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Article

# Literature Review: Implications of Early Marriage on Human Development

Annisatul Mujahidah \*, Budiman Rusli and Yogi Suprayogi Sugandi

**Abstract:** Early marriage is a phenomenon that has an impact on various aspects of life which then affects human development. This study aims to conduct a literature review on the implications of early marriage on human development. The method used in this study is the SLR (*Systematic Literature Review*) method. Data collection was carried out by documenting all literature that met the research inclusion requirements. The literature obtained as many as 25 articles from the *Google Scholar database with the help of Harzing's Publish or Perish* application. From this literature study, it was found that the phenomenon of early marriage has implications for the human development index based on health indicators and life expectancy, education, and welfare. Another finding is that women are the most disadvantaged from the impact of early marriage. Things that can be done to deal with the phenomenon and impact of early marriage include formal and non-formal education, strengthening access to health and education services, creating empowerment programs, and strengthening regulations and legal protection.

**Keywords:** early marriage; human development; gender

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## 1. Introduction

A process of sustainability of life is determined by the cycle of human activities. Humans have a prosperous standard of living that has been agreed upon in running a civilization. To achieve these standards, development is needed in this context to cover all aspects of human life. Human development is a continuous process of improving the quality of human life by proceeding through increasing access to education, health, and economic opportunities (Mišćević, 2021). The achievement of human development can be seen through the Human Development Index benchmark which consists of life expectancy measured by looking at the average life span of the population, education level through measuring the average years of schooling followed by the population and the prevalence of literacy in a country, and income that can be measured by calculating the National Gross Income (BPN) per capita. (Mon, 1999)

Some of the main factors that cause the inhibition of human development in a country include poverty, conflict, climate change, and gender inequality (Conceição, 2019). One of the development issues that is still rife in the campaign in order to reduce its prevalence is early childhood marriage. Early childhood marriage (*child* marriage) is a marriage performed by both boys and girls who are less than 18 years old. The occurrence of early marriage cannot be separated from several influencing factors, including cultural and traditional factors (especially in rural and less educated environments, economic factors in the form of the assumption that early marriage can reduce the family's financial burden on poor families, religious factors to avoid deviations from religious norms, political factors and conflicts that make early marriage a form of protection for women and families involved. (Alqahtani & Alqahtani, 2022) (Lal, 2015)

The phenomenon of early marriage has a negative impact on the individuals involved and community groups if left unchecked. For children who engage in early marriage, especially women, it will affect physical health in this case is reproductive health, mental health, and is also able to limit access to education and economic welfare. On the scale of global society, early marriage has a significant impact on the economic sector. Especially women who marry young tend to experience

unemployment and participate less in economic activities, this can result in increased poverty and social inequality. (Omeje, 2017) (Wodon et al., 2017)

The issue of early marriage and its implications becomes a serious problem when viewed from the lens of the Human Development Index theory proposed by Mahbub ul Haq San Amartya Sen which states that to understand the level of development of a country can be measured based on three main dimensions, namely long life expectancy, quality education, and decent income level. (Mon, 2000; Ul Haq & Kevane, 1997)

The impact of early marriage based on previous research data has implications for the human development index. Through this literature review, the author has presented the relationship between early marriage involvement affecting the Human Development Index (HDI), and the parties most disadvantaged from the phenomenon of early marriage.

## 2. Method

This research was conducted using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, which is a structured and systematic, objective, and transparent method to find, evaluate and synthesize all relevant evidence in a particular field. This research was carried out through several stages, namely the formulation of research questions, identifying literature, determining inclusion and exclusion criteria, selecting literature based on titles and abstracts, presenting and processing data, and drawing conclusions. (J. Paul et al., 2021)

There are two research questions answered through this literature review, namely: (1) what are the implications of early childhood marriage with the Human Development Index (HDI)? (Q1); (2) Which party is most disadvantaged (between men and women) in the phenomenon of early childhood marriage? (Q2). This research question is one of the guides for researchers in determining search keywords and selecting literature used in this study.

