimental effects on the children involved. Couples who marry early are not emotionally or financially mature, increasing the risk of instability in the relationship, which may lead to divorce (Bhan et al., 2019; Dommaraju & Tan, 2018; Duadji & Tresiana, 2022; Rumble et al., 2018).

Sixth, religion. Another factor influencing child marriage is the Islamic religious values that allow marriage after puberty (Kohno et al., 2021; Rumble et al., 2018). Therefore, to avoid and prevent unwanted circumstances, parents marry off their children to avoid situations like premarital pregnancies, as pregnancy outside of marriage is considered sinful. When parents discover that their unmarried daughter is pregnant or has a child out of wedlock, they quickly arrange for her marriage to preserve the family's dignity. According to Dini Fadilah's (2021) journal, in cases of premarital pregnancy, parents and the family often marry the couple quickly to avoid societal ridicule, even though the child may be very young. This happens even though, based on Islamic law, couples in such cases should not be married off until the child is born. Religious beliefs that prohibit dating often root the practice, so people see early marriage as an alternative solution.

CONCLUSION

Child marriage is a serious issue in Indonesia and other countries around the world. Child marriage can occur due to various factors such as poverty, social norms, customary laws, or religion that condone the practice. However, studies have highlighted the factors that drive child marriage in Indonesia and can contribute to efforts to develop appropriate policies and programs to eliminate this harmful practice. Researchers can view studies on child marriage from several approaches, namely the economic, socio-cultural, and educational perspectives. Economic factors, culture, the environment where individuals live, and the low level of education and knowledge in local communities can all contribute to the occurrence of child marriage. In addition, factors such as free teenage socializing and internet abuse can also influence child marriage. Parents' concerns about their children's social interactions may also encourage child marriage.

A limitation of this study is the lack of widely gathered information, as the researcher collected data from only one data source, resulting in a limited amount of data. Therefore, for future research, the researcher recommends considering data collection from multiple data sources such as *Scopus*, *Google Scholar*, and others. The aim is to obtain a more comprehensive dataset. Furthermore, the issue of child marriage is a complex problem. By looking at the trends in the development of literature on child marriage, future research can further explore this study with various research approaches.

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