Technical literature collection is done on the Google Scholar database with the help of Harzing's Publish or Perish application. The literature search was conducted using the keywords "child/early marriage and/on mortality", "child/early marriage and/on health", "child/early marriage and education", and "child marriage and/on poverty" with restrictions on the use of articles from 2019 to 2023. The selection of literature in this study was determined based on inclusion criteria, including studies related to the impact of early childhood marriage on life expectancy (death and birth), health, education, and welfare whose research results have been published in national and international journals or seminar proceedings.

From this search process, 1,074 related articles have been identified. After selecting the titles and abstracts of literature, 56 inclusive literature and 1,018 exclusion literature were found. Furthermore, checking the qualified literature, found as many as 25 literature that can be used as data and processed in this study, there are 31 unqualified literature, including inappropriate types of publications (n = 5), exclusionary research results (n = 7), and inappropriate exposure (n = 19).

To facilitate the process of data analysis, the collected literature is presented in the form of tables. The number of tables presented is based on the classification of articles according to the results of the researcher's analysis, including research design and those that have implications for one or all HDI indicators.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Indicators of the success of human development can be seen from 3 aspects, namely in terms of survival (life expectancy, mortality rate of children under 5 years, maternal mortality rate), in terms of literacy (adult literacy rate, education level), and in terms of welfare (poverty rate and national income). A literature review has shown that early marriage negatively affects a country's HDI because it can hinder access to education, health, employment and income. (Anand & Sen, 1994)

**Table 1.** Research results implications of early marriage with Human Development Index.

<b>Researchers and Year Published</b>	<b>Journal</b>	<b>Research Results</b>
(Zaman & Koski, 2020)	<i>PLoS ONE</i>	The study found that child marriage is quite common in Canada. Girls are more likely to marry early than boys, and indigenous girls are more affected.
(Modak, n.d.)	<i>Journal of International Women's Studies</i>	The study shows that the prevalence of girl child marriage is on the decline in India. The decline was uneven due to the uneven level of socio-economic development, modernization, and uneven distribution of income at the state level in India.
(Cameron et al., n.d.)	<i>Book: Melbourne Institute Applied Economic &amp; Social Research</i>	Limited access to education, low income, prevalence of divorce, stunting, and additional burden on families
(Garcia-Hombrados, 2022)	<i>Journal of Population Economics</i>	The results showed that delaying the age of child marriage could reduce infant mortality in Ethiopia.
(P. Paul, 2020)	<i>Journal of Public Health (Germany)</i>	Child marriage is associated with an increased risk of infant and under-five mortality in India, especially in rural areas and in lower social groups.
(Moyazzem Hossain et al., 2022)	<i>PLoS ONE</i>	Child marriage is associated with an increased risk of infant and toddler mortality, as well as an increased risk of morbidity in children under 5 years of age, including diarrhea, cough, fever, and breathing problems.
(Cameron et al., 2022)	<i>Review of Economics of the Household</i>	The study shows that child marriage negatively impacts the education, well-being, reproductive health, and household decisions of women and men who marry at an early age.
(Ahinkorah et al., 2022)	<i>BMC Health Services Research</i>	Married girls under the age of 18 are less likely to use maternal health services compared to those who marry at an older age.
(Abdo, n.d.)		Health problems that arise in early age couples consist of vaginal bleeding, women prone to infection, and depression due to the strain of married life
(P. Paul et al., 2019)	<i>Public Health</i>	The results showed that children born to married mothers under the age of 18 had a higher risk of stunting, underweight, and anemia.
(Irani & Roudsari, 2019)	<i>Journal of Midwifery and Reproductive Health</i>	Child marriage negatively impacts young women's reproductive and sexual health, including a high risk of pregnancy and premature birth, anemia, hypertension,

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		cervical cancer, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV/AIDS.
(Dadras et al., 2023)	<i>BMC Public Health</i>	The results showed that children born to mothers who were married as children had a 2-fold risk of death and higher morbidity and a higher risk of experiencing severe cough.
(Fan & Koski, 2022)	<i>BMC Public Health</i>	Early couples have children at a younger age, use contraceptives less, are at risk of physical and sexual violence, and rampant unwanted pregnancies.
(Shahbaz, 2021)	<i>PAKISTAN LANGUAGES AND HUMANITIES REVIEW</i>	The consequences of early marriage consist of the death of the mother and child, exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, domestic and sexual violence, and the future being ruined and the loss of childhood
(Adekoya & Sokunbi, 2021)	<i>Izvestiya Journal of the University of Economics</i>	Children from poor families are unable to continue their studies and eventually marry early. Early spouses are still dependents of poor families, creating a continuous cycle of poverty.
(P. Paul, 2019)	<i>Children and Youth Services Review</i>	Education and poverty remain the two main factors in girl child marriage in India at the aggregate level.
(Efevbera et al., 2019)	<i>BMC Medicine</i>	The study emphasizes the importance of improving education and socioeconomic status of families to reduce the risk of girl child marriage and malnutrition.
(Kashif et al., 2020)	<i>Journal of Sociology and Anthropology</i>	This article presents that early marriage is still common in Pushtoon society, especially families with low socioeconomic backgrounds, strong patriarchal cultures.
(Jafarey et al., 2020)	<i>Review of Development Economics</i>	The results of the study show that women's education is negatively affected by cultural norms in Nepal that support early marriage.
(Baataar et al., 2019)	<i>Africa Development And Resources Research Institute (Adrri) Journal</i>	Early marriage led to low educational development for women in the Wa West District.
(Bhandari, 2019)	<i>Journal of International Women's Studies</i>	Community leaders, religious leaders, traditional leaders, neighbors, and relatives are the most influential on the high prevalence of early marriage in Nepal. Female students are also at risk of early marriage.
(Samkange, 2022)	<i>East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences</i>	The formal school curriculum lacks in covering children's rights and the dangers of early marriage.
(Soler-Hampejsek et al., 2021)	<i>Journal of Adolescent Health</i>	It found that girls who married at an early age had fewer job opportunities, lower education and income compared to girls who married at an older or unmarried age.

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(Mughal et al., n.d.)	<i>Global Journal of Management, Social Sciences and Humanities</i>	The results showed that early marriage can affect women's education levels and limit their opportunities for further education.
(Junaedi et al., 2022)	<i>Al-Ishlah: Journal of Education</i>	The role of schools has not shown significant results because there is almost no curriculum in schools that requires the provision of materials on marriage, and reproductive health.

**Table 2.** Implications of early marriage and life expectancy.

Researchers and year published	Health Risk and Death
(Cameron et al., n.d.)	Stunting
(Garcia-Hombrados, 2022)	Infant mortality
(Moyazzem Hossain et al., 2022)	Infant and toddler mortality, morbidity: diarrhea, cough, fever, and respiratory problems
(Cameron et al., 2022)	Reproductive health
(Ahinkorah et al., 2022)	Use of healthcare
(Abdo, n.d.)	Vaginal bleeding, infection, and depression
(P. Paul et al., 2019)	Stunting, underweight, and anemia
(Irani & Roudsari, 2019)	Preterm birth, anemia, hypertension, cervical cancer, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV/AIDS
(Dadras et al., 2023)	Death, morbidity: cough
(Shahbaz, 2021)	Maternal and child mortality, sexually transmitted diseases

In terms of survival, early marriage is at high risk of causing death in both mother and child (Dadras et al., 2023; Garcia-Hombrados, 2022; Moyazzem Hossain et al., 2022; Shahbaz, 2021). Young couples who already have children also experience limited education about access to health services. This is evidenced by the use of health services in early childhood couples is lower than in married couples of reasonable age. Children who marry early allow having children at a younger age, this is because the lack of knowledge about the use of contraceptives is still minimal. (Ahinkorah et al., 2022) (Fan & Koski, 2022)

Children born to early couples have a higher risk of health problems compared to children born to mothers who marry and give birth at a reasonable age. Some diseases that are easily infected include stunting or failure to thrive, diarrhea, cough, fever, respiratory problems, underweight, and anemia. Higher health risks also affect girls who experience early marriage. Health problems that often arise include reproductive health problems, premature birth, anemia, cervical cancer, sexually transmitted infections, HIV / AIDS, vaginal bleeding and even mental disorders such as depression. (Cameron et al., n.d.; P. Paul, 2020) (Dadras et al., 2023; Moyazzem Hossain et al., 2022) (P. Paul, 2020) (Cameron et al., 2022) (Irani & Roudsari, 2019) (Abdo, n.d.)

**Table 3.** Implications of early marriage and education.

Researchers and Year Published	Implication
(Cameron et al., 2022)	Less than three out of every ten Indonesians who marry at an early age are still attending school by age

	15, compared to more than six out of every ten who do not marry at an early age.
(P. Paul, 2019)	Girls with a recent primary school education are at high risk of early marriage. Upper secondary education and higher education can reduce prevalence.
(Jafarey et al., 2020)	Postponement of marriage can improve women's education.
(Baataar et al., 2019)	Early marriage hinders education and productivity in future generations, thus affecting the achievement of the 2030 SDGs
(Bhandari, 2019)	The status of female students is also at risk of experiencing early marriage and then deciding to quit school.
(Samkange, 2022)	Additional curricula are needed in formal schools on the dangers of early marriage, sexual education, and reproductive health to reduce the prevalence of early marriage and young pregnancy.
(Efevbera et al., 2019)	Improved education and socioeconomic status can reduce the prevalence of early marriage.
(Mughal et al., n.d.)	Level of education and limited access to higher education.
(Junaedi et al., 2022)	The role of schools has not had a significant effect on the prevalence of early marriage and free sex because the curriculum offered does not include risk factors for early marriage.

The relationship between early marriage and education is very closely related. Low education strata for children under 18 years of age can increase the practice of early marriage (Cameron et al., 2022; P. Paul, 2019). It is also true that early marriage children can also hinder the access of married children to education. For children who are still students, it does not rule out the possibility of avoiding the practice of early marriage, because the issue of early marriage is enough to get intervention from community leaders, religious leaders, neighbors, and culture that can influence children's decisions to marry young. The role of schools in the form of curriculum offerings on the dangers of early marriage and other reproductive health problems is not significant enough and does not even contribute anything to this issue (Baataar et al., 2019; Mughal et al., n.d.) (Bhandari, 2019). (Junaedi et al., 2022; Samkange, 2022)

**Table 4.** Implications of early marriage and well-being.

Author and Year Published	Implication
(Modak, n.d.)	Individual income
(Shahbaz, 2021)	Loss of childhood and future well-being.
(Adekoya & Sokunbi, 2021)	Sustained poverty.

(Efevbera et al., 2019)	Increased socioeconomic status and risk of girl child marriage.
(Kashif et al., 2020)	Early marriage in the lower economic classes and patriarchy.
(Soler-Hampejsek et al., 2021)	Job opportunities are few and income is low.

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In communities that consider early marriage to be common, the main reason for doing this practice is to reduce the family's economic burden. But the fact is that the married child has not been able to be responsible for the family economy so that it becomes a burden for the previous family. This makes early childhood marriage can have long-term welfare and sustainable poverty if left untreated. In early age couples, the type of work that can be done tends to earn lower wages (Adekoya & Sokunbi, 2021) (Modak, n.d.; Soler-Hampejsek et al., 2021) . Low income is very influential on the level of welfare. (Shahbaz, 2021)

### Analysis

Research results from literature data that has been analyzed show that the practice of early marriage is still often found in developing and low-income countries. There are many factors that influence the practice of early marriage in a country or region, including awareness of the importance of education that is still low, intervention from parties who have influence, economy, and culture of a region that is still thick with patriarchy.

This study has also answered a research question, namely the implications of early marriage on HDI, which include indicators of life expectancy, education, and well-being have a relationship with the phenomenon of early marriage. Improper handling of the practice of early marriage in a country/region, especially those that are still developing, will hinder the progress of human development.

Of the 25 literatures analyzed, there are 11 literature that discuss the negative impact of early marriage on women. This means that women are the most disadvantaged from the practice of early marriage both in terms of the sustainability of their education, physical, mental, and reproductive health, as well as career path and welfare.

### 4. Discussion

Early marriage is a common practice in many developing countries, including Indonesia. Early marriage is defined as marriage performed before the age of 18, by both a man and a woman. Early marriage has a serious impact on all dimensions of a country's human development index (HDI). A country's Human Development Index can be seen through 3 aspects, namely health, education, and welfare.

In the health aspect, early marriage has a considerable impact, especially in terms of women's reproductive health. The practice of child marriage often forces women to become pregnant at too young an age. This can lead to increased health risks for both mother and baby. In addition, babies born to mothers who are too young have a high risk of neonatal death and stunting. In addition to physical health, mental health disorders are also susceptible to be experienced by early age couples. This is because the expectations of married life that are not in accordance with the capacity of the children's mindset, as well as the expectations of people around the marriage partner that cannot be contained can cause mild to severe depression.

In the aspect of education, more dominant women who marry at a young age have a higher risk of dropping out of school or not continuing their education to a higher level. When women marry at too young an age, they tend to get stuck in traditional roles as wives and housewives. Opportunities to develop themselves and reach their maximum potential in education are limited. Unlike men, young marriage does not completely close the opportunity to study. The patriarchal culture that is still thick, especially in developing countries that are still rife in the practice of early marriage, always provides the widest possible opportunity for men even though they have married at a young age.



Early marriage can also limit access to economic opportunities that lead to women's well-being. After marriage, the majority of young women are unable to complete their education, thus limiting the opportunities to get a decent job and a sufficient income. This also causes young women to experience poverty and dependence on their partners. The impact on economic well-being caused by early marriage also intersects with the community and society as a whole. For example, early marriage exacerbates the poverty and education problems of a region because the population of young married women does not contribute enough to the economic and social sectors of society.

In the context of the global economy, the need and supply of increasingly competitive human resources, skills and education become the benchmark of one's competence. This cannot be touched by early couples if there is no help from various parties. In order to address the impact of early marriage on women's welfare and economy, especially for women, efforts need to be made to increase education and awareness about women's rights, including the right to self-determine their future. In addition, economic empowerment programs for women also need to be improved so that they have equal opportunities to achieve success.

The issue of early childhood marriage is also inseparable from gender issues, as in the literature review above that women are the most disadvantaged parties and become victims of the practice of early marriage. Early marriage can also reinforce negative gender stereotypes and hinder gender progress. This is because often early marriage is considered part of certain traditions and cultural norms that override the importance of women's rights and their individual freedoms. In societies that tend to emphasize patriarchal values, early marriage in women is considered a way to control their behavior and establish conformity to conventional gender roles.

However, it is important to note that early marriage affects not only women, but also men. Early marriage in men can limit their opportunities for education and affect their income. In addition, they may also experience social pressure to fulfill traditional gender roles and become the primary caregivers of the family.

## 5. Conclusions and Suggestions

From the results of this literature study, it can be concluded that early childhood marriage can affect human development in a country both from the aspects of health, education and welfare. In terms of gender, women are the ones who experience the most losses in the practice of early marriage, especially in the health aspect. In order to reduce the impact of marriage in a country on HDI, the author suggests that the government can increase awareness of the impact of early marriage through formal and non-formal education; Increased access to education and health services (especially for women) especially in remote areas to ensure that women have access to adequate health and education services; create various empowerment programs that provide skills and training to increase economic independence; legal regulation and protection, including legal action against persons who engage in child marriage; and the development of programs and policies that encourage economic independence, especially for women.

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